



# Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

## 2021 Request for Proposal

### General Information

**Proposal ID:** 2021-146

**Proposal Title:** Providing K-12 Residential Environmental Learning Experiences

### Project Manager Information

**Name:** Bryan Wood

**Organization:** Osprey Wilds Environmental Learning Center

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

**Email:** wood@ospreywilds.org

### Project Basic Information

**Project Summary:** Osprey Wilds Environmental Learning Center (formerly Audubon Center of the North Woods) will provide scholarships allowing over 3,000 K-12 students to experience residential environmental learning programs at Osprey Wilds.

**Funds Requested:** \$400,000

**Proposed Project Completion:** 2023-06-30

**LCCMR Funding Category:** Environmental Education (C)

### Project Location

**What is the best scale for describing where your work will take place?**

Statewide

**What is the best scale to describe the area impacted by your work?**

Statewide

**When will the work impact occur?**

During the Project

## Narrative

### **Describe the opportunity or problem your proposal seeks to address. Include any relevant background information.**

Children today are increasingly spending less time in nature, resulting in a lack of awareness, understanding and contact with the environment. Nationwide, K-12 students today spend less than 30 minutes daily outside (even before COVID-19), far less time than any other generation in human history. For students low on the socio-economic spectrum, this is compounded as there are typically no outdoor areas near where they live, or adults who spend time with them in nature. 38% (over 323,000 children) of Minnesota's K-12 students qualify for free and reduced-price (FRP) meals, meaning a multi-day field trip is not financially feasible for tens of thousands of families. By offering scholarships for students who need support, we will provide meaningful hands-on nature experiences to children who otherwise wouldn't have that opportunity. Through our most popular 2-night, 3-day residential environmental learning stay, students will experience six 2-hour classes and two evening programs, and receive seven meals and two nights lodging. Teachers select from their choice of over thirty standards-aligned class options during their stay in the fields of biological, earth, and physical sciences, adventure, energy, food, cultural history, and team building. Through these experiences, we will make lasting connections with children to nature.

### **What is your proposed solution to the problem or opportunity discussed above? i.e. What are you seeking funding to do? You will be asked to expand on this in Activities and Milestones.**

We would offer scholarship assistance of up to 100% of our \$125/student cost for a 2-night, 3-day experience, as well as busing scholarships if needed. One, three and four night experiences are also available. We would have a statewide reach, serving 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 process including high FRP student percentages, and are not currently attending another residential environmental learning center. This past academic year, we saw \$175,000 worth of demand in K-12 scholarships for our programs, which we could not fully meet. The long-term financial impacts of COVID-19 will only increase the financial assistance that families and schools will need to make residential experiences like this happen. Without scholarship support, thousands of children will be left out of nature. If COVID-19 travel restrictions and/or fears are still present by fall of 2021 preventing schools from attending Osprey Wilds, our staff is ready to bring programming to schools where nearby greenspaces and parks could be utilized for delivering hands-on environmental programming over multiple days, as we did this year through a pilot program.

### **What are the specific project outcomes as they relate to the public purpose of protection, conservation, preservation, and enhancement of the state's natural resources?**

Through this project, we would provide a minimum of 3,000 K-12 Minnesota students residential environmental learning experiences at Osprey Wilds Environmental Learning Center. Through our scholarship application process, special consideration will be given to schools with high numbers of: FRP meal eligible students, minority, and immigrant populations. By giving K-12 students extended time in nature over multiple days, we help them develop awareness, appreciation and interest in the environment. These experiences help craft a future for Minnesota where environmental protection, conservation, preservation and stewardship are recognized, valued and implemented by our society's next generation of decision makers.

## Activities and Milestones

### Activity 1: Providing K-12 Residential Environmental Learning Experiences through Scholarships

**Activity Budget:** \$400,000

**Activity Description:**

Provide scholarship funds of up to 100% cost of \$125/student experience as well as busing scholarships on a needs-basis through scholarship application review for multi-day residential environmental learning experiences at Osprey Wilds Environmental Learning Center to a minimum of 3,000 Minnesota K-12 students. Schools eligible would be Minnesota public schools with free and reduced lunch percentages above 25% and not currently attending another residential environmental learning center. Special consideration will be given to schools with high numbers of minority, and immigrant populations.

**Activity Milestones:**

Description	Completion Date
Begin Contacting Prospective Schools & Awarding Scholarships	2021-07-31
Complete Year One of Providing K-12 Residential Environmental Learning Experiences	2022-06-30
Complete Year Two of Providing K-12 Residential Environmental Learning Experiences	2023-06-30

## Long-Term Implementation and Funding

**Describe how the results will be implemented and how any ongoing effort will be funded. If not already addressed as part of the project, how will findings, results, and products developed be implemented after project completion? If additional work is needed, how will this be funded?**

We will reach out to schools who have expressed a need for financial support, and utilize our existing marketing strategies and tools to promote scholarship support. We will utilize our many district contacts to share this opportunity for funding assistance for their schools. Through our last ENRTF grant in 2017, we provided 1,254 K-12 student residential learning experiences, and the demand we saw was substantially more than we could match. There is clearly a strong desire from schools and teachers to give their students these meaningful, lasting environmental learning experiences. We want to provide as many experiences as possible.

