

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

**Project Title:**

**ENRTF ID: 141-CH**

Providing Residential Environmental Learning Experiences to Underserved Students

**Category:** H. Proposals seeking \$200,000 or less in funding

**Sub-Category:** C. Environmental Education

**Total Project Budget:** \$ 150,000

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

## Summary:

Through program and busing scholarships, and a multi-language informational orientation video, we wish to connect Minnesota's increasingly diverse and changing K-12 student demographics to nature through residential environmental learning experiences.

**Name:** Bryan Wood

**Sponsoring Organization:** Audubon Center of the North Woods

**Job Title:** Executive Director

**Department:**

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Sandstone MN 55072

**Telephone Number:** (320) 245-2648

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**Web Address:** www.audubon-center.org

**Location:**

**Region:** Statewide

**County Name:** Statewide

**City / Township:**

## Alternate Text for Visual:

Shown are the multiple benefits and enhanced educational outcomes that occur when children spend time in nature including better academic performance, enhanced attention, increased engagement and enthusiasm, and improved behavior.

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



**PROJECT TITLE: Providing Residential Environmental Learning Experiences to Underserved Students**

**I. PROJECT STATEMENT**

1. We wish to build on the success of our recent ENRTF grant, which at year end will have served over 850 K-12 students from 21 schools, by further reducing barriers keeping children from experiencing nature and connect a minimum of 1,000 underserved Minnesota K-12 students to the environment. This will be done by creating an informational video in multiple languages detailing what students, parents and teachers can expect during their trip and by providing field trip and busing scholarships to under-served K-12 schools for a residential environmental learning experience at the Audubon Center of the North Woods (ACNW).

- There is an urgent problem: Today's students are increasingly being left out of nature learning experiences with children today spending less than 30 minutes daily outside, far less time than previous generations. This is compounded for students on the low socio-economic spectrum as there are typically no outdoor areas near where they live, or adults who spend time with them in natural areas.
- Increasingly, schools do not have financial resources for environmental field trips. Additional factors impeding participation are the cultural and language barriers increasingly seen with Minnesota's diversifying population. Parents do not understand what the experience is, and are wary of sending their child on an overnight field trip. Students coming from low economic families cannot afford to pay the student fee, and parents have misconceptions or inaccurate fears for their child's safety and choose to not send their child, reducing the percentage of students per school who attend.
- Our recent ENRTF grant has made significant strides in reaching underserved K-12 students. By the start of the 2019-20 school year, we will have provided scholarships to over 850 K-12 students and 21 schools for residential environmental learning experiences who otherwise would not have been able to attend.
- We as a society have a responsibility to foster environmentally literate citizens from all backgrounds and it starts with our children. They will make the decisions in our society's future.

2. Many factors are converging to make it more difficult for K-12 students to have nature-based field trips..

- 38% of MN's K-12 students (more than 323,000 children) qualify for free-and-reduced price (FRP) meals.
- In 2005-06, only 14% of schools had student populations with 50% or more students qualifying for FRP meals, in 2015-16, that had grown to nearly one-quarter (24%) of all schools.
- When compared with inflation, MN schools today receive \$2,500 less per K-12 student than in 1991-92.
- Average hourly earnings for U.S. workers peaked more than 46 years ago in January 1973. Since that time, household incomes have failed to keep up with inflation, with income inequality widening.
- Since 2010, Minnesota's black population has increased by 31%, its Hispanic population has increased by 20%, and its Asian population has increased by 30%, all far outpacing national population increases.
- There are growing cultural and language barriers to getting students into nature. Minnesota has the highest Somali population in the US (over 75,000) and second highest Hmong population (over 85,000).
- We want to be proactive in reaching more communities of color and low socio-economic status to make nature an inclusive, accessible and comfortable learning experience for all demographics.

3. We want to engage with the diverse and changing demographics of MN's schools by offering scholarships to financially strained schools to come to the Audubon Center of the North Woods for 1-4 night residential environmental learning experiences. Currently, over 4,000 K-12 learners from 75 schools annually attend ACNW, and last year 52% of those students qualified for free-and-reduced price meals. 46% identified as Caucasian, 17% as Black, 15% as Asian, 15% as Hispanic, 3% as American Indian, and 4% as Two Races or Other.

