**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-**

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| **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 |
| 1. Pre and post surveys will be developed to assess student comprehension
 | 3/31/21 |
| 1. *Rivers Are Alive* 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 |
| 1. 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 **ENTRF 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 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 |
| 1. RAA curriculum is integrated into 50% of existing classroom lesson plans
 | 6/30/23 |
| 1. Train at least 25 Volunteer Educators to support at school programs
 | 8/30/22 |

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| **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 *Wild River Journey Riverboat Adventure* | 6/30/23 |
| 3. 4,000 MN youth experience a *Rivers Are Alive* field trip | 6/30/23 |
| 4. Evaluations will show a 75% improved attitude toward nature | 6/30/23 |
| 1. 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.