



# Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

## 2024 Request for Proposal

### General Information

**Proposal ID:** 2024-100

**Proposal Title:** Outdoor Pathways to Environmental Education, Recreation, and Careers

### Project Manager Information

**Name:** Meg Krueger

**Organization:** Wilderness Inquiry

**Office Telephone:** (612) 676-9400

**Email:** development@wildernessinquiry.org

### Project Basic Information

**Project Summary:** Wilderness Inquiry engages 20,000 Minnesotans through outdoor adventures, promoting equity in access to outdoor activities, places, and careers and supporting stewardship and conservation values for current and future generations.

**Funds Requested:** \$1,500,000

**Proposed Project Completion:** June 30, 2027

**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 and In the Future

## Narrative

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

Our youngest generation is less connected to the natural world than any previous generation. Children in the U.S. spend 4-7 minutes a day playing outside and over 7 hours a day in front of a screen. At the same time, researchers report that outdoor learning improves student performance, increases participation in science learning, strengthens attention, and positively impacts STEM career motivation.

Through this project, Wilderness Inquiry will:

Connect youth and families to outdoor activities that teach about stewardship, conservation, and outdoor career pathways.

Equip youth with tools to be future stewards of Minnesota's natural resources and problem solvers in addressing climate challenges.

Build social-emotional capacities in youth through activities focused on outdoor recreation and education.

Additionally, according to a report in The Lancet measuring climate anxiety in youth, 84% of respondents were at least moderately worried about climate change and 59% were very or extremely worried. Of respondents, 50% reported feeling: sad, anxious, angry, powerless, and helpless.

Experiences in nature increase confidence, improve social-emotional capacities, and facilitate deep and meaningful connections to self, community, and our environment. Wilderness Inquiry seeks to support equitable access to the outdoors while empowering climate stewardship and developing social-emotional and skill-building capacities in youth.

**What is your proposed solution to the problem or opportunity discussed above? Introduce us to the work you are seeking funding to do. You will be asked to expand on this proposed solution in Activities & Milestones.**

As a signatory of the Minnesota Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights, Wilderness Inquiry believes that youth have the inherent right to outdoor experiences that promote physical, social-emotional, and academic wellbeing. Unfortunately, many youth face barriers to participating in outdoor activities, specifically youth from communities historically and currently underrepresented in the outdoors.

Through this project, Wilderness Inquiry will engage 20,000 Minnesotans through a continuum of outdoor experiences that lead to positive engagement and behavior outcomes, instill stewardship ethics, and inspire interest in outdoor careers. Through this increased engagement, our youngest generation of Minnesotans will become more empowered to address the challenges ahead, including actions to mitigate biodiversity loss and climate change. ENRTF funding will support the development and expansion of programs including: day and virtual adventures through Canoemobile that connect youth to waterways and public lands in every region of Minnesota; nearby-nature experiences that provide a gateway for youth and families to experience state parks or an overnight camping experience; extended trips for youth, adults, and families to connect in inclusive, shared experiences in parks and wilderness areas; pathways to careers through fellowship opportunities and engagement with industry professionals; and implementation of STEM-based and climate-education curriculum (including Project WET/WILD).

**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?**

Success includes increasing the knowledge and skills of youth to cultivate sustainable lifestyles and fostering connections to Minnesota's natural environment.

This project will support:

Placed-based, outdoor experiences for 20,000 Minnesotans.

Broad-based partnerships with schools, government partners, faith-based organizations, and nonprofits.

Engaging diverse and changing demographics – of Wilderness Inquiry participants, 12% identify as having a disability, 48% identify as BIPOC, and 74% receive financial aid.

Building a lasting and action-based conservation ethic through training on wilderness ethics (Leave No Trace, Project WET/WILD) and recreation-based opportunities for youth and families that build tangible skills and increase social-emotional learning capacities.

## Activities and Milestones

### Activity 1: 20,000 Minnesotans Experience Nature-Based Adventures that Instill Stewardship Ethics, Improve SEL Outcomes, and Provide Pathways to Outdoor Careers.

**Activity Budget:** \$1,500,000

#### Activity Description:

The Outdoor Pathways project will engage 20,000 Minnesotans across a continuum of backyard to backcountry outdoor experiences that build community in the natural world by breaking down barriers to outdoor education, recreation, and careers. These experiences range from introductory day programs; to multi-day and overnight extended adventures across a variety of Minnesota outdoor spaces; to skill-building and leadership development opportunities for outdoor careers.

