

**Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund
2017 Request for Proposals (RFP)**

Project Title:

ENRTF ID: 079-C

Floating Classroom: Connecting 20,000 Youth to Minnesota Waterways

Category: C. Environmental Education

Total Project Budget: \$ 1,240,730

Proposed Project Time Period for the Funding Requested: 3 years, July 2017 - June 2020

Summary:

Floating Classroom reaches 20,000 diverse students statewide on 30+ waterways, engaging them in environmental science education, campsite restoration, data collection and dissemination to earn a resume-building outdoor science certificate.

Name: Greg Lais

Sponsoring Organization: Wilderness Inquiry

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Location

Region: Statewide

County Name: Statewide

City / Township:

Alternate Text for Visual:

Displays state of MN with dots representing potential program locations; sample student completed waterway report card; pictures of diverse students engaged in environmental education

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



PROJECT TITLE: Floating Classroom: Connecting 20,000 Youth to Minnesota Waterways

I. PROJECT STATEMENT

20,000 diverse Minnesota youth (grades 6-12) engage in environmental science accessing 30+ locations along Minnesota State Water Trails, waterways, and other public lands. Youth assess natural resources, collect and disseminate scientific data, engage in outdoor recreation, develop a conservation ethic, and prepare for outdoor-related employment opportunities by earning a resume-building certificate of completion. "Floating Classroom" represents a progression of skill development and environmental science education for Minnesota's changing demographics. Specific activities include:

- 19,400 students participate in hands-on exploration and assessment of State Water Trails and waterways from a 24' Voyageur canoe—a floating classroom.
- 600 students participate in a 3-5 day expedition from a 17' tandem canoe along State Water Trails and waterways. Students receive training, restore and maintain public lands, and learn about access and outdoor recreation opportunities.
- All participants compile and disseminate data and information through on-line, real-time reports.

"Floating Classroom" provides enriching environmental science lessons and develops core skills for diverse high school and middle school youth. In doing so, youth will develop a conservation ethic and care for their natural resources as active, engaged citizens while being introduced to employment opportunities in the outdoors.

II. PROJECT ACTIVITIES AND OUTCOMES

Activity 1: 19,400 Youth Explore and Assess Minnesota's Waterways

Budget: \$915,000

19,400 Minnesota youth, grades 6-12, practice scientific methods through hands-on daylong environmental science education and recreation activities. Students paddle 24' Voyageur canoes, engage in multiple water-based activities, and earn an environmental science certificate by completing each of these three modules:

- Water quality testing (pH, temperature, phosphorus, nitrates, clarity)
- Inventorying aquatic and terrestrial invasive and native species
- Assessing recreational opportunities such as fishing, hunting, canoeing, and bird watching

Data and assessments will be compiled in a student-created on-line waterway report card. "Floating Classroom" leverages existing curriculum and assessment tools such as the Watershed Health Assessment Framework to highlight the health, accessibility, and recreation resources of local waterways.

As a result of exploring and assessing Minnesota waterways, 19,400 youth access recreational opportunities, experience hands-on environmental science education, and develop a conservation ethic. Each program day costs an average of \$47 per student.

Outcome	Completion Date
1. 19,400 diverse youth experience environmental science education along their local Minnesota State Water Trails and waterways and earn an environmental science certificate (approximately 240 events, each with average of 80 youth)	6/30/20

Activity 2: 600 Youth Conduct Intensive Multi-Day Waterway Assessments

Budget: \$265,730

600 Minnesota youth, grades 9-12, participate in 3-5 day overnight expeditions along State Water Trails and waterways. Groups of 8-12 youth paddle 17' tandem canoes, experience Activity 1 at a deeper level, and pilot an "Adopt-a-Campsite" project in partnership with the Minnesota DNR.



Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund (ENRTF)

2017 Main Proposal

PROJECT TITLE: Floating Classroom: Connecting 20,000 Youth to Minnesota Waterways

“Adopt-a-Campsite” trains youth to restore and maintain healthy and biodiverse natural environments on public lands. Activities include facilities upkeep, fire pit maintenance, portage clearing, invasive species removal, trash clean-up, general site improvements, and information-sharing for campsites. Youth will:

- Participate in hands-on environmental science education and recreation
- Improve and maintain waterways through service projects such as invasive species removal
- Earn an outdoor professional certificate, highlighting resume-boosting skills learned in scientific data collection, resource management, leadership, Leave No Trace, and more

Overnight excursions prepare youth to improve their waterways, overcome challenges, learn about work opportunities in the outdoor industry, and adopt sustainable lifestyles. 3-5 day overnight excursions costs an average of \$443 per student.

