

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

Project Title:

ENRTF ID: 095-C

Preparing Wildlife Champions Program Model for Statewide Expansion

Category: C. Environmental Education

Total Project Budget: \$ 150,325

Proposed Project Time Period for the Funding Requested: 1.5 years, July 2017 - December 2018

Summary:

The Zoo will continue its work with high schools to analyze and improve student-led prairie conservation projects for greatest conservation impact and refine the student engagement model for statewide expansion.

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Sponsoring Organization: Minnesota Zoo

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Location

Region: Southwest

County Name: Big Stone, Chippewa, Cottonwood, Jackson, Kandiyohi, Lac qui Parle, Lincoln, Lyon, McLeod, Murray, Nobles, Pipestone, Redwood, Renville, Rock, Swift, Yellow Medicine

City / Township:

Alternate Text for Visual:

A visual flowchart of project activities and graphic illustrating future program expansion.

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



PROJECT TITLE: Preparing Wildlife Champions Program Model for Statewide Expansion

I. PROJECT STATEMENT

Preserving and restoring habitat is critical to preventing further decline of local wildlife populations. With initial funding from the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund in 2016, the Minnesota Zoo will begin working with high schools in southwestern Minnesota to engage students in local prairie wildlife conservation projects. To enable students to revise and improve their projects and have a greater impact on their local wildlife communities, the Zoo seeks funding to broaden the *Wildlife Champions* program in southwestern Minnesota and refine the program model in preparation for expansion to additional regions of the state. This program is designed to:

- Create awareness and understanding of prairie conservation issues,
- Build appreciation for wildlife through hands-on encounters with Zoo animals,
- Inspire conservation action through service learning projects, and
- Promote lifelong conservation interest.

The *Wildlife Champions* program includes:

- Engaging 12 SW MN high schools for two full school years of wildlife conservation service projects.
- Training local school teachers to facilitate student-led project design, revision, and improvement.
- Mentoring and workshops for students featuring Zoo naturalists and ambassador animals.
- Long term student-led prairie wildlife conservation projects in each community.
- Project exhibition and recognition for all 12 schools at the Minnesota Zoo.
- Program evaluation and assessment of changes in conservation understanding.

II. PROJECT ACTIVITIES AND OUTCOMES

Activity 1: Train Partner School Teachers and Students

Budget: \$45,975

Partner teachers attend full day workshop facilitated by Zoo staff to be trained to equip students with skills to analyze and revise their projects for greatest conservation impact. Zoo visits each school to deliver assessment and hands-on student workshops featuring live Zoo animal ambassadors.

Outcome	Completion Date
1. 12 partner teachers trained to facilitate continuous improvement of student-led projects	Sept 30, 2017
2. Up to 750 students equipped to broaden prairie conservation projects	Nov 30, 2017
3. Attitudinal assessment delivered to all participating students and teachers	Nov 30, 2017

Activity 2: Student-led Prairie Conservation Project Revision and Implementation

Budget: \$35,375

Students analyze their conservation project results and identify design modifications to improve the overall impact of their projects on the sustainability of their chosen prairie wildlife species. Zoo provides support and mentoring during project revision and implementation through series of scheduled interactive engagements through online/ distance learning technology.

Outcome	Completion Date
1. 36 interactive distance learning sessions completed (3/school x 12 partner schools) to guide and advise students through conservation project analysis and modification	Mar 31, 2018
2. 12 local SW MN prairie habitat and wildlife conservation projects implemented	Sept 1, 2018



Activity 3: Second Annual Student Project Exhibition and Recognition Event at MN Zoo **Budget: \$68,975**
Participating student leaders and teachers showcase their projects at the Minnesota Zoo during the *Wildlife Champions* Expo—a public exhibition and recognition event. Students are recognized for their contribution to prairie conservation through Zoo media and communications, press releases, and a return live animal presentation by Zoo staff for all student and/or community participants. Post assessment completed.

Outcome	Completion Date
1. Results of modified and improved student prairie conservation projects showcased and recognized at <i>Wildlife Champions</i> Expo event at Minnesota Zoo.	Sept 30, 2018
3. Program evaluation indicates degree of increase in conservation understanding as a direct result of program engagement for participating school students and teachers.	Dec 31, 2018

III. PROJECT STRATEGY

A. Project Team/Partners

The *Wildlife Champions* program will be facilitated by the Minnesota Zoo with participating partner schools from Southwestern Minnesota. Partner schools will be identified through a competitive application process based on interest, capacity, and need. The Zoo will provide teacher training for participating teachers at a centralized location convenient for teachers, and student workshops onsite at each participating school. Mentoring and guidance for student conservation projects will be provided by MN Zoo education and conservation staff as well as non-Zoo wildlife conservation professionals recruited as necessary. The Southwest/West Central Service Cooperative, a State designated regional consortium that provides educational and administrative services to schools, will assist with school recruitment, ongoing communication, and recognition.