#### Outcomes:

Build capacity to implement programs across the state. This includes acquiring equipment; developing partnerships; hiring and training staff; and maintaining operational systems that directly support this work.

Implement environmental education curriculum, including natural resource stewardship, STEM-learning, and climate education (e.g., Project Wet/Wild).

Engage 20,000 youth and families in place-based programs demonstrated to promote positive physical, social-emotional, and academic outcomes.

Measure the impact of programs on personal development and social-emotional learning (SEL) capacities among participants. Strong SEL capacities are foundational to youth experiencing positive wellbeing and academic outcomes. Wilderness Inquiry has four measurable program goals: 1) to build positive connections between participants and trusted adult leaders; 2) to increase connections between participants and the natural world; 3) to help participants connect with their inner selves; and 4) to provide stronger connection to community.

#### Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Build capacity to deliver programming across Minnesota (e.g., acquiring gear/equipment, partnership development, staffing).	June 30, 2025
Outreach to the 10 Minnesota communities with the highest demonstrated opportunity gap in outdoor participation.	June 30, 2025
Implement existing curriculum on environmental education, stewardship, STEM-learning, and climate-education (Project Wet/Wild). Reported annually.	June 30, 2027
75 educators participate in professional development workshops to integrate STEM and nature-based learning into curriculum.	June 30, 2027
70%-plus participants report positive personal development outcomes after programming (measured with evaluation tools).	June 30, 2027
20,000 individuals participate in day programs, extended adventures, and career-building opportunities across Minnesota.	June 30, 2027

## Project Partners and Collaborators

Name	Organization	Role	Receiving Funds
Educators, teachers, and principals	Minnesota School Districts	Minnesota school districts, principals, and educators are key program partners who: coordinate programs; recruit participants; share important details with students, parents, and families; attend programs as trip chaperones; and participate in WI professional development workshops.	No
Dan Dressler	USDA Forest Service	USFS supports program implementation in national forests and USFS-managed lands across MN, connection to stewardship education and hands-on conservation opportunities, and pathways to outdoor careers.	No
Tucker Blythe	National Park Service - Mississippi National Rivers & Recreation Area	NPS provides in-kind support of staff time for curriculum development and program implementation along the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area across programming sites.	No
Maggie Lorenz	Lower Phalen Creek Project	Indigenous-led program partner to co-develop programs and curriculum, integrating teaching on Traditional Ecological Knowledge with Western Scientific Knowledge. Collaborative programming includes environmental stewardship and building connections to nature, culture, and self.	No
Cathy Jordan, Ph.D.	Children & Nature Network and University of Minnesota - Institute on the Environment	Will provide guidance on professional development for educators and teachers. Also serves as a primary research partner to increase integration of existing STEM and nature-based learning into curriculum. Will support program evaluation framework for this project.	No

## 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 work be funded?**

Wilderness Inquiry maintains a diversified budget, wherein funding from state government sources is matched 4:1 by other contributed and earned revenue. Additional funding includes earned revenue from trip sales (unique to Wilderness Inquiry's model), corporate and foundation support, individual contributions, and proceeds from endowments we maintain with JP Morgan Private Bank. Matching (in-kind) contributions to this project include costs associated with planning, delivery, and administrative and other investments needed to successfully deliver on programming. We will continue to develop these contributed and earned sources of revenue to sustain the impacts of this work beyond the life of this project.

## Other ENRTF Appropriations Awarded in the Last Six Years

Name	Appropriation	Amount Awarded
Urban Environmental Education Engaging Students in Local Resources	M.L. 2014, Chp. 226, Sec. 2, Subd. 09c	\$1,093,000
Connecting Youth to Minnesota Waterways through Outdoor Classrooms	M.L. 2017, Chp. 96, Sec. 2, Subd. 05a	\$1,200,000
Minnesota Freshwater Quest: Environmental Education On State Waterways	M.L. 2021, First Special Session, Chp. 6, Art. 5, Sec. 2, Subd. 05b	\$500,000

