

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

Project Title:

ENRTF ID: 114-C

Southwestern Minnesota Youth Environmental Education and Training Partnership

Category: C. Environmental Education

Total Project Budget: \$ 415,000

Proposed Project Time Period for the Funding Requested: 3 years, July 2016 to June 2019

Summary:

Through a college/city partnership, college students will train to become entry-level professionals through service-learning opportunities and faculty mentorship to provide environmental education programs to preK-12 student communities.

Name: Robyn Ceurvorst

Sponsoring Organization: Mankato State University

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Mankato MN 56001

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Location

Region: SW

County Name: Statewide

City / Township: Mankato

Alternate Text for Visual:

Elk's Nature Center Revitalization, Budgetary Crisis and Youth Accessibility to Programs

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



Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund (ENRTF)

2016 Main Proposal

Project Title: Southwestern Minnesota Youth Environmental Education and Training Partnership

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I. PROJECT STATEMENT

Through a partnership between the City of Mankato, Southwestern Minnesota Private and Public Schools, and Minnesota State University, professor-managed college students will train through service-learning opportunities and provide environmental education programs to under-served approximately 20 schools with preK-12 students and surrounding communities. Students will transport for program engagement at the Rasmussen Woods/Indian Creek Slough Nature Area, an urban-wildland interface of the critically polluted Minnesota River watershed. This project targets priority area number three, Environmental Education. The project will provide outreach, demonstration, and technical assistance efforts to under-represented and under-served students and communities in outdoor education and natural resource professions through the following topical goals and tangible outcomes over a three-year period:

- 1) Promote renewable energy and energy conservation and natural resource conservation and management tools, practices, and options through environmental education at the Elk’s Nature Center and Rasmussen Woods Nature Area (see activities section for specific activities).
- 2) Train and use college students as naturalists to engage and educate preK-12 students on topics such as aquatic invasive species, climate change, ecology, plant and wildlife species, pollinators, and habitat conservation (see activities).
- 3) Pilot and demonstrate options for renewable energy production and rainwater reuse (see activities).
- 4) Provide training and technical assistance on water quality improvement through teaching citizen science mechanisms with preK-12 students and interested community members/parents.

Numerous pressures from agricultural lands, industry and an influx of residents in southern Minnesota water and natural resources impact quality and availability. New and existing residents from multicultural and diverse socioeconomic backgrounds around the Greater Mankato Area need more accessible opportunities for connection to outdoor landscapes to learn more about water ecology and quality, prairie restoration and health, and cultivating sustainable lifestyles. Transportation, educational personnel and equipment / supplies budget limitations place restrictions on program opportunities for student out-of-school experiences or field trips to connect with experientially learning in outdoor landscapes. With a lack of diversity and many state practitioners nearing retirement in Minnesota conservation-based agencies, practical, applied resource management skills and interpretation efforts will be lost without training the next generation of entry-level professionals.

II. PROJECT ACTIVITIES AND OUTCOMES

Activity 1 – Conservation Education Program Research, Training and Preparation - Consult with instructors and agencies for current program curriculum and benchmarks. Acquire program equipment, supplies, marketing and transportation. Create a program delivery plan. Develop and launch website, social media and printed marketing media. Train college student instructors. **Budget = \$138,334**

Outcome	Completion Date
1. Launch the environmental education program at the Elk’s Nature Center / Rasmussen Woods Nature Area and website.	October 15, 2016

Activity 2 – Conservation Education Program Delivery. Deliver fall, spring and summer interim conservation program series. Create rainwater catchments, composters and raised community garden beds (with plants). Create refuse reduction and pollution management media / strategies community adoption. Create bee boxes and butterfly gardens by remove invasive vegetation and seed with native wildflowers and **Budget = \$138,333**



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prairie/aquatic plants at the nature area. Make bird and bat houses to install around schools and community nature areas. Cultivate community program support, conservation awareness and sustainable lifestyles through online media, on-site pilot programs and outreach meetings. Train college students in professional conservation techniques to deliver environmental education programs to Minnesotans.