Project Partners Receiving Funds:

- Minnesota Zoo [\$138,325]: Facilitate and administer overall program
- Partner teachers [\$12,000]: \$1000 contract per 12 teachers to direct student projects

Project Partners Not Receiving Funds:

- Southwest/West Central Service Cooperative: Assist with school recruitment, communication, and recognition

B. Project Impact and Long-Term Strategy

Engaging students in locally-relevant prairie conservation projects benefits prairie habitat and wildlife populations as well as builds community awareness and appreciation for the need to preserve and sustain healthy ecosystems. Students participating in *Wildlife Champions* gain valuable 21st-century skills in critical thinking, research and design, and communication—essential assets when preparing for potential careers in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). The Zoo will leverage its experience with the first year of *Wildlife Champions* in 2016-17 to refine the program model in year two, supported by this proposal in 2017-18. Further adjustments will be made as necessary such that the Zoo will seek funding to expand *Wildlife Champions* to additional regions of the state in 2018 and beyond.

C. Timeline Requirements

Wildlife Champions requires 2 years for full implementation in each school. Site visits to schools take place during the academic year, when safe travel and temperature conditions exist for the transportation of ambassador animals. Revised prairie conservation projects will be implemented in spring/summer 2018. Expo and final evaluation will be completed in fall 2018.

2017 Detailed Project Budget

Project Title: Preparing Wildlife Champions Program Model for Statewide Expansion

IV. TOTAL ENRTF REQUEST BUDGET: 2 years

<u>BUDGET ITEM</u>	<u>AMOUNT</u>
Personnel:	\$ -
Project Manager TBD (70% salary, 30% benefits): 15% FTE for 1.5 years	\$ 23,625
Project Coordinator TBD (70% salary, 30% benefits): 25% FTE for 1.5 years	\$ 31,500
Teacher/Student Materials Developer (70% salary, 30% benefits): 10% FTE for the first three months of the project	\$ 2,000
Graphic Designer (70% salary, 30% benefits): 10% FTE for approximately three months during the project	\$ 1,100
Program Evaluator (70% salary, 30% benefits): 15% FTE for 1.5 years	\$ 20,000
Professional/Technical/Service Contracts:	\$ -
Equipment/Tools/Supplies:	\$ -
Student conservation service project supplies - up to \$500/school x 12 schools	\$ 6,000
Supplies for teacher training and <i>Wildlife Champions</i> Expo at Minnesota Zoo	\$ 1,000
Travel:	\$ -
Mileage (~5000 miles), lodging, and meals for Zoo travel to schools for student workshops & for travel to centralized location for teacher training	\$ 5,000
Additional Budget Items:	\$ -
Printing of student and teacher project support materials	\$ 2,000
Partner school student workshops - 2/school x 12 schools @ \$1000 ea - to bring live animals to schools and to begin conservation project analysis	\$ 24,000
Partner school distance learning guidance/mentoring sessions - 3 sessions/school x 12 schools @\$140 ea - to connect MN Zoo educators and conservation staff with students to analyze and revise conservation project design and methodology	\$ 5,000
Partner school teacher contracts - \$1000 ea x 12 teachers to supervise student conservation projects throughout analysis, revision, and implementation	\$ 12,000
Transportation for participating students and teachers to attend <i>Wildlife Champions</i> Expo at Minnesota Zoo (up to \$800 per school x 12 schools)	\$ 9,600
<i>Wildlife Champions</i> Expo student conservation project exhibition and recognition event at Minnesota Zoo - costs estimated at \$10/student x up to 750 students	\$ 7,500
TOTAL ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES TRUST FUND \$ REQUEST =	\$ 150,325

V. OTHER FUNDS

<u>SOURCE OF FUNDS</u>	<u>AMOUNT</u>	<u>Status</u>
Other Non-State \$ To Be Applied To Project During Project Period: The Zoo has not included overhead or indirect costs associated with this project in this budget. Those costs will be absorbed by the Zoo and are covered by other Zoo funds coming from general fund appropriations, earned income or private charitable gifts.	\$ -	N/A
Other State \$ To Be Applied To Project During Project Period: The Zoo has not included overhead or indirect costs associated with this project in this budget. Those costs will be absorbed by the Zoo and are covered by other Zoo funds coming from general fund appropriations, earned income or private charitable gifts.	\$ -	N/A
In-kind Services To Be Applied To Project During Project Period: Southwest/West Central Service Cooperative: school recruitment, communication, recruitment @\$2000 total	\$ 2,000	Pending
Wildlife conservation professionals as mentors to student projects @\$1000 ea x 12 projects	\$ 12,000	Pending
Funding History: This is an extension of a project included in the existing HF 2993 bill before the legislature.	\$ -	N/A
Remaining \$ From Current ENRTF Appropriation:	\$ -	N/A

Preparing *Wildlife Champions* Program Model for Statewide Expansion

WILDLIFE CHAMPIONS PROGRAM MODEL

Teacher training

For 12 local high school teachers to supervise student project design and implementation

In-school student workshops

For up to 750 high school students in 12 partner schools, featuring live animal ambassadors from MN Zoo

