



Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

2024 Request for Proposal

General Information

Proposal ID: 2024-139

Proposal Title: The Boundary Waters is Our Backyard

Project Manager Information

Name: Alison Nyenhuis

Organization: Friends of the Boundary Waters Wilderness

Office Telephone: (612) 263-0347

Email: alison@friends-bwca.org

Project Basic Information

Project Summary: Connecting students from Northeastern Minnesota, especially Ely and Cook County schools, to the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness through grade-wide day trips and overnight wilderness experiences during the school year.

Funds Requested: \$582,000

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?

Region(s): NE

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

Region(s): NE

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.

Through our “No Boundaries to the Boundary Waters” education program, Friends staff connected with schools in Northeastern Minnesota and found a shared concern among local educators: despite a close proximity to the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness (BWCA), many students have never visited this beloved wilderness area.

Upon further discussion with teachers and administrators in Ely and Cook County Schools, we discovered great enthusiasm to close this gap in access through grade-wide educational experiences to the BWCA during the school year that culminate in overnight trip opportunities for all students. Discussions with educators and members of the Native Nations near the Boundary Waters highlighted a similar desire, with additional focus on visiting the wilderness through a cultural lens and including harvests such as ricing or maple sugaring.

Operating grade-wide field trips is expensive. In school districts like Ely and Cook County, there is a wide range of financial need, making it difficult to implement day trips or overnight trips to the wilderness area at a school level.

The Friends seeks to connect these students, who have "the Boundary Waters in their backyard," to the BWCA through cumulative wilderness experiences that enable students to develop a sense of place and stewardship.

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.

Schools such as Ely Public Schools, Cook County Schools, and the Native Nations bordering the BWCA have not only expressed interest in integrating BWCA experiences during the school year, they are geographically situated to do so.

The Friends is well-positioned to facilitate such programming with our extensive outfitter network, classroom lesson resources, and relationships with local experts to bring scientific and cultural topics to wilderness experiences, resulting in entire grades of students building life-long skills while forming a deeper understanding of the local ecosystem.

Our project will implement school-wide BWCA experiences that progress in depth and skill with each grade level, from day trips to capstone overnight trips. In this way, school programming will be scaffolded uniquely for each grade, increasing familiarity and student confidence as they progress in their school career. This will result in entire classes of students having multiple experiences in the BWCA by the end of the grant term

Programming would provide opportunities to tie real-world experiences to curriculum content areas like water quality, ecology, and Indigenous cultural studies, in addition to opportunities for students to practice teamwork and learn new skills.

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?

This project would provide entire school communities with a deep understanding of the wilderness area close to home, leading to student outcomes such as:

- Connection to place through increased understanding of their ecosystem, and subsequent desire for increased stewardship
- Lifelong skills leading to increased recreation in Minnesota’s outdoors
- Introduction to and awareness of conservation-related career opportunities

This foundational knowledge fosters long-term care and conservation of places like the Boundary Waters as students leave with experiences and skills that stay with them through adulthood.

Activities and Milestones

Activity 1: Connecting Northeastern Minnesota students to grade-wide field trip opportunities in the Boundary Waters during the school year.

Activity Budget: \$582,000

Activity Description:

Friends of the Boundary Waters will implement immersive, grade-level BWCA experiences for 7th-12th grade students at Ely and Cook County Schools during the school year, culminating in capstone overnight experiences for roughly 80 seniors each year.

In doing so, this project reaches many Indigenous students who attend these schools, and our additional partnerships with the Nett Lake and Fond du Lac communities will provide opportunities for Indigenous students from other districts to experience the BWCA through this program. Programming focused on Indigenous students will include culturally-relevant teachings led by members of these communities.

Program elements would be collaborative with each school and include:

“Boundary Waters Sampler Day Trips” to introduce students to activities in the Boundary Waters, such as paddling, hiking, examining water quality, and exploring the ecosystem in and near the BWCA.

“Wilderness Day Trips” give opportunities for small groups to explore for a full day with local experts in topics such as fishing, hiking, water quality, and wild ricing.

