

**Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund  
2015 Request for Proposals (RFP)**

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**Project Title:**

**ENRTF ID: 070-C**

Tamarac National Wildlife Refuge Outdoor Youth Learning Program

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**Category:** C. Environmental Education

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**Total Project Budget:** \$ 118,600

**Proposed Project Time Period for the Funding Requested:** 3 years, July 2015 - June 2018

**Summary:**

This project will expand an existing youth experiential, outdoor, conservation, stewardship and environmental education program at the Tamarac National Wildlife Refuge from 3000 to 6000 student visits per year.

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**Name:** Raymond Vlasak

**Sponsoring Organization:** Friends of Tamarac National Wildlife Refuge, Inc.

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Ponsford MN 56575

**Telephone Number:** (218) 573-3243

**Email** highpines@arvig.net

**Web Address** www.tamaracfriends.org

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**Location**

**Region:** Central, NW

**County Name:** Becker, Clay, Clearwater, Hubbard, Mahnomen, Otter Tail, Wadena

**City / Township:**

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**Alternate Text for Visual:**

This project is centered at the Tamarac National Wildlife Refuge and the surrounding counties.

<input type="checkbox"/>	Funding Priorities	<input type="checkbox"/>	Multiple Benefits	<input type="checkbox"/>	Outcomes	<input type="checkbox"/>	Knowledge Base	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Extent of Impact	<input type="checkbox"/>	Innovation	<input type="checkbox"/>	Scientific/Tech Basis	<input type="checkbox"/>	Urgency	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Capacity Readiness	<input type="checkbox"/>	Leverage				<input type="checkbox"/>	TOTAL



**PROJECT TITLE: Tamarac National Wildlife Refuge Outdoor Youth Learning Program**

**I. PROJECT STATEMENT**

This project responds to an increasing demand for an expanded conservation, stewardship, and environmental education program at the Tamarac National Wildlife Refuge. Currently the program presentation is a partnership between the Friends of Tamarac National Wildlife Refuge, Inc. volunteer 501(c)3 organization and Tamarac Staff with approximately equal contributions of time. It primarily serves elementary and middle school children, but also preschool, high school and other youth organizations. Most students come from the surrounding Counties of Becker, Clay, Clearwater, Hubbard, Mahanomen, and Ottertail including tribal, public and private schools. The participating students experience an outdoor educational program with field excursions and hands-on nature activities utilizing Tamarac’s diverse environment. They learn how the environment changes with seasons, how wildlife adapts, how the water cycle works, how invasive species affect native species, etc. Over 150 documented lesson activities are designed to address standards in the curriculum areas of science, mathematics, language arts and social studies. STEM based learning principles are incorporated into the lessons. In order to accommodate increased enrollment the Friends organization is constructing a Discovery Center building which is 85% funded and will be completed this year. Unfortunately the Friends organization lacks the funding for delivery of the expanded program.

Therefore, this project proposal requests funding for a 3 year period while the Friends of Tamarac establish a sustainable funding stream for delivery of the program. The goal is to double program participation from 3000 student visits to 6000 student visits per year. This will be accomplished by: hiring an education coordinator to assist refuge staff, teachers, and volunteers who deliver the program to students; funding transportation to assist schools with busing; and funding additional expansion costs for activity materials and equipment, office supplies, mileage for the coordinator, program brochures/booklets, and miscellaneous program expenses.

**II. PROJECT ACTIVITIES AND OUTCOMES**

**Activity 1:** Expand the existing environmental education program by doubling the number of student visits from 3000 to 6000 (students from 1500 to 3000) per year. **Budget: \$118,600**

The Friend of Tamarac, Inc will hire a 75% FTE education coordinator to handle the increased number of students and schools in the program. The Friends of Tamarac Education Committee will provide and train volunteers to implement the lesson activities. Equipment, tools and supplies will be purchased for the expansion of the outdoor classroom activities.

Outcome	Completion Date
1. Student visits will increase from 3000 to 6000	July 15, 2018
2. The number of participating schools will increase from 10 to 20	July 15, 2018
3. Students gain knowledge of the natural world through experiential lessons	On-going
4. Students learn to appreciate and respect nature	On-going
5. Students learn and participate in stewardship of the environment	On-going
6. Students experience the healthful benefits of the outdoors both physical and mental	On-going
7. Students become better prepared for the future by understanding conservation and sustainability	On-going



### **III. PROJECT STRATEGY**

#### **A. Project Team/Partners**

The Expansion Phase of the Tamarac National Wildlife Refuge Outdoor Youth Learning Program is a partnership project. The partnership organizations include the Tamarac National Wildlife Refuge (TNWR), Friends of Tamarac National Wildlife Refuge (FOT), and the Laurentian Lakes Chapter (LLC) North County Trail Association (NCTA). The partnership also includes the participating public and private school entities in a six-county area surrounding the refuge. The TNWR staff provides facilities support but will not provide additional coordination support for this program expansion. The FOT organization will handle funding including financial accounting, provide in-kind volunteer support for the student learning sessions and project management, and the Discovery Center facilities. The FOT mission is to facilitate activities and programs that interpret, protect and restore the natural and cultural resources of the Refuge. The LLC provides volunteer in-kind support to FOT and maintains the North Country National Scenic Trail. The LLC NCTA mission is to develop, maintain, protect and promote the North Country National Scenic Trail as a premier hiking path.