Minnesota Freshwater Quest: Environmental Education For 15000 Youth	M.L. 2021, First Special Session, Chp. 6, Art. 6, Sec. 2, Subd. 05c	\$699,000
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## Project Manager and Organization Qualifications

**Project Manager Name:** Meg Krueger

**Job Title:** Adventures Director

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

Meg Krueger, Adventures Director: Ms. Krueger oversees all aspects of operations and program development, implementation, and delivery for Wilderness Inquiry. This includes more than 500 program events each year serving more than 27,000 people across Minnesota and around the country. In this capacity, Ms. Krueger supervises and oversees all Wilderness Inquiry program and operations staff (currently 11 FTE), as well as our seasonal staff and Outdoor Leaders (120+ staff annually).

From 2018-2022, Ms. Krueger led environmental education and conservation work with government and nonprofit agencies in Texas and Louisiana. Ms. Krueger previously served as Wilderness Inquiry’s Education Program Manager from 2015-2018, and prior to that was a high school teacher in the Minneapolis Public Schools.

Ms. Krueger has extensive experience in the areas of program development and implementation, curriculum development, staff hiring and training, supervision, evaluation, budget development and management, and partnership development.

**Organization:** Wilderness Inquiry

**Organization Description:**

Wilderness Inquiry’s mission is to connect people of all ages, backgrounds, identities, and abilities through shared outdoor adventures so that all people can equitably experience the benefits of time spent in nature.

Wilderness Inquiry programs, which range from single-day introductory activities to multi-day adventures, provide outdoor education, recreation, and career pathway opportunities while building community through engagement in the natural world. We meet participants and partners where they are and offer nature-based experiences designed to teach about stewardship, conservation, environmental education, and support learning around STEM, geography, and history – ultimately equipping the next generation with the resources needed to protect and participate in Minnesota’s great outdoors.

Through our programs and adventures, we primarily seek to serve core audiences from communities historically and currently underrepresented in the outdoors – including people with disabilities, individuals who identify as BIPOC and/or LGBTQ+, and individuals and families that experience financial inequity. Each year we connect 27,000+ people to inclusive outdoor experiences on public lands and waterways in more than 50 communities across Minnesota and around the country.

Wilderness Inquiry is governed by a 17-member volunteer board of directors and has 23 full-time and 120+ part-time/seasonal staff.

## Budget Summary

Category / Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Purpose	Gen. Ineligible	% Benefits	# FTE	Classified Staff?	\$ Amount
<b>Personnel</b>								
Outdoor Leaders (multiple personnel)		Serve as trip guides and leaders of on-the-ground program delivery and direct-service work with youth and families.			0%	12		\$450,000
Part-time warehouse staff (multiple personnel)		Warehouse and logistical support, trip pack-in and pack-out, canoe and inventory maintenance and repairs, evaluation data entry.			0%	0.6		\$25,500
Operations Coordinator		Coordinates operational aspects of project, including gear and equipment maintenance, warehouse coordination, and trip logistics.			0%	1.5		\$77,273
Outreach Program Coordinator		Coordinates partnerships with organizations and individuals - including outreach to core audiences served by this project.			0%	0.9		\$46,364
Youth Program Coordinator		Coordinates program logistics and supports program delivery statewide. Responsible for administering curriculum and evaluations.			0%	1.5		\$77,273
Program Manager		Manages implementation and delivery of programs and relationships/partnerships with educators and youth and families statewide.			0%	2.25		\$162,272
Program Director		Oversees all aspects of operations and program development, implementation, and delivery for Wilderness Inquiry.			0%	1.5		\$162,272
Staffing Manager		Manages recruitment, hiring, training, and supervision of seasonal staff (Outdoor Leaders) responsible for program delivery.			0%	1.2		\$92,727
Finance and Administration Coordinator		Coordinates payroll, collective of expenses and invoices, billing, and finance database needs.			0%	0.75		\$39,406
Full-time Outdoor Leader		Supports LCCMR program development, Outdoor Leader training, and on-site programming.			0%	3		\$126,000
							<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>\$1,259,087</b>
<b>Contracts and Services</b>								