Outcome	Completion Date
1. 600 diverse youth experience environmental science education through 3-5 day intensive overnight expeditions, earning an outdoor professional certificate (approx. 60 total expeditions/10 youth each)	6/30/20

Activity 3: Data Dissemination and Project Evaluation

Budget: \$60,000

Youth compile statewide waterway report cards of 30+ Minnesota State Water Trails and waterways online. In addition, the University of Minnesota develops and implements an evaluative survey to measure program effectiveness in youth developing a conservation ethic, adopting sustainable lifestyle habits, and defining future recreational interests. Evaluation costs \$20,000/year with the University of Minnesota.

Outcome	Completion Date
1. 250+ online reports showing fluctuations across time and seasons of Minnesota waterways, based on youth assessments and data collection of water quality, species inventory, and recreation opportunities in both Activities 1 and 2	6/30/20
2. Project evaluation: impact on development of conservation ethic, sustainable lifestyle habits, and recreational interests among youth served	6/30/20

III. PROJECT STRATEGY

A. Project Team/Partners:

This project represents a large-scale collaboration with Wilderness Inquiry as the lead organization, coordinating with multiple project partners, including local school districts and nonprofits throughout the state, the MN Department of Natural Resources, the National Park Service, the Conservation Corps of Minnesota and Iowa, and many others. The University of Minnesota will provide evaluation and dissemination expertise.

B. Project Impact and Long-Term Strategy:

“Floating Classroom” advances environmental science education statewide and helps 20,000 diverse youth access Minnesota State Trails and waterways. Environmental science education at this scale changes the way Minnesota youth engage with outdoor resources. Most importantly, this creates deeper connections between students and their environment, opens minds to potential career opportunities, and cultivates a conservation ethic. Long-term funding options include foundations, corporations, individuals, and others.