Outcome	Completion Date
1. Complete environmental education semester program delivery.	January 1, 2017/2018/2019, May 15 2017/2018/2019 and June 30, 2017/2018

Activity 3 – Conservation Education Program Evaluation and Dissemination - Deliver two public meetings - a workshop and presentation at the Elk’s Nature Center to cultivate community awareness, connectivity, and display program outcomes. Develop electronic media on a website and submit a publication to the Journal of Experiential Education summarizing pedagogical approaches, environmental education model explanation for adoption and overall beneficial program outcomes. Complete biannual and final reports for LCCMR on program outcomes and expenditures. **Budget = \$138,333**

Outcome	Completion Date
1. Submit journal article publication manuscript.	June 20, 2019
2. Post program outcomes including photos and survey results to website.	January 1, 2017/2018/2019 and June 30, 2017/2018
3. Deliver biannual reports to LCCMR.	January 1, 2017/2018/2019 and June 30, 2017/2018
4. Deliver final report to LCCMR.	June 30, 2019

III. PROJECT STRATEGY

A. Project Team/Partners

The project team will consist mainly of one project manager, supporting faculty/administration from MSU, preK-12 schools and the City of Mankato, college students and community members. The project manager will organize all activities, partner with other interested MSU/ preK-12 faculty, and supervise/lead college students to deliver conservation education programs to K-12 students and the public. Minnesota State University will partner with the City of Mankato to utilize the Rasmussen Woods/Indian Creek Slough Nature Area and Elk’s Nature Center grounds for program facilitation. MSU and the City of Mankato will partner with surrounding Southwestern Minnesota schools and communities to deliver the programs.

B. Project Impact and Long-Term Strategy

Tracking and evaluation of the program will be incorporated into a clearly articulated, easy-to-adopt model for other community nature centers’ to adopt for similar to increase conservation awareness and natural resources health. Information will be provided in a journal article manuscript, public website, and public meeting/workshop. Any public interested in creating additional media for public use, volunteering, contributing funds, or learning from environmental education programs will be welcomed to be involved in this portion of the project. The initial impact starts regionally targeting youth in southwestern Minnesota, and will impact Minnesotans statewide with college student instructor MSU alumni placement in conservation positions and leadership around the state of Minnesota as well as grading senior students placement in statewide college conservation programs and entry-level field positions.

C. Timeline Requirements

The anticipated timeline for this project starts July 1, 2016 and finishes June 20, 2019.

2016 Detailed Project Budget

Project Title: Southeastern Minnesota Conservation Education Institute

IV. TOTAL ENRTF REQUEST BUDGET -- 3 years

BUDGET ITEM (See "Guidance on Allowable Expenses", p. 13)	AMOUNT
Personnel: Robyn Ceurvorst, (Project Manager 56% salary, 44% benefits, \$350 x 168 days)	\$ 58,800
Professional/Technical/Service Contracts: City of Mankato Grounds/Building Service, Sewage & Water (current Elk's Nature Center facility is minimally maintained with little budgetary support from City of Mankato funds; influx of greater use from students will impact the nature area moreso than the current wildland-urban interface slough area normally experiences from surrounding community members. The service fee serves as a special use permit for utilizing Elk's Nature Center grounds, water, sewage, waste management, staffing and upkeep of the deteriorating nature area and nature center facilities).	\$ 150,000
Equipment/Tools/Supplies: Global Positioning Units (GPS) Garmin eTrex 30 \$300 x 30 units = \$30000; Brother TN-420 Toner Cartridge \$20 x 150 = \$3000; Multipurpose Printing Paper, 8.5x11" white, \$20 x 150 = \$3000; Bird/Bathhouse Kits \$50 x 100 = \$5000; Flower seed (2 lb bag) \$100 x 20 = \$2000; Native plants / trees = \$5 x 500 = \$2500; Planting kits (shovel, bucket, gloves) \$100 x 20 = \$2000; Wood cutting supplies = \$2500; Pens, Pencils and Markers = \$200; Water Quality Testing Kits \$100 x 10 units = \$1,000; Bee Box Kits \$100 x 10 units = \$1000; Raised Garden Kits \$100 x 10 units; Wilderness Medical Kit \$200 x 3 = \$600; Garbage bags and clean-up gloves = \$200; Soil / Compost / Mulch = \$1000; Water cans / garden hoses / sprinklers = \$1000	\$ 56,200
Travel: Greater Mankato Bus Service from K-12 Schools, \$75 a trip x 20 schools x 100 program days (number of students cannot be determined at this time; however, enrollments approximate 8,000 students or more)	\$ 150,000
TOTAL ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES TRUST FUND \$ REQUEST =	\$ 415,000