- Through our most popular 2-night, 3-day residential environmental learning stay, students experience six 2-hour classes, two evening programs, receive seven meals and two nights lodging.
- Teachers select from their choice of over forty class options during their stay in the fields of biological, earth, and physical sciences, adventure, energy, food, cultural history, and team building.



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

- We will make lasting connections and open students' eyes and minds to a world they previously didn't know, creating awareness that their actions have environmental impacts. Studies show that most people who develop a love of nature trace it back to a positive childhood experience with a caring adult.
4. We would offer scholarship assistance of up to 100% of the \$118/student cost for a 2-night, 3-day experience, as well as busing scholarships if needed. 1, 3 and 4 night experiences also are available.
- We would serve K-12 student populations in the Twin Cities metro area, as well as greater Minnesota.
  - Eligible schools would be schools that show a clear financial need through our scholarship application process, and are not currently attending another residential environmental learning center.
  - We would create an informative video for teachers and parents to show them what their students would experience, addressing safety, educational and logistical questions and concerns they may have. This video would have English, Spanish, Somali and Hmong versions and be posted online to view easily.

### II. PROJECT ACTIVITIES AND OUTCOMES

#### **Activity 1 Title:** Provide K-12 Residential Scholarships

**Description:** Providing overnight scholarships to schools that show clear financial need whether due to lack of school or parent financial support, or a combination of both. Up to 100% of student fee would be possible, based on need. Busing scholarships to help with the cost of transportation would also be available.

**ENRTF BUDGET: \$125,000**

#### **Activity 2 Title:** K-12 Informational Video

**Description:** We wish to create an informative video addressing the questions and concerns we regularly hear from teachers and parents regarding the experience their students and children will have at ACNW. We have found that parents are increasingly concerned with safety, accommodations, privacy, learning environments, instruction, meeting dietary restrictions, and bathrooms. Creating a film with versions in English, Hmong, Somali and Spanish aimed at teachers and parents to address those concerns will increase the likelihood their students and children will attend and experience nature. Our last ENRTF grant addressed accessibility by supplying students with winter gear to wear, and translating all our K-12 forms into Spanish, Somali and Hmong. These steps have greatly helped, but through extensive discussions with parents and teachers, we see this video as a clear need for more parents to feel comfortable about sending their child on the learning experience.

**ENRTF BUDGET: \$25,000**

Outcome	Completion Date
1. Provide minimum of 1,000 K-12 public school students residential experiences at the Audubon Center of the North Woods. Special consideration will be given to schools with high numbers of 1) FRP meal eligible students, 2) minority and 3) immigrant populations.	June 30, 2023
2. Create multi-language informational video to show teachers and parents what students will experience, and addressing safety, lodging, learning, privacy and meal concerns.	Dec 31, 2020

### III. PROJECT PARTNERS AND COLLABORATORS:

This project will have partnerships with school districts from across the state as we work with school leaders to bring their students to the Audubon Center of the North Woods.

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

Over recent years, we have secured scholarships annually from Ecolab, the Audubon Chapter of Minneapolis, St. Paul Audubon Society, Minnesota River Valley Audubon Chapter, the Onan Family Foundation, and developed our own annual K-12 fundraiser to bolster our scholarship offerings, connecting more students to nature.

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

Legal Citation:

Project Manager: Bryan Wood

Project Title: Providing Residential Environmental Learning Experiences to Underserved Students

