

**Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund  
2020 Request for Proposals (RFP)**

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**Project Title:**

**ENRTF ID: 126-C**

Rivers Are Alive: Inspiring Life-long Environmental Stewardship

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**Category:** C. Environmental Education

**Sub-Category:**

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**Total Project Budget: \$** 363,900

**Proposed Project Time Period for the Funding Requested:** June 30, 2023 (3 yrs)

**Summary:**

Expanding "Rivers Are Alive" in Minnesota to inspire life-long stewards of rivers and wild places through meaningful, equitable, and inclusive environmental education experiences.

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**Name:** Jaime Souza

**Sponsoring Organization:** St. Croix River Association

**Job Title:** Education and Outreach Coordinator

**Department:**

**Address:** PO Box 655

St. Croix Falls WI 54024

**Telephone Number:** (715) 483-3300

**Email** jaimes@scramail.com

**Web Address:** <http://www.stcroixriverassociation.org>

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**Location:**

**Region:** Metro, Northeast

**County Name:** Anoka, Carlton, Chisago, Dakota, Hennepin, Isanti, Kanabec, Pine, Ramsey, Washington

**City / Township:**

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**Alternate Text for Visual:**

The attached map displays current Minnesota schools being reached by Rivers Are Alive and the priority school districts this project will target.

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



**PROJECT TITLE: Rivers Are Alive: Inspiring Life-long Environmental Stewardship**

**I. PROJECT STATEMENT**

The St. Croix River Association (SCRA) will deliver *Rivers Are Alive* curriculum to Minnesota students to inspire life-long stewardship of rivers and wild places through meaningful, equitable, and inclusive environmental education experiences. *Rivers are Alive* is an experiential watershed-based environmental education program that introduces K-12 students to the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway (Riverway), the connectedness of living and nonliving elements, and the diversity and abundance of life living below the surface of the water and surrounding forests. We will target schools in the St. Croix watershed, and the Twin Cities metro area.

Riverway champions are aging and not representative of changing demographics. It is believed that by 2043, 50% of the U.S. population will be people of color. Studies show that kids spend less time outside than prison inmates, with the average child playing freely outside for just four to seven minutes a day. There are many barriers that prevent underrepresented youth from exploring the outdoors. Targeting schools is our opportunity to cultivate future stewards for the St. Croix and the environment in general, that reflects our society and the changing face of Minnesota.

People protect what they love, and connecting youth with the Riverway will build a long-lasting and action-based conservation ethic to ensure that the St. Croix and its watershed remain special. We will increase the knowledge and skills of students through at-school activities, such as winter ecology, building ecosystem and watershed models; and on-river activities, such as mucking for macroinvertebrates, nature observation and ecosystem discovery activities. Through our proven Minnesota science standards aligned curriculum, we will reach more than 10,000 Minnesota students over three years with LCCMR grant support.

**II. PROJECT ACTIVITIES AND OUTCOMES-**

**Activity 1 Title:** Building Relationships and Project Coordination

**ENRTF Budget: \$97,750**

**Description:** This activity will strengthen existing relationships with Minnesota schools, target the rest of the Minnesota schools within the St. Croix River watershed and nine Twin Cities Metro Area school districts with Title One, and free and reduced lunch school within close proximity to the watershed, and develop the team needed to manage this project. We will also lead educator workshops that train teachers to integrate *Rivers Are Alive* into their existing science units. The result of this activity will help us to engage more diverse demographics and implement existing *Rivers Are Alive* curriculum in more Minnesota schools.

Outcome	Completion Date
1. An advisory team will be assembled to guide this project and meet grant outcomes	12/31/20
2. Pre and post surveys will be developed to assess student comprehension	3/31/21
3. <i>Rivers Are Alive</i> information packets will be created and distributed to targeted schools	8/31/21
4. 125 new schools in the watershed and 9 Metro Area school districts are recruited	6/30/23
5. 10 workshops will coach MN educators to integrate Rivers Are Alive into existing lessons	6/30/23
6. One educational video will be produced to support the Rivers Are Alive experience	6/30/23

**Activity 2 Title:** Provide *Rivers Are Alive* School Activities

**ENRTF BUDGET: \$114,025**

**Description:** This activity will emphasize introducing the *Rivers Are Alive* program to targeted schools. These lessons presented by SCRA and Riverway staff, involve collaborative inside and outside activities that familiarize students with the Riverway, National Parks, river ecosystems and watersheds. We will increase students' awareness of the importance of maintaining healthy and biodiverse natural environments, and inspire teachers



## Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund (ENRTF) 2020 Main Proposal Template

to integrate *Rivers Are Alive* into existing science units.