## Other ENRTF Appropriations Awarded in the Last Six Years

Name	Appropriation	Amount Awarded
Increasing Residential Environmental Learning Center Opportunities	M.L. 2017, Chp. 96, Sec. 2, Subd. 05g	\$130,000

## Project Manager and Organization Qualifications

**Project Manager Name:** Bryan Wood

**Job Title:** Executive Director

**Provide description of the project manager's qualifications to manage the proposed project.**

Bryan Wood has served as Executive Director for Osprey Wilds Environmental Learning Center (formerly Audubon Center of the North Woods) since 2009. During that time, Bryan has managed over \$2 million in grant projects including a \$1,500,000 ENRTF grant in 2010 among six Minnesota residential environmental learning centers for energy improvements and demonstrations, a \$130,000 ENRTF grant for K-12 residential environmental learning opportunities, a \$238,000 Conservation Partners Legacy grant to acquire 140 acres of land adjacent to Osprey Wilds, and many others.

**Organization:** Osprey Wilds Environmental Learning Center

**Organization Description:**

Osprey Wilds Environmental Learning Center (formerly Audubon Center of the North Woods) is a private, nonprofit organization located on 783 acres near Sandstone in Pine County, MN whose mission is "to instill a connection and commitment to the environment in people of all communities through experiential learning". Since 1969, this has been accomplished with a wide variety of environmental learning programs for audiences K-12 to seniors. Each year more than 4,000 K-12 students attend Osprey Wilds for residential environmental learning experiences, participating in outdoor learning on our 783-acre campus.

## Budget Summary

Category / Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Purpose	Gen. Ineligible	% Benefits	# FTE	Classified Staff?	\$ Amount
Personnel								
							Sub Total	-
Contracts and Services								
							Sub Total	-
Equipment, Tools, and Supplies								
							Sub Total	-
Capital Expenditures								
							Sub Total	-
Acquisitions and Stewardship								
							Sub Total	-
Travel In Minnesota								
							Sub Total	-
Travel Outside Minnesota								
							Sub Total	-
Printing and Publication								
							Sub Total	-
Other Expenses								

		K-12 Participant & Transportation Scholarships	Funding support for K-12 students to attend Osprey Wilds Environmental Learning Center					\$400,000
							<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>\$400,000</b>
							<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>\$400,000</b>

Classified Staff or Generally Ineligible Expenses

Category/Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Justification Ineligible Expense or Classified Staff Request
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## Non ENRTF Funds

Category	Specific Source	Use	Status	Amount
<b>State</b>				
			<b>State Sub Total</b>	-
<b>Non-State</b>				
Cash	Osprey Wilds Environmental Learning Center	Annual K-12 scholarship fundraiser to support K-12 schools attending Osprey Wilds	Potential	\$40,000
Cash	Onan Family Foundation	K-12 scholarship support for Minneapolis & St. Paul schools	Potential	\$8,000
Cash	Ecolab Foundation	K-12 scholarship support for St. Paul schools	Potential	\$20,000
Cash	Minnesota River Valley Audubon Chapter	K-12 scholarship support for south metro area schools	Potential	\$3,000
Cash	St. Paul Audubon Society	K-12 scholarship support for St. Paul schools	Potential	\$4,000
Cash	Minneapolis Audubon Society	K-12 scholarship support for Minneapolis schools	Potential	\$2,000
Cash	Audubon Chapter of Minneapolis	K-12 scholarship support for Minneapolis schools	Potential	\$3,000
			<b>Non State Sub Total</b>	<b>\$80,000</b>
			<b>Funds Total</b>	<b>\$80,000</b>



## Attachments

### Required Attachments

#### *Visual Component*

File: [8c9d1a32-646.pdf](#)

#### *Alternate Text for Visual Component*

The left half of this document highlights the many cognitive, emotional and academic benefits children exhibit when spending time in nature. These figures are gathered from the Children and Nature Network. The right half of the document illustrates one of countless positive interactions children have with their environment while attending Osprey Wilds Environmental Learning Center through residential learning experiences, as well as the funding need present in schools.