Organization: Audubon Center of the North Woods

Project Budget: \$150,000

Project Length and Completion Date: July 1, 2020 - June 30, 2023

Today's Date: April 9, 2019



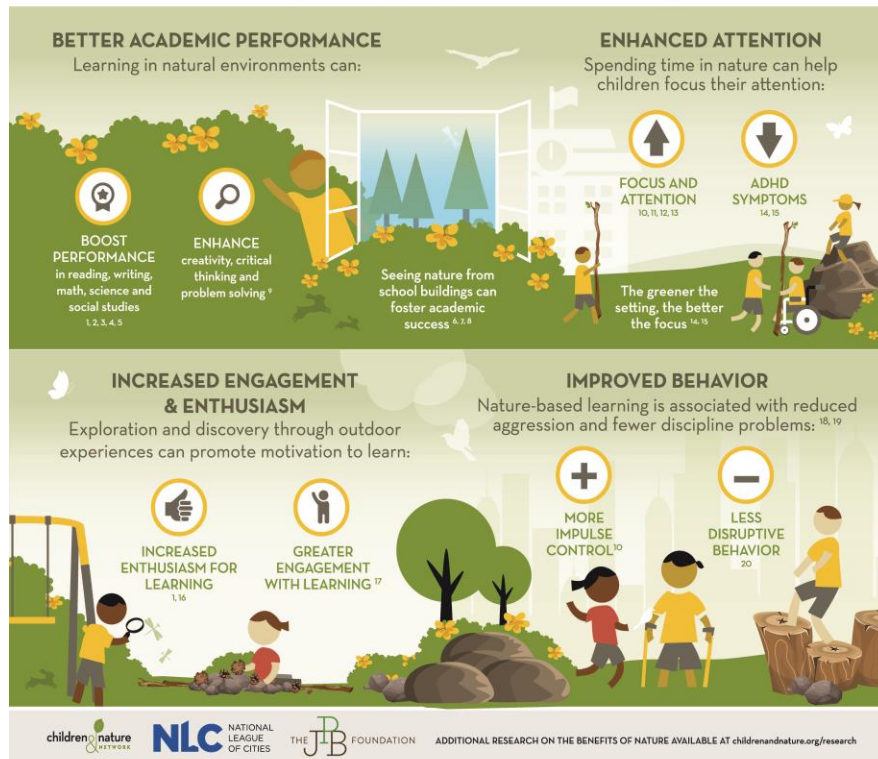
ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES TRUST FUND BUDGET		Budget	Amount Spent	Balance
<b>BUDGET ITEM</b>				
<b>Personnel (Wages and Benefits)</b>		\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
<b>Professional/Technical/Service Contracts</b>				
Create instructional video for teachers and parents that addresses safety, lodging, dietary, learning, transportation and cultural questions and concerns. The video will have versions narrated in English, Spanish, Somali, and Hmong. This video will be done through a competitive, quality-based bids process with a contractor.		\$ 25,000	\$ -	\$ 25,000
<b>Equipment/Tools/Supplies</b>				
		\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
<b>Capital Expenditures Over \$5,000</b>				
		\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
<b>Fee Title Acquisition</b>				
		\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
<b>Easement Acquisition</b>				
		\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
<b>Professional Services for Acquisition</b>				
		\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
<b>Printing</b>				
		\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
<b>Travel expenses in Minnesota</b>				
		\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
<b>Other</b>				
Student fee and bussing scholarships to cover costs for students to attend residential learning programs at the Audubon Center of the North Woods. Scholarships will be awarded through a needs-based application process. Minimum of 1,000 K-12 students will be served.		\$ 125,000	\$ -	\$ 125,000
<b>COLUMN TOTAL</b>		\$ 150,000	\$ -	\$ 150,000
<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>
<b>Non-State:</b>		\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Ecolab	Pending	\$ 7,500		
Audubon Chapter of Minneapolis	Pending	\$ 1,000		
St. Paul Audubon Society	Pending	\$ 2,000		
Minnesota River Valley Audubon Chapter	Pending	\$ 1,500		
Onan Family Foundation	Pending	\$ 4,000		
<b>State:</b>		\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
<b>In kind:</b>		\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
<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>
M.L. 2017, Chp. 96, Sec. 2, Subd. 05g	\$ 73,327	\$ 130,000	\$ 56,673	\$ 73,327



# Children Benefit From Time Spent in Nature

## NATURE CAN IMPROVE ACADEMIC OUTCOMES

Spending time in nature enhances educational outcomes by improving children's academic performance, focus, behavior and love of learning.



