

**Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund  
2016 Request for Proposals (RFP)**

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**Project Title:**

**ENRTF ID: 090-C**

Minnesota Conservation Apprentice Academy

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**Category:** C. Environmental Education

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**Total Project Budget:** \$ 433,000

**Proposed Project Time Period for the Funding Requested:** 2.5 years, July 2016 to December 2018

**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:** Board of Water and Soil Resources

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**Location**

**Region:** Statewide

**County Name:** Statewide

**City / Township:**

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**Alternate Text for Visual:**

Map shows the placement of Apprentices from 2011 through 2015

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



**PROJECT TITLE: Minnesota Conservation Apprentice Academy**

**I. PROJECT STATEMENT**

The Minnesota Conservation Apprentice Academy project provides the opportunity for college students and recent graduates to be mentored by experienced conservation professionals at Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) across Minnesota. In return, the Apprentices bring knowledge of emerging technologies and other innovations to improve the quality and productivity of current conservation efforts. When initially proposed to LCCMR, this project was viewed as an 8 year project. This proposal represents years 7 and 8. This request will fund cohorts of 30 Apprentices in each of the 2017 and 2018 field seasons. To date, 139 individuals have successfully completed apprenticeships and 60 more are anticipated during the cohort years of 2015 and 2016. A 2014 survey of past apprentices indicated that 96% of the program participants were either employed in the natural resources field, or continuing their education in Natural resources.

The exchange of knowledge provided through this program is especially important to maintaining an experienced conservation workforce in Minnesota as the Baby Boomer generation continues to reach retirement age. With their departure goes much of their practical, on-the-ground experience, and skills. While college students may have knowledge of emerging technologies and other innovations that can improve and contribute to current conservation efforts, they often lack experience with on the ground projects and relating to landowners. The Conservation Apprenticeship Academy fills this gap by providing an opportunity for two generations to exchange knowledge during the SWCD’s busiest season and is an experience that classroom based courses simply cannot deliver.

To deliver the Apprentice Academy Program, the 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. The impact of this program is best described by the participants themselves. Mathias V, a 2012 Apprentice now employed at South Saint Louis SWCD summarized his experience by saying *“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.”* Kayla H, a 2014 Apprentice now employed at Dakota SWCD said *“This opportunity is truly life changing. The hands on experience and networking opportunities are priceless. I have learned countless new things about water monitoring and soil and water conservation methods.”*

**II. PROJECT ACTIVITIES AND OUTCOMES**

**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.

<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Completion Date</b>
<b>1.</b> Contract executed between BWSR and Conservation Corps	August 30, 2016
<b>2.</b> Employment agreements and program documentation describing schedule and duties updated.	October 15, 2016
<b>3.</b> Year one evaluation complete	December 31, 2017
<b>4.</b> Year two evaluation complete	December 31, 2018



**Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund (ENRTF)**

**2016 Main Proposal**

**Project Title: Minnesota Conservation Apprentice Academy**

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

**Budget:** \$427,000

**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). Apprentices are selected and matched with an SWCD based on skill, area of interest and regional preference. SWCD’s are selected based on quality of experience, skill-training potential and geographic distribution. Participating SWCDs provide final feedback on Apprentice selection prior to hiring. Both the SWCD and the apprentice 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.

<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Completion Date</b>
1. Apprentice applicants recruited through educational institutions, online, and through other media	November 30, 2016
2. List of interested SWCDs (incl. primary mentor) complete	December 30, 2016
3. Candidates matched with interested SWCDs	April 31, 2017
4. Up to 30 Apprentices employed and managed; local projects implemented	October 15, 2017
5. Apprentice applicants recruited through educational institutions, online, and through other media; year 2	November 30, 2017
6. List of interested SWCDs (incl. primary mentor) complete; year 2	December 30, 2017
7. Candidates matched with interested SWCDs; year 2	April 31, 2018
8. Up to 30 Apprentices employed and managed; local projects implemented; year 2	October 15, 2018

**III. PROJECT STRATEGY**

**A. Project Team/Partners**

CCMI via contract will recruit, manage and employ apprentices. BWSR will provide contract, oversight, and assistance for CCMI. MN Association of SWCDs, individual SWCDs, University and State College systems, and other agencies will assist in publicizing the program. NRCS and SWCD field staff will assist in mentoring of apprentices. In-kind staff hours from SWCDs and BWSR staff will be the largest source of direct money.

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

This project proposal will utilize the capacity that has been built and the momentum gained during the first years of the Apprentice Academy. The project will meet the needs of SWCDs with 30 apprentices in each of the 2017 and 2018 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 working to develop long-term funding strategies for the Conservation Apprenticeship Academy involving a mixture of federal, state, local, foundation, and private support.

**C. Timeline Requirements**

The proposed project timeline is July 1, 2016 – December 31, 2018. This allows agreements to be in place between BWSR and CCMI prior to identifying SWCD locations for the 2017 summer season. The end date of December 31, 2018 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.