Online mentoring via distance learning

Three sessions per school, facilitated by Zoo conservation and education staff, to advise project design

Student-led prairie habitat restoration and wildlife biology projects in their local communities

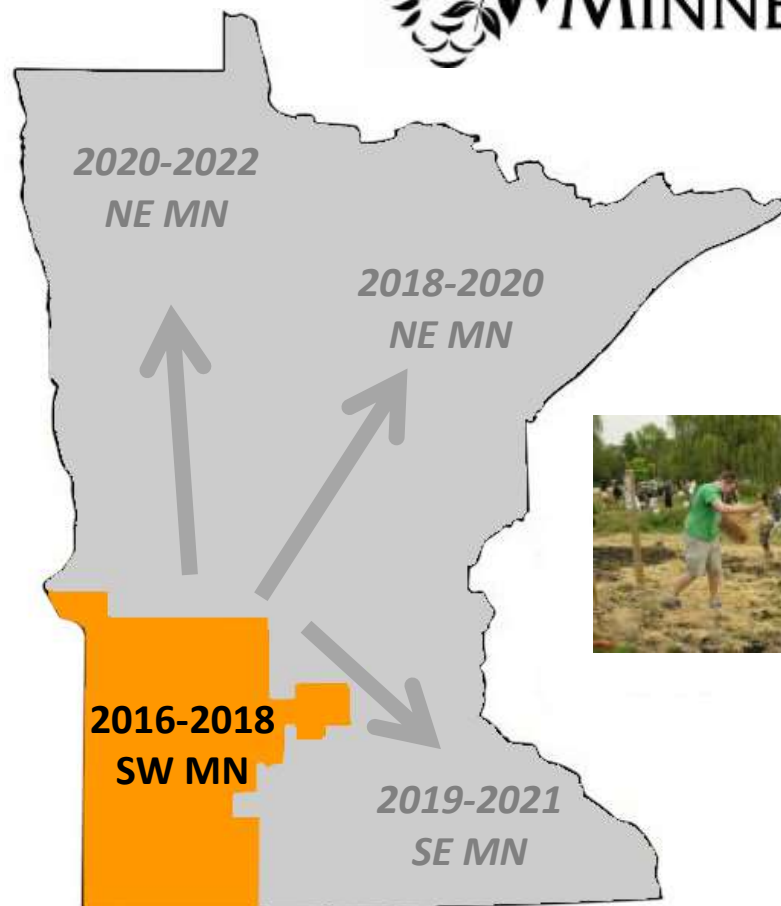
Students design and complete local hands-on prairie conservation projects that benefit wildlife

Student project exhibition and recognition event at MN Zoo

Up to 750 students and partner teachers showcase their conservation projects in a science fair-like exhibition

Program evaluation and assessment of impact on conservation understanding

Professional evaluation to assess the impact of program on student and teacher overall conservation ethic



The Minnesota Zoo is actively engaged in Minnesota wildlife conservation projects involving the American bison, imperiled prairie butterflies, native mussels, moose, and other key species.

ORGANIZATION DESCRIPTION: Minnesota Zoological Garden

The Minnesota Zoo is a unique state agency. Established 1978 to provide Minnesota residents and guests with a unique opportunity to experience animals from the exotic to the familiar in natural habitats, today the Zoo is one of the State's premier cultural and educational institutions.

The Zoo's mission is *to connect people, animals and the natural world to save wildlife*. With over 1.2 million guests a year and state-wide outreach programs reaching thousands more, the Zoo is in a unique position to strengthen Minnesotans' awareness and understanding of our State's cultural commitment to wildlife, science and conservation. The Zoo is, in fact, the State's largest environmental educator with more than 500,000 participants in Zoo education programs.

The Minnesota Zoo has also become a worldwide leader in conservation – leading and participating in a variety of conservation programs at the Zoo, in Minnesota, and across the globe. The Zoo has recently enhanced its efforts to focus on Minnesota wildlife and habitats, including efforts to conserve Minnesota's native moose, bison, mussel and prairie butterfly populations. It is also addressing habitat issues on its own 485 site, looking to restore undeveloped areas to native conditions and exploring ways to provide educational opportunities to interpret those efforts.

The Zoo has a proven record of using its resources efficiently and effectively, *matching* the State's investment with private funds and earned income.

PROJECT MANAGER: Carol Strecker

Carol Strecker is the Director of Education at the Minnesota Zoo. Carol has a Bachelor's Degree in Ecology, Evolution, and Behavioral Biology, and a Master's Degree of Education in Science Education and has worked at the Minnesota Zoo since 2009. Carol draws on her 20 years of experience in the field of informal science education in museums, zoos, botanical gardens, and environmental education organizations to ensure all activities of the Minnesota Zoo's education department serve to inspire and teach participants to act on behalf of wildlife. Her professional experience includes student instruction, designing and developing both formal and informal educational curriculum, designing and facilitating professional development opportunities for classroom teachers, developing community partnerships to advance science and environmental education in local schools, and managing national and local programs that utilize distance learning technology to connect students and teachers directly to scientists working in the field.