#### *Financial Capacity*

File: [8e5987ce-f5b.pdf](#)

#### *Board Resolution or Letter*

Title	File
Osprey Wilds Board Resolution	<a href="#">72187101-0b9.pdf</a>

### Optional Attachments

#### *Support Letter or Other*

Title	File
Senator Rarick Letter of Support	<a href="#">72174e5d-100.pdf</a>

## Administrative Use

**Does your project include restoration or acquisition of land rights?**

No

**Does your project have patent, royalties, or revenue potential?**

No

**Does your project include research?**

No

**Does the organization have a fiscal agent for this project?**

No

# 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.

**BETTER ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE**  
Learning in natural environments can:

- BOOST PERFORMANCE** in reading, writing, math, science and social studies<sup>1,2,3,4,5</sup>
- ENHANCE** creativity, critical thinking and problem solving<sup>6</sup>

Seeing nature from school buildings can foster academic success<sup>7,8,9</sup>

**ENHANCED ATTENTION**  
Spending time in nature can help children focus their attention:

- ↑ FOCUS AND ATTENTION**<sup>10,11,12,13</sup>
- ↓ ADHD SYMPTOMS**<sup>14,15</sup>

The greener the setting, the better the focus.<sup>16,19</sup>

**INCREASED ENGAGEMENT & ENTHUSIASM**  
Exploration and discovery through outdoor experiences can promote motivation to learn:

- INCREASED ENTHUSIASM FOR LEARNING**<sup>1,16</sup>
- GREATER ENGAGEMENT WITH LEARNING**<sup>17</sup>

**IMPROVED BEHAVIOR**  
Nature-based learning is associated with reduced aggression and fewer discipline problems:<sup>18,19</sup>

- +** MORE IMPULSE CONTROL<sup>19</sup>
- LESS DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR<sup>20</sup>

children's nature NETWORK | NLC NATIONAL LEAGUE OF CITIES | THE JTB FOUNDATION | ADDITIONAL RESEARCH ON THE BENEFITS OF NATURE AVAILABLE AT [childrenandnature.org/research](http://childrenandnature.org/research)

### SUPPORTING RESEARCH

Lidzeman & Hoody (2009). Closing the achievement gap: Using the environment as an integrating context for learning. Results of a Nationwide Study, San Diego: SEER. \* Chavira (2015). Benefits of nature contact for children. *J Plan Lit*, 30(4), 433-452. \* Beresowitz et al. (2013). School gardens enhance academic performance and dietary outcomes in children. *J School Health*, 83(8), 503-519. \* Williams & Dixon (2012). Impact of garden-based learning on academic outcomes in schools: Synthesis of research between 1991 and 2010. *Rev Educ Res*, 82(5), 21-55. \* Wells et al. (2013). The effects of school gardens on children's science knowledge: A randomized controlled trial of low-income elementary schools. *Int J Sci Edu*, 35(17), 2658-2678. \* Li & Sullivan (2016). Impact of views to school landscapes on recovery from stress and mental fatigue. *Landscape Urban Plan*, 148, 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): e103048. \* Mitsuoka, R. H. 2010. Student performance and high school landscapes. *Landscape and Urban Planning* 97 (3): 275-281. \* Moore & Wong (2007). Natural Learning: Rediscovering Nature's Way of Teaching. Berkeley, CA: HPS Communications. \* Faber Taylor et al. (2012). Views of nature and self-discipline: Evidence from inner-city children. *J Environ Plan*, 25, 49-65. \* Mathrienson et al. (2009). Outdoor environmental assessment of attention promoting settings for preschool children. *Health Place*, 15(4), 149-157. \* Walls (2000). At home with nature effects of "greenness" on children's cognitive functioning. *Environ Behav*, 32(6), 776-796. \* Berke et al. (2016). How does psychological restoration work in children? An exploratory study. *J Child Adolesc Behav* 3(3). \* Faber Taylor et al. (2003). Coping with ADHD: The surprising connection to green play settings. *Environ Behav*, 35(8), 54-77. \* Kuo et al. (2014). Green and blue spaces and behavioral development in Barcelona schoolchildren: The BREATHE Project. *Environ Health Perspect*, 122(13):1258. \* Blair (2009). The child in the garden: An evaluation review of the benefits of school gardening. *J Environ Educ*, 40(2), 15-38. \* Riss & Brewer (2014). Outdoor education and science achievement. *Appl Environ Educ Commun*, 13(4), 214-240. \* Blair & Dynam (2008). Grounds for health: The interaction of green school grounds and health promoting schools. *J Environ Educ*, 39(1), 77-90. \* Nadeau & Montney (2012). Calm, active and focused: Children's responses to an organic outdoor learning environment. *Learn Environ Res*, 10(3), 281-295. \* Ruiz-Galvez & Valde (2013). Garden-based learning: An experience with "at risk" secondary education students. *J Environ Educ*, 44(4), 353-370.

CAJN 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 from residential environmental learning experiences like at Osprey Wilds Environmental Learning Center.

Osprey Wilds Environmental Learning Center provides hands-on, positive experiences in nature like the one above where students are gently holding a tiger salamander they found in class. When factoring inflation, ***MN schools today receive \$2,500 less per K-12 student than in 1991-92. With ENRTF's help, we can reach at least 3,000 more underserved K-12 students and connect them to nature.***