## 2016 Detailed Project Budget

Project Title: Minnesota Conservation Apprentice Academy

### IV. TOTAL ENRTF REQUEST BUDGET years

BUDGET ITEM	AMOUNT
<b>Personnel:</b> BWSR Training Coordinator @0.04 FTE (non-general fund employee).	\$ 6,000
<b>Professional/Technical/Service Contracts:</b> Two years of Conservation Corps Minnesota for manager time (\$85,000), salary and benefits for 60 Apprentices (\$4,850/apprentice, or \$291,000 total), training (\$25,000), and site visits (\$13,500). Included in contract are funds for recruitment, background checks & recruiting ads (\$12,500).	\$ 427,000
<b>TOTAL ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES TRUST FUND \$ REQUEST =</b>	<b>\$ 433,000</b>

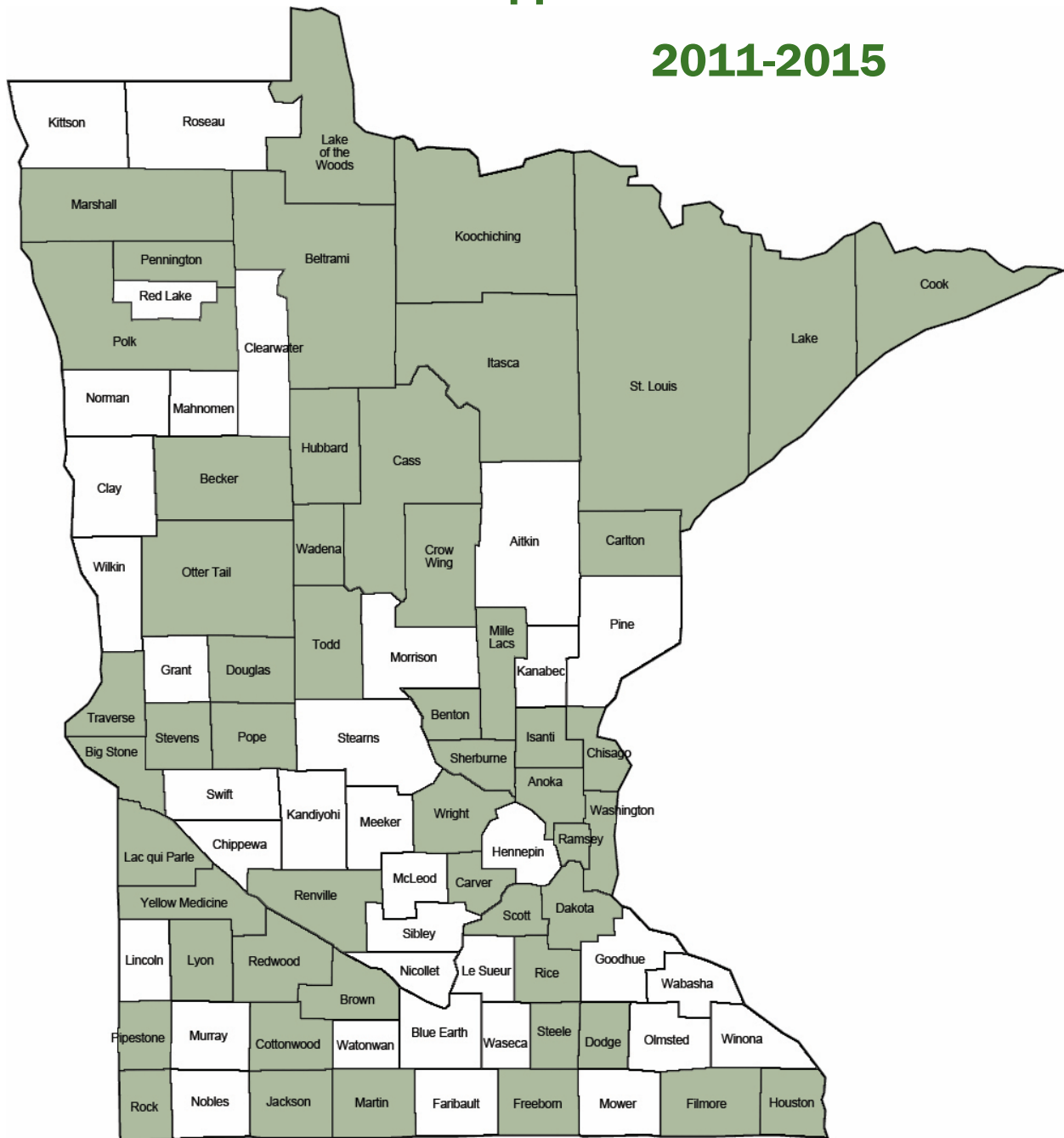
### V. OTHER FUNDS

SOURCE OF FUNDS	AMOUNT	Status
<b>Other Non-State \$ To Be Applied To Project During Project Period:</b>	\$ -	NA
<b>Other State \$ To Be Applied To Project During Project Period:</b>	\$ -	NA
<b>In-kind Services To Be Applied To Project During Project Period:</b> 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 \$1515.	\$ 90,900	Pending
<b>Funding History:</b> M.L. 2010, Chp. 362, Sec 2, Subd. 8a. Appropriation amount of \$368,000.	\$ 368,000	Remaining \$392,000 will be spent by 12/2016
M.L. 2011, First Special Session, Chp. 2, Art. 3, Sec. 2, Subd. 09a. Appropriation amount of \$200,000.	\$ 200,000	
M.L. 2013, Chp. 52, Sec. 2, Subd. 7a. Appropriation amount of \$186,000.	\$ 186,000	
M.L. 2014, Chp. 226, Sec. 2, Subd. 09a Appropriate amount of \$392,000. Remaining unspent balance of \$392,000 will be spent by 12/2016.	\$ 392,000	
<b>Remaining \$ From Current ENRTF Appropriation:</b> M.L. 2014, Chp. 226, Sec. 2, Subd. 09a Appropriate amount of \$392,000. Remaining unspent balance of \$392,000 will be spent by 12/2016.	\$ 392,000	

# Minnesota Conservation Apprenticeship Academy Map

## Apprentice Placement Sites

2011-2015



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 an MS in Communications.