TBD	Professional or Technical Service Contract	Contract for project evaluation to demonstrate success of implementation of the project throughout the state. Contracts selected through a competitive bidding process.				0.6		\$40,000
							<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>\$40,000</b>
<b>Equipment, Tools, and Supplies</b>								
	Tools and Supplies	Programmatic equipment and educational supplies: water safety gear replacement, camping gear replacement, first aid supplies, adaptive gear, STEM activity supplies and water quality testing materials, Project WET/WILD materials (\$12,000/year x 3 years = \$36,000).	Materials and supplies to conduct environmental education programming with youth.					\$36,000
	Equipment	Equipment and vehicle maintenance and repair - this program primarily utilizes existing equipment such as 10-person North canoes, vans, and trailers, however these require annual maintenance and repair to use safely across the state. (\$15,000/year x 3 years = \$45,000).	Maintenance needed to keep equipment safe for direct environmental education programming with youth.					\$45,000
	Equipment	6 Kevlar tandem canoes (\$2,000/canoe x 6 canoes = \$12,000)	Tandem canoes are essential to deliver extended program opportunities statewide, so that youth and families who don't otherwise have access to canoes and recreational gear can participate in place-based educational programming.					\$12,000
							<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>\$93,000</b>
<b>Capital Expenditures</b>								
		1 single-axel tree trailer to carry and transport tandem canoes (1 trailer x \$15,000)	Remackel Trailers based in Minnesota has created a specialized trailer to safely haul six of our tandem canoes at a time.	X				\$15,000
							<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>\$15,000</b>
<b>Acquisitions and Stewardship</b>								



							<b>Sub Total</b>	-
<b>Travel In Minnesota</b>								
	Other	Student transportation and busing	When needed, and in order to make programming accessible to youth from low-income backgrounds, Wilderness Inquiry assists with student buses to program locations near the school. (\$300/day x 50 events = \$15,000).					\$15,000
	Miles/ Meals/ Lodging	Transportation for Wilderness Inquiry staff to deliver environmental education events across the state via van with trailer and boats (205 day/local events x avg. 50 miles round trip x .58 = \$7,250; 45 greater MN evts = 9 tours // 1500 miles round-trip/tour x 9 tours x .58 = \$7,830; 75 overnight/extended trips x avg. 200 miles round-trip x \$0.58 = \$8,700).	In order to deliver environmental education programming, Wilderness Inquiry staff must travel across the state (with boats and equipment) in order to reach students in the communities where they live.					\$22,500
	Miles/ Meals/ Lodging	Food for participants on events - includes food during day programming for youth and meals on extended/overnight trips for youth and families (600 participants x 4 days x \$10/day per pax = \$24,000); Day: (19,400 pax x \$.50/pax = \$9,700)	In order to make our programs accessible, funding supports costs associated with purchase of food for program participants during day and extended trips.					\$33,700
							<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>\$71,200</b>
<b>Travel Outside Minnesota</b>								
							<b>Sub Total</b>	-
<b>Printing and Publication</b>								
							<b>Sub Total</b>	-
<b>Other Expenses</b>								
		Program reservations and rentals (permits, campsites and shelter reservations, biff rentals, etc.)	In order to conduct programming in state and national parks and on public lands, we purchase permits and reservations for campsites. Additionally, during large day programs and when needed for groups, we will provide portable					\$21,713

			toilets to make programming accessible.					
							<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>\$21,713</b>
							<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>\$1,500,000</b>

## Classified Staff or Generally Ineligible Expenses

Category/Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Justification Ineligible Expense or Classified Staff Request
<p><b>Capital Expenditures</b></p>		<p>1 single-axel tree trailer to carry and transport tandem canoes (1 trailer x \$15,000)</p>	<p>This trailer is essential to safely transport canoes to program locations statewide, so that youth and families who don't otherwise have access to canoes and recreational gear can participate in place-based educational programming.</p> <p><b>Additional Explanation :</b> As canoes and human-powered watercraft are the foundational tool of Wilderness Inquiry programs, the need to transport them to site locations is necessary in order to deliver programming. A tree trailer purchased with ENRTF funds will be used for the entirety of its lifespans to connect Minnesota youth to place-based educational opportunities in the outdoors.</p>