Outcome	Completion Date
1. We will reach at least 6,000 new students in the targeted schools	6/30/23
2. Assessment of students' understanding of concepts will result in 90% comprehension	6/30/23
3. RAA curriculum is integrated into 50% of existing classroom lesson plans	6/30/23
4. Train at least 25 Volunteer Educators to support at school programs	8/30/22

**Activity 3 Title:** Provide *Rivers Are Alive* Field Trips

**ENRTF BUDGET: \$152,125**

**Description:** This activity will support the growth of the *Wild River Journey Riverboat Adventure* field trip, as well as expansion to new Minnesota State and Regional Park field trip destinations in the watershed. *Wild River Journey* is a new *Rivers Are Alive* field trip program with the Riverway and St. Paul Audubon that gets students on the river, an incomparable experience, and participating in hands-on learning stations during the river tour. Adding additional field trip locations will increase the convenience and decrease costs. The result of this activity will inspire thousands of connections to nature, leading to an emerging conservation ethic.

Outcome	Completion Date
1. 95% of students will be positively impacted by transformative nature-based field trips	6/30/23
2. At least 1,200 MN youth will experience the <i>Wild River Journey Riverboat Adventure</i>	6/30/23
3. 4,000 MN youth experience a <i>Rivers Are Alive</i> field trip	6/30/23
4. Evaluations will show a 75% improved attitude toward nature	6/30/23
5. Train at least 25 Volunteer Educators to support nature-based field trips	8/30/22

### III. PROJECT PARTNERS AND COLLABORATORS:

No other partner requests funds from the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund. As the Friends Group for the Riverway, SCRA has a long-term commitment to protecting the vibrant ecological, cultural and recreational value of our wild and scenic river. SCRA will work closely with the National Park Service grow. SCRA will assemble a team to coordinate and manage this project.

#### Project Partner Receiving Funds

- St. Croix River Association, project management & program implementation

#### Project Partner Not Receiving Funds (All will provide support and implement strategies)

- National Park Service at the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway
- St. Paul Audubon
- Current RAA MN schools: Braham High School, Chisago Lakes Middle School, East Central Elementary, Lakes International Language Academy, Hinckley-Finlayson High School, Moose Lake Middle School, Stonebridge Elementary, Sunrise River Elementary, Taylors Falls Elementary, Webster Elementary
- Minnesota state and regional parks

### IV. LONG-TERM IMPLEMENTATION AND FUNDING:

SCRA's activities include outcomes that will form a basis for measuring success, and utilize pre and post program evaluation surveys to collect data. We will review the results of this project to measure its success and to determine future needs and strategies. SCRA has a diverse funding strategy that includes a stable base of support from individuals, businesses, foundations, government grants, and earned income. Earned income revenue and other options will be explored to continue adding to public investments, and expand our outreach work to build an even stronger constituency of citizen stewards for the St. Croix, ultimately protecting biodiversity and our healthy watershed.

**Attachment A: Project Budget Spreadsheet**  
**Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund**  
**M.L. 2020 Budget Spreadsheet**