V. OTHER FUNDS (This entire section must be filled out. Do not delete rows. Indicate "N/A" if row is not applicable.)

SOURCE OF FUNDS	AMOUNT	Status
Other Non-State \$ To Be Applied To Project During Project Period: N/A	\$ -	N/A
Other State \$ To Be Applied To Project During Project Period: N/A	\$ -	N/A
In-kind Services To Be Applied To Project During Project Period: N/A	\$ -	N/A
Funding History: N/A	\$ -	N/A
Remaining \$ From Current ENRTF Appropriation: N/A	\$ -	N/A

Elk's Nature Center Revitalization, Budgetary Crisis and Youth Accessibility to Programs

The Elk's Nature Center current is serviced by a small budget through the City of Mankato. A partnership with Minnesota State University was in place for 2010, where soon after, feasibility regarding budgetary issues disallowed the partnership to exist. This new program will revitalize the area. Posted: Monday, February 1, 2010 8:34 pm | Updated: 4:22 am, Tue Sep 2, 2014.

By Tanner Kent, The Free Press

After a cost-saving winter hibernation, the Elks Nature Center will reopen Friday. The reopening comes as a partnership between the city and Minnesota State University, which will provide students from its parks and recreation department to staff the center and create programming. To get things started, the center will be open every Friday from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Rachele Toupenca, a parks and recreation instructor at MSU, said she has spent several weeks at the center taking inventory and cleaning up. She said Friday's reopening only marks the first step in the partnership. "It's still a work in progress," Toupenca said. "But we're hoping to grow from here."

Last summer the Mankato City Council moved to close the center beginning Aug. 31 as a cost-saving measure. Formerly, the city had paid Mankato Area Public Schools \$50,000 per year to staff the center and provide educational programming. To help Toupenca and her students, the city is still planning to hire a summer intern for the center. The city also is recruiting volunteers to help staff the center throughout the year. The city has budgeted \$20,000 toward the operation of the center, though the agreement with MSU is at no cost. Laura Elvebak, who coordinates volunteers for the city, said she is collecting names for several volunteer opportunities throughout the city, including Elks Nature Center. (If interested, call Elvebak at 507-387-8621.)



VI. PROJECT MANAGER / ORGANIZATION DESCRIPTION

Project Manager:

Robyn L. Ceurvorst, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, Resource Management
Minnesota State University Mankato
Recreation, Parks and Leisure Services – Resource Management
213 Highland Center North
Mankato, MN 56001

15 years of academic and professional experience in environmental education / resource management

2014 - *present* Assistant Professor, Department of Recreation, Parks and Leisure Services, College of Allied Health and Nursing, Minnesota State University, Mankato, Minnesota.

Ph.D., Human Dimensions of Coastal and Forest Recreation Resources, Oregon State University, 2010
M.S., Human Dimensions of Natural Resources Recreation and Tourism, Colorado State University, 2004
B.A., Leisure, Youth and Human Services, Outdoor Recreation, Business Administration, University of Northern Iowa 2002

2014 Utah State University Innovations in teaching grant, funded, \$5,000

2013 Tread Lightly grant for trail clean-up / education grant, funded, \$1,000

2011 National Park Service request for minimum tool inventory research, cost share, \$45,000

Minnesota State University, Mankato promotes learning through effective undergraduate and graduate teaching, scholarship, and research in service to the state, the region and the global community. Minnesota State Mankato will be known as a university where people expect to go further than they thought possible by combining knowledge and the passion to achieve great things. Our foundation for this vision is our heritage of both dedicated teaching and the direct application of knowledge to improve a diverse community and world. We will achieve it by actively nurturing the passion within students, faculty and staff to push beyond possibility on the way to realizing dreams. Minnesota State University, Mankato is an innovative, student-centered learning community that values integrity, diversity, access, responsibility and excellence.

The Department of Recreation, Parks and Leisure Services (RPLS) is situated within the College of Allied Health and Nursing (CAHN) at Minnesota State University, Mankato. The RPLS department was created in 1968 and the Bachelor of Science degree in the major has been continuously conferred for the past forty-five years. The department is the only nationally accredited undergraduate RPLS program in the state. Six, full time, faculty members focus on excelling as teachers and fostering student development. Faculty members have real-world experience in one or more of the three major tracks—Resource Management, Leisure Planning and Management, and Therapeutic Recreation—and are dedicated to preparing students for success in their careers. The Department offers a curriculum responsive to the needs of the profession and the needs of students. Students learn the science behind recreation, parks and leisure. They also learn how to help people live well and flourish, and how to manage natural resources for people’s enjoyment now and for generations to come. As a result, graduates are highly respected throughout the state, region and nation.