## Non ENRTF Funds

Category	Specific Source	Use	Status	Amount
<b>State</b>				
			<b>State Sub Total</b>	-
<b>Non-State</b>				
Cash	Carolyn Foundation	Funding specifically to connect Minneapolis youth to a progression of immersive outdoor experiences. Supports overall LCCMR program goals to connect youth & families to environmental education programming.	Secured	\$22,000
Cash	H.B. Fuller	Funding specifically to connect Saint Paul youth to a progression of immersive outdoor experiences. Supports overall LCCMR program goals to connect youth & families to environmental education programming.	Secured	\$5,000
Cash	Linsmayer Foundation	Funding specifically to connect Minneapolis youth to a progression of immersive outdoor experiences. Supports overall LCCMR program goals to connect youth & families to environmental education programming.	Secured	\$25,000
In-Kind	National Park Service	NPS provides program staff and Rangers in-kind to support programs, deliver educational materials, and guide students through place-based environmental education lessons on the Mississippi River.	Secured	\$60,000
In-Kind	USDA Forest Service (USFS)	USFS provides program staff in-kind to support programs, deliver educational and career pathway content, and guide students through place-based environmental education lessons in Forest Service-managed areas statewide.	Secured	\$15,000
In-Kind	Wilderness Inquiry	Wilderness Inquiry will contribute the following in-kind support to this project: staff benefits; additional staff support including from the Executive Director, Business Operations Director, External Relations Director, and Executive Assistant; equipment and facilities; staff food and lodging; insurance; and vans for program transportation.	Secured	\$270,000
Cash	Minnesota Public School Districts	When able, school districts and schools contribute a small amount of fee for service funding to support Canoemobile programs in their community.  Additionally, school districts and teachers contribute valuable time and resources to this project through staffing field trips/place-based programming, providing substitute teachers, recruiting and contacting students, and planning and prep time.	Pending	\$210,000
Cash	National Park Service	Funding specifically to connect Twin Cities youth to educational and recreational programming on the Mississippi River. Supports overall LCCMR program goals to connect youth to environmental education programming.	Secured	\$18,000

Cash	RBC Wealth Management	Funding specifically to connect Twin Cities youth to a progression of immersive outdoor experiences. Supports overall LCCMR program goals to connect youth & families to environmental education programming.	Secured	\$7,500
Cash	USDA Forest Service	Funding specifically to connect Minnesota youth in urban areas to a progression of immersive outdoor experiences. Supports overall LCCMR program goals to connect youth & families to environmental education programming.	Pending	\$150,000
			<b>Non State Sub Total</b>	<b>\$782,500</b>
			<b>Funds Total</b>	<b>\$782,500</b>

## Attachments

### Required Attachments

#### *Visual Component*

File: [b1dee930-8c3.pdf](#)

#### *Alternate Text for Visual Component*

Alt text for Visual Component:

Header: Outdoor Pathways to Environmental Education, Recreation, and Careers

Body: Program description and goals

Footer: Learn more at [wildernessinquiry.org](#)

Sidebar: Quote from program partner

Photos: Showing youth participating in Wilderness Inquiry programs

Image: Map of Minnesota communities served by Wilderness Inquiry...

#### *Financial Capacity*

File: [620d6e5d-e20.pdf](#)

#### *Board Resolution or Letter*

Title	File
Wilderness Inquiry Board Authorization for LCCMR application	<a href="#">727b4862-5f0.pdf</a>

### Optional Attachments

#### *Support Letter, Photos, Media, Other*

Title	File
Letter of Support for Wilderness Inquiry from NPS	<a href="#">ddbaf3a7-4d1.pdf</a>

## Administrative Use

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

No

**Does your project have potential for royalties, copyrights, patents, or sale of products and assets?**

No

**Do you understand and acknowledge IP and revenue-return and sharing requirements in 116P.10?**

N/A

**Do you wish to request reinvestment of any revenues into your project instead of returning revenue to the ENRTF?**

N/A

**Does your project include original, hypothesis-driven research?**

No

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

No

**Does your project include the design, construction, or renovation of a building, trail, campground, or other capital asset costing \$10,000 or more?**

No

**Do you propose using an appropriation from the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund to conduct a project that provides children's services, as defined in Minnesota Statutes section 299C.61 Subd.7?**

Yes

**Do you certify that background checks are performed for background check crimes, as defined in Minnesota Statutes, section 299C.61, Subd. 2, on all employees, contractors, and volunteers who have or may have access to a child to whom children's services are provided by your organization?**

Yes