**Legal Citation:**

**Project Manager:** Jaime Souza

**Project Title:** Rivers Are Alive: Inspiring Life-long Environmental Stewardship

**Organization:** St. Croix River Association

**Project Budget:** \$363,900

**Project Length and Completion Date:** 3 years (6/30/23)

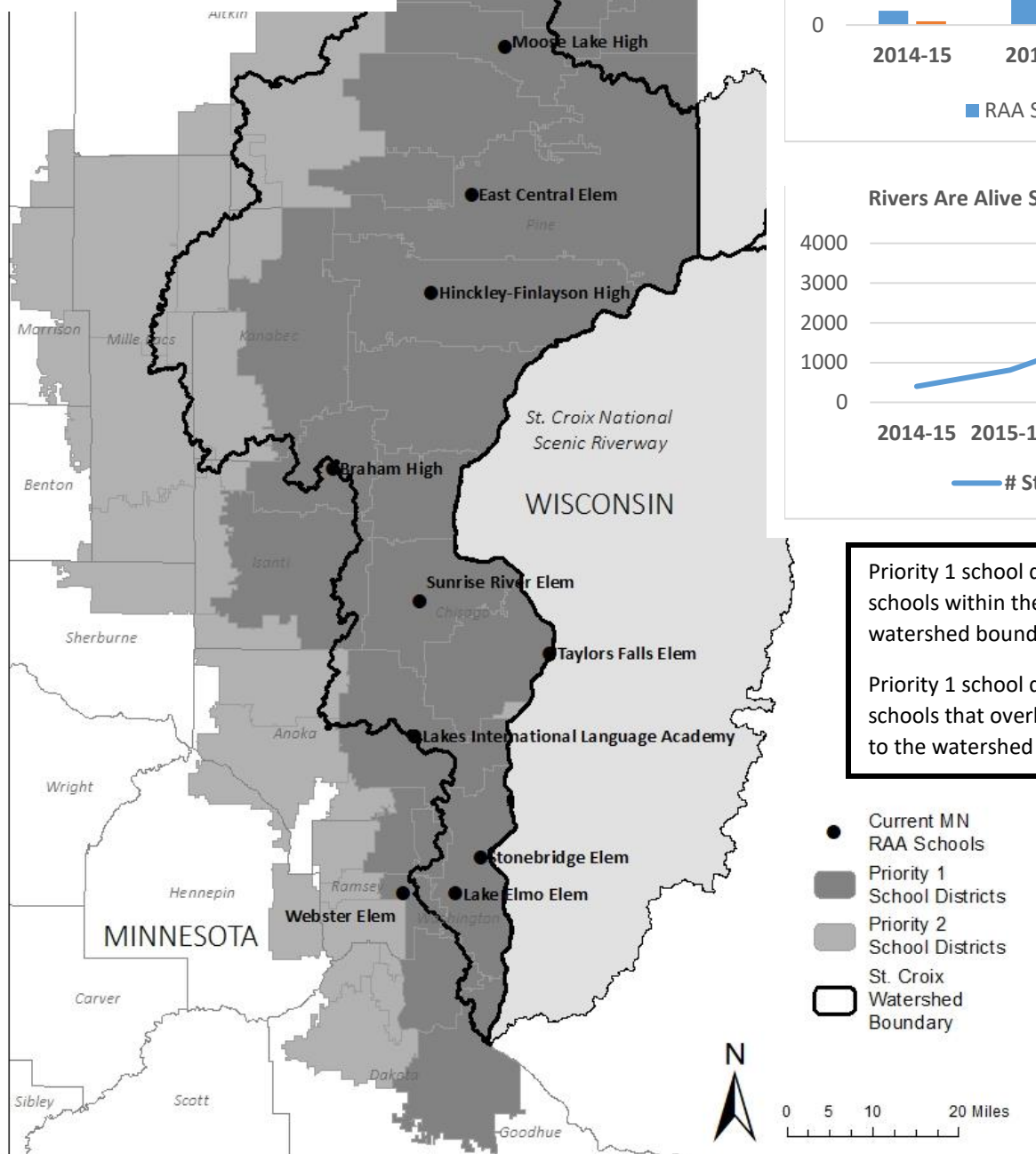
**Today's Date:** 04/15/2019



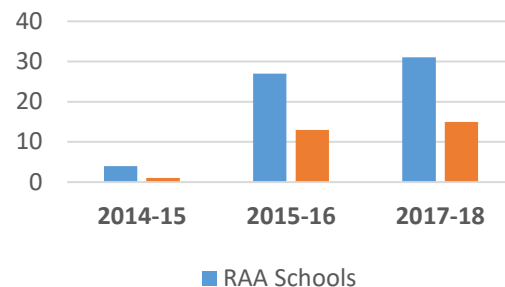
ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES TRUST FUND BUDGET		Budget	Amount Spent	Balance
<b>BUDGET ITEM</b>				
<b>Personnel (Wages and Benefits)</b>		\$ 285,000	\$ -	\$ 285,000
Project Manager & Coordinator, \$90,000, (75% salary; 25% benefits) .5 FTE each year for 3 years				
Environmental Educator, \$138,750, (75% salary; 25% benefits) 1 FTE each year for 3 years				
River Connections Guide, \$56,250, (75% salary; 25% of benefits) .5 FTE each year for 3 years				
<b>Professional/Technical/Service Contracts</b>				
Wild River Journey Riverboats services, (\$8 x 1,200 students); contract for competitive bid		\$ 9,600		\$ 9,600
Outfitter services for on-river field trips (\$45 each for 20 students for 5 field trips each year for three years); contract for competitive bid		\$ 13,500		\$ 13,500
Educational video, for information transference; contract for competitive bid		\$ 10,000	\$ -	\$ 10,000
<b>Equipment/Tools/Supplies</b>				\$ -
Educational equipment and supplies (binoculars, nets, snowshoes, etc) for classroom and field trip		\$ 15,000	\$ -	\$ 15,000
<b>Capital Expenditures Over \$5,000</b>				
N/A		\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
<b>Attachment A: Project Budget Spreadsheet</b>				
N/A		\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
<b>Easement Acquisition</b>				
N/A		\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
<b>Professional Services for Acquisition</b>				
N/A		\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
<b>Printing</b>				\$ -
Classroom, field trip, training, and promotional materials		\$ 10,000	\$ -	\$ 10,000
<b>Travel expenses in Minnesota</b>				\$ -
Travel to Minnesota schools and field trips (60 trips/year x 3 years, .58 x 10,000 miles)		\$ 5,800	\$ -	\$ 5,800
<b>Other</b>				\$ -
Transportation scholarships for schools qualified for financial hardship		\$ 15,000	\$ -	\$ 15,000
<b>COLUMN TOTAL</b>		\$ 363,900	\$ -	\$ 363,900
<b>SOURCE AND USE OF OTHER FUNDS CONTRIBUTED TO THE PROJECT</b>	<b>Status (secured or pending)</b>	<b>Budget</b>	<b>Spent</b>	<b>Balance</b>
Non-State: N/A		\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
State: N/A		\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
In kind: National Park Service staff and other volunteer service time	pending	\$ 45,000	\$ -	\$ 45,000
<b>Other ENRTF APPROPRIATIONS AWARDED IN THE LAST SIX YEARS</b>	<b>Amount legally obligated but not yet spent</b>	<b>Budget</b>	<b>Spent</b>	<b>Balance</b>
N/A		\$ -	\$ -	\$ -