C. Timeline Requirements: This project takes place over three years.

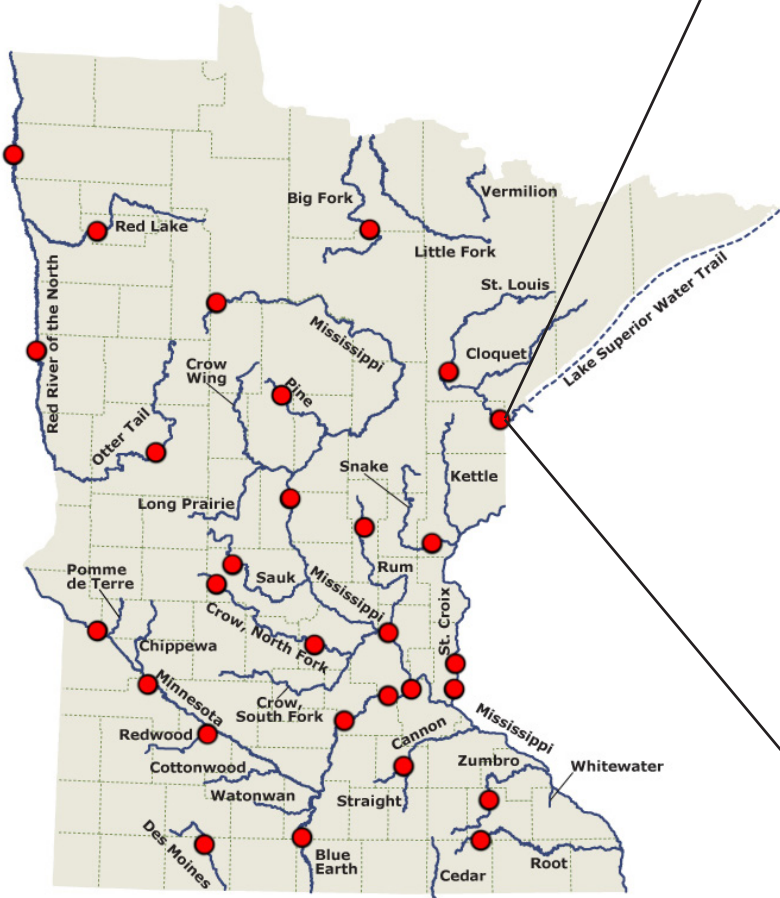
2017 DETAILED PROJECT BUDGET

Waterways		
IV. TOTAL PROJECT REQUEST BUDGET (3 years)		
BUDGET ITEM	AMOUNT	
Personnel (all Wilderness Inquiry Staff - total wages for 3 years):		
Program Director (1 FTE) (\$65,000 x 3 years)	\$195,000	
Program Manager (1 FTE) (\$55,000 x 3 years)	\$165,000	
Program Coordinator (1 FTE) (\$40,000 x 3 years)	\$120,000	
Finance and Administration (.25 FTE) (\$10,000 x 3 years)	\$30,000	
Trail guides (1 to 7 staff/ student ratio 3,840 staff trail days X \$85)	\$326,400	
Professional/Technical/Service Contracts:		
University of Minnesota: Project evaluation (\$20,000 X 3 years)	\$60,000	
Equipment/Tools/Supplies:		
Equipment maintenance and repair (\$10,000 x 3 years)	\$30,000	
PFDs, paddles, first aid supplies, and other outdoor gear	\$20,000	
Porta-potty rental for program sites (\$2,000 year x 3 years)	\$6,000	
Water quality testing kits, invasive species interpretive materials, youth certificates (\$3 x 20,000 youth)	\$60,000	
Technology for real-time project data collection and reporting (tablets, cases, and connectivity for \$1500 x 10)	\$15,000	
Travel:		
Planning transportation: Meetings with MN school districts (4,500 miles x \$.54/mile)	\$2,430	
Gear and Staff transportation: 15-passenger van, trailer, 6-Voyageur canoes, crew (300 events x ave 100 miles round trip x \$.54/mile)	\$16,200	
Student transportation (avg \$250 x 200 events)	\$50,000	
Additional Budget Items:		
Youth Food on Trail (600 kids x 5 days x ave \$10/day per kid) + (19400 kids x \$.50)	\$39,700	
Liability Insurance (\$30,000 X 3 years)	\$90,000	
Camping Fees, entrance fees, permits and licenses (\$150 x 100 events).	\$15,000	
TOTAL PROJECT BUDGET REQUEST TO LCCMR	\$	1,240,730
V. OTHER FUNDS		
SOURCE OF FUNDS	AMOUNT	Status
Non-State \$ Applied to Project		
Public Schools throughout MN	\$ 300,000	<i>Pending</i>
TOTAL NON-STATE \$ BEING	\$ 300,000	<i>Pending</i>
Other State \$ Being Applied to Project		
TOTAL STATE \$ BEING		
In Kind Services of		
Wilderness Inquiry In-kind Services During Project Period: All staff benefits, add'l staff support incl. Exec Director, Outreach Director, etc. Equipment and facilities, Staff food and lodging during and between events	\$ 360,000	<i>Committed</i>
National Park Service In-kind Services During Project Period: Program Staff/Rangers; Environmental Curricula and Interpretion.	\$ 150,000	<i>Committed</i>
TOTAL ALL IN-KIND	\$ 510,000	
Remaining \$ from Current ENRTF Appropriation: For UEE project. On track for project completion by project end 6/2017.	\$625,411	<i>Unspent Approp.; On Track</i>
Funding History: This project builds on the successes of LCCMR funding for <i>Urban Wilderness Youth Outdoors</i> and current of <i>Urban Environmental Education (Metro)</i> with in depth science education and service learning.		

Floating Classroom: Connecting 20,000 Youth to Minnesota Waterways

SAMPLE OF A WATERWAY REPORT

Description: 20,000 diverse middle and high school students access 30+ waterways statewide, participate in environmental science education, collect and disseminate data in the form of an online "Report Card," and earn a resume-building science certificate.



● = Potential Program/Sampling Locations

MN Floating Classroom Report Card

Date Visited: _____
 Waterway Name: _____
 GPS Coordinates: _____

Water Quality Data: (Student group average)
 Temperature: _____
 Phosphorus: _____
 Nitrates: _____
 Clarity: _____
 pH: _____

Aquatic and Terrestrial Species Inventory:
 1) _____ (Native)
 2) _____ (Native)
 3) _____ (Invasive)

Recreational Opportunities on Site:
 1) _____
 2) _____
 3) _____
Ex: Canoeing, Hiking, Fishing, Hunting (with license)

Assessment Completed by: _____
 School: _____

Summary/Narrative:





PROJECT MANAGER QUALIFICATIONS – Greg Lais, MBA

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 415,000 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 outdoor programs, Mr. Lais has developed outdoor policies, written and delivered staff training curricula, developed safety standards, designed adaptive equipment and published several books and articles on outdoor programming.

Under the direction of Mr. Lais, Wilderness Inquiry has received awards from the National Therapeutic Recreation Association, Minnesota State Council on Disability, ARC of Minnesota and many others. In 2015, WI received an “Excellence in Service Award” from the City of Minneapolis for our work with people with disabilities and an “Educator of the Year” award for our work with urban youth. Mr. Lais was the recipient of the 2012 Wilderness Education Association Paul K. Petzoldt Award in recognition of his leadership in outdoor education and the 2014 “Social Entrepreneur of the Year” from St. John’s University/College of St. Benedict. An avid outdoors person, Mr. Lais enjoys hunting, fishing, hiking, camping, and canoeing.

ORGANIZATION DESCRIPTION – Wilderness Inquiry (WI)

A Minnesota non-profit organization, WI provides opportunities for outdoor recreation for our most underserved and at-risk populations. Since 1978, WI has served more than 415,000 people through outdoor adventures. Our youth programs connect thousands of Minnesota youth to their public lands and natural resources through hands-on outdoor learning experiences. The program works with federal, state, and local entities to engage youth – addressing the achievement gap and fostering the next generation of environmental stewards. WI is governed by a volunteer board of directors and has 16 full-time and 110 part-time staff.