"BWCA Overnights" capstone building on previous years for high school students.

This progression supports lifelong learning and a sense of stewardship as students become more aware and confident through repeat experiences in the Boundary Waters.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Hold consultations with participating teachers before BWCA experiences regarding registration, content areas, and assessment.	August 31, 2024
Recruit local experts in scientific and cultural content areas for assisting in program implementation.	September 30, 2024
Over three years, 1,060 Northeastern Minnesota students have day-trip experiences in or near BWCA.	June 30, 2027
Over three years, 480 Northeastern Minnesota students have overnight experiences in the Boundary Waters.	June 30, 2027
Teachers facilitate student post-experience assessment after each grade-level experience.	June 30, 2027

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?

We will evaluate desired outcomes named above through teacher and student feedback, with the opportunity for multi-year data as students progress through grade-level programs. This will drive efforts for modifications as we institutionalize this project into our larger No Boundaries to the Boundary Waters programming, tailored specifically for communities close in proximity to the BWCA.

We will financially support this project and the larger No Boundaries to the Boundary Waters programming through continued fundraising efforts via grants, individual donations, corporate sponsorships, and/or event revenue.

Other ENRTF Appropriations Awarded in the Last Six Years

Name	Appropriation	Amount Awarded
Connecting Students to the Boundary Waters	M.L. 2019, First Special Session, Chp. 4, Art. 2, Sec. 2, Subd. 05b	\$450,000

Project Manager and Organization Qualifications

Project Manager Name: Alison Nyenhuis

Job Title: Education Director

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

Alison Nyenhuis, Education Director, has been with the Friends of the Boundary Waters Wilderness since 2019. She oversees the No Boundaries to the Boundary Waters program that is funded in part by our 2019 LCCMR appropriation "Connecting Students to the Boundary Waters". Under her direction, our current project has met or exceeded goals and metrics laid out in the application in spite of COVID-related setbacks and modifications.

As a former classroom teacher, youth wilderness guide, and environmental educator, she has a wealth of experience in outdoor education, project management, and inspiring young learners of all backgrounds. She is skilled in curriculum development, and organizing and administering large-scale projects. While overseeing our current LCCMR-funded project, she has demonstrated that she also has the skills and creativity to adapt to unforeseen circumstances.

Organization: Friends of the Boundary Waters Wilderness

Organization Description:

Since 1976, Friends of the Boundary Waters Wilderness has been the leading voice for the ongoing protection, preservation, and restoration of the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness (BWCA). Our organization was instrumental in the passage of the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness Act of 1978, which made the Boundary Waters what it is today.

The mission of the Friends of the Boundary Waters Wilderness is to protect, preserve and restore the wilderness character of the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness and Quetico-Superior ecosystem. We believe that in order to protect, preserve and restore the wilderness, increased access is necessary. Our future generations of land stewards are the youth of today.

We envision a future where all people feel welcome in the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness and help to maintain the natural recreational resources of the space. A future where threats to that wilderness no longer exist, and where communities surrounding the BWCA are prosperous and thriving. These drive our day-to-day work and we foresee the greatest impact to come through our No Boundaries to the Boundary Waters program.

Budget Summary

Category / Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Purpose	Gen. Ineligible	% Benefits	# FTE	Classified Staff?	\$ Amount
Personnel								
Program Coordinator Salary (\$50,000) + 25% Benefits (\$12,500) = \$62,500/FTE x 3 years, plus a 5% pay raise years 2 and 3 = \$192,500		Works in Northeastern Minnesota to coordinate between school staff, outfitting network, and local experts to facilitate day and overnight experiences in the Boundary Waters.			25%	3		\$192,500
							Sub Total	\$192,500
Contracts and Services								
TBD	Professional or Technical Service Contract	Speakers or partners to provide programming during day or overnight trips. \$4,000 available per year for 3 years.				-		\$12,000
							Sub Total	\$12,000
Equipment, Tools, and Supplies								
	Equipment	Equipment to practice cultural harvesting in the Boundary Waters, such as ricing or sugarbush supplies. Estimated \$3,000 per set, 2 sets.	For culturally-focused BWCA day trips or overnights geared towards Indigenous students					\$6,000
	Tools and Supplies	Gear for students to use on trail such as rain gear, fleece layers, and wool socks. Set of 50 rain gear (\$200 each), fleeces (\$50 each) = \$12,500. \$3500 remaining for socks (\$15/pair) and other gear as needed.	Especially when traveling in the shoulder season these items are necessary for a positive trip experience, and many students do not have these readily available.					\$16,000
							Sub Total	\$22,000