### SUPPORTING RESEARCH

Lieberman & Hoody (1998). Closing the achievement gap: Using the environment as an integrating context for learning. Results of a Nationwide Study. San Diego: SEER. \* Chawla (2015). Benefits of nature contact for children. *J Plan Lit*, 30(4), 435-452. \* Beresowitz et al. (2015). School gardens enhance academic performance and dietary outcomes in children. *J School Health*, 85(8), 508-518. \* Williams & Dixon (2012). Impact of garden-based learning on academic outcomes in schools: Synthesis of research between 1990 and 2010. *Rev Educ Res*, 82(5), 211-235. \* Wells et al. (2015). The effects of school gardens on children's science knowledge: A randomized controlled trial of low-income elementary schools. *Int J Sci Educ*, 37(17), 2858-2878. \* Li & Sullivan (2014). Impact of views to school landscapes on recovery from stress and mental fatigue. *Landscape Urban Plan*, 145, 149-158. \* Wu et al. (2014). Linking student performance in Massachusetts elementary schools with the "greenness" of school surroundings using remote sensing. *PLoS ONE* 9(10): e107898. \* Makiwaka, R. H. 2010. Student performance and high school landscapes. *Landscape and Urban Planning* 97 (4), 275-281. \* Moore & Wong (1995). Natural Learning Rediscovering Nature's Way of Teaching. Berkeley, CA: HSC Communications. \* Faber Taylor et al. (2002). Views of nature and self-discipline: Evidence from inner-city children. *J Environ Plan*, 33, 49-65. \* Mårtensson et al. (2009). Outdoor environmental assessment of attention promoting settings for preschool children. *Health Place*, 15(4), 149-153. \* Wells (2000). At home with nature effects of "greenness" on children's cognitive functioning. *Environ Behav*, 32(6), 779-795. \* Berto et al. (2016). How does psychological restoration work in children? An exploratory study. *J Child Adolesc Behav* 3(3). \* Faber Taylor et al. (2001). Coping with ADD: The surprising connection to green play settings. *Environ Behav*, 33(5), 547-77. \* Amely et al. (2014). Green and blue spaces and behavioral development in Barcelona schoolchildren: The BREATHE Project. *Environ Health Perspect*, 122(13):1335-1345. \* Blair (2009). The child in the garden: An evaluation review of the benefits of school gardening. *J Environ Educ*, 40(2), 15-28. \* Rios & Brewer (2014). Outdoor education and science achievement. *Appl Environ Educ Commun*, 13(4), 234-240. \* Bell & Dymant (2008). Grounds for health: The intersection of green school grounds and health-promoting schools. *Environ Educ Res*, 14(3), 77-90. \* Nedovic & Morrissey (2013). Calm, active and focused: Children's responses to an organic outdoor learning environment. *Learn Environ Res*, 10(3), 281-295. \* Ruiz-Gallardo & Valde (2013). Garden-based learning: An experience with "at risk" secondary education students. *J Environ Educ*, 44(4), 133-170.

CANN recognizes that not all studies support causal statements.

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Research increasingly shows there are a myriad of academic, cognitive, emotional and behavioral benefits children gain when they spend time in nature. Underserved students typically spend very little time outside and can benefit greatly through residential environmental learning experiences like at the Audubon Center of the North Woods.

Over 4,000 K-12 students like these above attend the Audubon Center of the North Woods's residential programs each year, gaining hands-on, positive experiences in nature. These students are gently holding a tiger salamander they found during class. We can reach at least 1,000 more underserved K-12 students and connect them to the environment with help from the ENRTF.

## Project Manager Qualifications

**Bryan Wood-** Executive Director at Audubon Center of the North Woods

- Leads organization with a \$1.8 million annual budget, 26 employees and 9 naturalist interns
- Oversees operations, programs, strategic plan, budget and development
- Teaches undergraduate and graduate level post-secondary courses
- Serves as public relations advocate on behalf of the Audubon Center of the North Woods
- Networks and forms productive partnerships with other environmental organizations
- Coordinates adult and community programs
- Chief grant writer with over 10 years of receiving and overseeing grant projects up to \$1.5 million

## Organizational Description

The Audubon Center of the North Woods (ACNW) is a 501(c)3 non-profit residential environmental learning center residing on over 780 acres near Sandstone, MN. As an accredited school, ACNW serves over 15,000 individuals annually including approximately 4,000 K-12 students from across MN and WI. ACNW also provides undergraduate and graduate level field courses to several colleges and universities, youth and family camps, adult and Road Scholar programs, outreach programs and community events. ACNW is the State of Minnesota's largest charter school authorizer with 34 schools and over 9,000 students. ACNW has been providing environmental education experiences since 1972.

**Our Mission:** *To instill a connection and commitment to the environment in people of all communities through experiential learning*

**Our Vision:** *A healthy planet where all people live in balance with the Earth*

### **Our Core Values:**

- *We demonstrate respect, care and passion for the Earth, all people and all things*
- *We strive for excellence in everything we do through integrity, open communication and teamwork*
- *We value, engage and appreciate individuals for their unique contributions*
- *We believe in life-long learning through positive shared experiences with the natural world*
- *We encourage others to recognize our interconnectedness with the Earth through their actions*