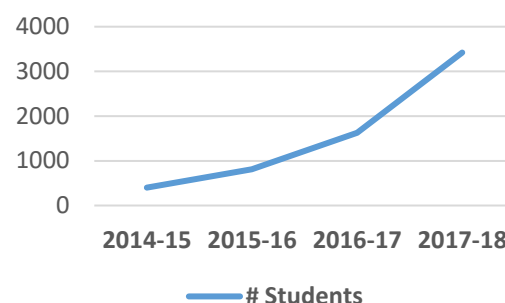
## St. Croix River Watershed



Rivers Are Alive Schools 2014 - 2018



Rivers Are Alive Students 2014 - 2018



Priority 1 school districts are those schools within the St. Croix River watershed boundary.

Priority 1 school districts are those schools that overlap or are adjacent to the watershed boundary.

**Rivers Are Alive At School Activities:** Conservation Careers, Let's Go Snowshoeing, River Connections in the Classroom, Into the Weeds and Out of Place (All About Invasive Species), Snowshoe Sleuths, and What is a Watershed?

### Rivers Are Alive Field Trips:

- **Destinations:** Most MN and WI state parks in the watershed, National Park Service Visitor Centers and landings
- **Activities:** Flooded Forest, Let's Go Mucking, Let's Go Paddling, Let's Go Snowshoeing, Observation Olympics, Our Forest Biome Home, Snowshoe Sleuths, What is a River?, What's in the River? (Water Quality Testing)

## Project Manager Qualifications and Organization Description

The St. Croix River Association (SCRA) is a nonprofit organization with a mission to protect, restore and celebrate the St. Croix River and its watershed. SCRA is the official friends group for the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway (Riverway). The SCRA has a long-term commitment to protecting the vibrant ecological, cultural and recreational value of our great river. We also recognize that we must engage new Riverway stewards, and the importance of bringing children and non-typical park visitors to realize the health and inspiration that comes from time spent on the river.

The SCRA has worked with the national park service staff at the Riverway to deliver the “Rivers Are Alive” since 2016. That year we reached 1,628 students and 266 teachers in 17 schools, growing to 3,421 students with 15 new schools in 2017/18, and included all four seasons. For this project we will hire one additional FTE Environmental Educator and one part-time River Connections Guide as part of the team that manages and coordinates this project.

### Jaime Souza, Education and Outreach Coordinator

15 years environmental education and non-profit program management experience

Jaime graduated from the University of Wisconsin River Falls with a M.S. Education (Elementary Education, grades K-8). Starting with SCRA on July 6 in 2017, Jaime has been instrumental in growing the Rivers Are Alive K-12 environmental education program in partnership with the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway (National Park Service). The number of students nearly doubled during the 2017-18 school year from 1500 to 3,421 total students under Jaime’s leadership. Jaime has worked hard to develop a strong framework for the Rivers Are Alive program, and has made many curriculum improvements.

Role: *Rivers Are Alive* program coordinator and grant project manager

### Deb Ryun, Executive Director

24 years conservation education and watershed stewardship experience

Deb Ryun, has been the Executive Director of SCRA since October 2009. She has extensive experience with management and coordination of multi-stakeholder initiatives; environmental education methods; watershed-level planning; and implementation of on-the-ground projects to protect land and water. Deb is responsible for carrying out the Association’s mission by ensuring the development, implementation and monitoring of goals, policy and strategic initiatives and by developing sufficient human and financial resources for organizational growth and stability.

Role: Rivers Are Alive program oversight and grant project guidance (no project funding requested)

St. Croix National Scenic Riverway Education Program Manager will be intimately involved in planning and implementation of the Rivers Are Alive project:

- Michelle Blees, Education Program Manager for the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway, <1 year environmental education experience with the Riverway, out of St. Croix Falls and Trego, WI

Role: Assist with the project development and program delivery (NPS staff time is in-kind match)