Capital Expenditures								
							Sub Total	-
Acquisitions and Stewardship								
							Sub Total	-
Travel In Minnesota								
	Miles/ Meals/ Lodging	Travel in Northeastern Minnesota, often between Ely, Grand Marais, and BWCA entry points. Average of 250 miles round trip x 12 times a year x 3 years = 9,000 miles, roughly \$6000 in mileage. 8 overnight stays during travel per year X\$125 = \$3000. Remaining \$1,000 for food while traveling.	Travel to Ely, Grand Marais, and other Northeastern communities to plan and implement the project. Those these areas are geographically close, the travel time between them is significant due to the available routes around the wilderness area.					\$10,000
	Other	Transportation of students to field trip experiences: an average of \$16 dollars per students for transportation on buses for grade-wide experiences in the Boundary Waters. \$16X1540 students = \$24,640. Round to \$25,000 for increased fuel costs.	Transportation of students is one of the largest barriers faced in getting students out in the wilderness area. This category will provide full reimbursements to each school for transportation costs, and have been estimated with rates from bus companies used by the schools.					\$25,000
							Sub Total	\$35,000
Travel Outside Minnesota								
							Sub Total	-
Printing and Publication								
	Printing	Trip journals for students on overnight trips (\$6.25/student X480 = \$3000)	Trip journals feature curriculum centered on reflection, leadership, and the Boundary Waters, students will use on trail and continue to revisit their journals after a trip.					\$3,000
							Sub Total	\$3,000

Other Expenses								
		Outfitting fees for day trips and overnight experiences near and in the BWCAW. ($\$50/\text{student}$ for day trips \times 1,060) + ($\$500/\text{student}$ for overnights \times 480) = $\$292,000$	To carry out grade-wide experiences in the BWCA.					\$292,000
		Stipends for teachers supervising overnight experiences: $\$300/\text{teacher}$ on overnight \times 85 teachers needed = $\$25,500$	Teachers are needed in each small group for overnights. Due to the group size limit in the Boundary Waters, 1 teacher is needed for every 6 students. $480/6$ students = 80, plus a few additional teachers for student groups that need additional adult support on trips.					\$25,500
							Sub Total	\$317,500
							Grand Total	\$582,000

Classified Staff or Generally Ineligible Expenses

Category/Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Justification Ineligible Expense or Classified Staff Request
---------------	---------------------	-------------	--

Non ENRTF Funds

Category	Specific Source	Use	Status	Amount
State				
			State Sub Total	-
Non-State				
In-Kind	Individual donations and foundation grants which support general operations	Additional staff support from the Operations Director, Education Director, and Community Coordinator. (.07 FTE per year X 3 years = \$50,000)	Secured	\$50,000
			Non State Sub Total	\$50,000
			Funds Total	\$50,000

Attachments

Required Attachments

Visual Component

File: [899776d3-d4b.pdf](#)

Alternate Text for Visual Component

1-page document with photos of students on canoe trips and working together under the title "The Boundary Waters is our Backyard." Project description, including the number of students on day trips and overnights listed in the milestones, along with a map of the area reached in Northeastern MN....

Financial Capacity

File: [75d58b6d-8db.pdf](#)

Board Resolution or Letter

Title	File
Board Resolution	09d015db-c8c.pdf

Optional Attachments

Support Letter, Photos, Media, Other

Title	File
Cook County Superintendent Letter of Support	dee32c56-b43.pdf
Ely High School Letter of Support	47bb3d6d-5dc.pdf
Nett Lake Elementary Letter of Support	d900987c-f29.pdf

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