#### **B. Project Impact and Long-Term Strategy**

The plan for this project will use the \$640,000 Discovery Center being constructed this year by the Friends of Tamarac and the newly constructed North Country National Scenic Trail, along with the resources requested above to expand the outdoor education program. The Discovery Center facility will be the center of education, exploration and connecting with nature for Pre-K - 12 school children. It provides adequate restroom facilities, a classroom for table, a place for lunch during inclement weather.

Currently the program includes multiple schools from the towns of Detroit Lakes, Frazee/Vergas, Moorhead, Ogema/Waubun, Park Rapids, and White Earth. Some of these schools desire to expand their programs, and additional schools from Dilworth/Glyndon/Felton, Henning, Lake Park/Audubon, Mahnommen, Pelican Rapids, Perham/Dent, and Pine Point have requested participation. Some of the school programs utilize a 3 season strategy where a class will come to Tamarac in fall, winter and spring.

A trail system from the Discovery Center including the new North Country National Scenic Trail, guides school children to appreciate, observe, listen, investigate, and discover the outdoor classroom laboratory and receive Minnesota School Standards/STEM-based activity lessons. Students also experience the healthy benefits and satisfaction of hiking. Students experience hiking on the many trails in the fall, winter and spring including snowshoeing in the winter as they rotate through their outdoor classroom laboratory sites. These trails bring students of all ages and abilities the chance to learn about the wildlife and habitat mission of the Tamarac NWR, to learn about how nature changes seasonally, how wildlife adapts to these changes, how invasive species affect the native species, how the water cycle works, etc.

Over 150 conservation/stewardship/environmental education activity lessons have been documented and are being delivered to the school. All activity lessons foster a respect of our natural resources, a conservation ethic, a stewardship emphasis and a need for protection of our natural resources. They integrate experiential learning into everyday living so that students understand the relationship and importance of the natural environment.

#### **C. Timeline Requirements**

A 3 year funding cycle is requested for this project. During this time the environmental learning program will expand to at least double the number of student visits from 3000 to 6000. Additional volunteers to present the classes will come from growing FOT and LLC membership programs. During the 3 years of funding support, the FOT will establish an endowment, planned giving, and sustaining membership programs to achieve a sustainable ongoing funding stream.

## 2015 Detailed Project Budget

**Project Title: Tamarac National Wildlife Refuge Outdoor Youth Learning Program**

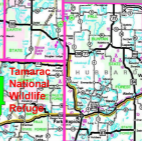
### IV. TOTAL ENRTF REQUEST BUDGET 3 years

<u>BUDGET ITEM</u>	<u>AMOUNT</u>
<b>Personnel:</b>	\$ -
Education Program Coordinator, 75% FTE for 3 years	\$ 93,600
<b>Contracts: N/A</b>	\$ -
<b>Equipment/Tools/Supplies:</b>	\$ -
Equipment for lesson plans (such as binoculars, GPS units and cameras)	\$ 2,500
Outdoor classroom materials and supplies	\$ 5,000
Brochures/Pamphlets for teachers, students and parents	\$ 2,500
Office supplies for education coordinator	\$ 2,100
<b>Acquisition (Fee Title or Permanent Easements): N/A</b>	\$ -
<b>Travel:</b>	\$ -
Mileage for education coordinator to attend meetings and visit schools in the seven counties. Estimate 2000 miles/year.	\$ 3,300
<b>Additional Budget Items:</b>	\$ -
Transportation scholarships to assist schools with busing costs	\$ 9,600
<b>TOTAL ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES TRUST FUND \$ REQUEST =</b>	<b>\$ 118,600</b>

### V. OTHER FUNDS

<u>SOURCE OF FUNDS</u>	<u>AMOUNT</u>	<u>Status</u>
<b>Other Non-State \$ To Be Applied To Project During Project Period: N/A</b>	\$ -	
<b>Other State \$ To Be Applied To Project During Project Period: N/A</b>	\$ -	
<b>In-kind Services To Be Applied To Project During Project Period:</b>	\$ 108,000	Secured
Friends of Tamarac volunteer instructors and aids - 1500 hours/yr for 3 years - \$90,000		
Laurentain Lake Chapter, NCTA volunteer instructors & aids - 300 hrs/yr for 3 yrs - \$18,000	\$ -	
<b>Funding History:</b>	\$ 20,000	
\$5,000 - NFWF 2011 Nature of Learning Program		
\$10,000 - NFWF 2009 Nature of Learning Program		
\$5,000 - NFWF 2007 Capacity building		
<b>Remaining \$ From Current ENRTF Appropriation: N/A</b>	\$ -	

# Tamarac Outdoor Youth Learning Project



**Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund**

**Project Title: Tamarac National Wildlife Refuge Trails to Discovery**

Project Manager Qualifications

Raymond (Ray) L. Vlasak

Current Positions:

Friends of Tamarac Board of Directors

Friends of Itasca State Park Board of Directors

President, Laurentian Lakes Chapter, North Country Trail Association

Chair, Bad Medicine Lake Area Foundation

Component Fund of West Central Initiative

District 1 Representative, Becker County Zoning Ordinance Advisory Committee

Project Manager for 2 active Conservation Partners Legacy Grants

Owner/Operator High Pines Resort on Bad Medicine Lake, Becker County

Previous Experience:

BS Degree in Chemical Engineering, Purdue University, 1966

Employed for 33 years by 3M Company in R&D, now retired

3 years National Board of Directors, North Country Trail Association

8 years Chair Forest Township Board of Supervisors

5 years Chair Becker County Park and Recreation Board

Mule Lake WMA Citizen Advisory Committee

Eagle Scout and Scoutmaster for 8 years