



Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

2026 Request for Proposal

General Information

Proposal ID: 2026-537

Proposal Title: Sharing PWLC Environmental Programs with Partner School Students

Project Manager Information

Name: Jane Stock

Organization: Friends of the Prairie Wetlands Learning Center

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Project Basic Information

Project Summary: The ENRTF grant will provide two full-time Naturalist Educators that will extend programming at the Prairie Wetlands LC beyond what the FPWLC have currently allotted through June of 2028

ENRTF Funds Requested: \$320,000

Proposed Project Completion: June 30, 2029

LCCMR Funding Category: Education and Outdoor Recreation (C)

Project Location

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

Region(s): NW

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.

In the fall of 2024, it was forecast that funding to fill positions for retiring US Fish and Wildlife Services staff (two Instructional Systems Specialists) was not forthcoming. Prior to that time, students from area schools, including homeschooled students, were invited to attend scheduled guided field trips that covered a variety of nature-related themes, including ecosystems, prairie and wetlands habitats and restoration, seasonal hibernation and migration patterns of waterfowl and songbirds and species adaptation. Environmental learning programming at the Prairie Wetlands Learning Center was part of a unique partnership with the Fergus Falls (ISD 544) Schools, where 200 students had daily classes taught by elementary-certified educators and the FWS staff. With an emphasis on outdoor learning, students' coursework, aligned to MN State Science Standards, provided them with methods for recording and analyzing data in student journals. Whether making daily or seasonal observations, students learned to record longitudinal evidence to make and test hypotheses. Students were taught to hone their observation skills, using them to assess anything from weather patterns to differentiating between native and invasive prairie plants or between terrestrial and aquatic invertebrates. So-called Partner School visits were significantly curtailed when staff positions remained unfilled due to budget constraints.

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.

In June of 2023, Friends of PWLC pursued an award from a local granting agency which supplied a much-needed Sustainability Grant. This provided part-time seasonal employment to bridge a gap in staffing beginning January of 2024. Three well-qualified applicants were subsequently hired and supplied curriculum at a time when the Friends' Greenhouse Naturalist was transitioning from ISS duties to the demands of full-time instruction on prairie plantings. This measure was, however, temporary as the grant monies and matching funds were soon depleted. Prior to the retirement of the PWLC Director, a meeting of community leaders brought increased motivation for a regional FWS staff member to pledge support to fill both the Directorship and one ISS position. The Board of the Friends of PWLC had the good fortune of receiving a trust endowment of significant value and voted to fund two part-time Naturalist Educator positions for three years. This option, however, only partially funds programming and only during the school year. While hiring part-time Naturalist Educators has allowed many area schools to schedule guided winter and spring student visits, the ENRTF grant would return summer programming, including Firefly and Wildflower Walks, and Nature Tots to supplement the popular Monarch Tagging events.

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?

Underground Inhabitants, a popular simulation of an underground burrow, once enhanced students' understandings about an earthy habitat for birds and mammals. Experiencing fireflies beginning to flicker above the cattails at dusk on a June evening is enhanced by the quiet voice of a Naturalist Educator sharing bug behavior. Immersion in the outdoors lays a foundation in stewardship and grows the next generation of conservation professionals. As one of our local Rotary groups shared by way of a forum on suicide prevention at the PWLC Visitor Center, such experiences offer refreshment for the mind, body, and soul.

Activities and Milestones

Activity 1: Increase participation in environmental programs to students in area Partner Schools during the academic year.

Activity Budget: \$302,000

Activity Description:

While the current employment of 2 part-time Naturalist Educators fulfills a part of the total environmental programming at the Prairie Wetlands Learning Center, there is much more that could be offered by hiring 2 full-time employees. Records indicate that the total number of students served from visiting schools sine 2005, including homeschoolers, is 52,760. Between 2008-2020 (pre-pandemic), the average annual student visitor total was 4,468. After staff layoffs, the program has been able to serve other grade levels in the Fergus Falls area, including private and parochial schools, as well as those schools outside of Fergus Falls who wish to bring students for "self-guided" tours. These totals have ranged from 1403 to 1573, a significant decrease from earlier years. Increased employee hours will allow for additional visits by Partner Schools with a goal of increasing the number of student visits by 20%+. Curricula for school and summer programming will continue to focus on the themes articulated by the MN State Science Standards with Outdoor Education supplemented by the Compass to Nature (USFWS Publication) focus on Place, Phenology, Naturalists, and Journals that encourages building relationships with nature. The goal is for classes to visit seasonally, fall, winter, and spring.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Yearly wages paid to 2 full-time (40 hr/wk) Naturalist Educators for Partner Schools	June 30, 2027
Yearly wages paid to 2 full-time (40 hr/wk) Naturalist Educators for Partner Schools.	June 30, 2028
Yearly wages paid to 2 full-time (40 hr/wk) Naturalist Eduators for Partner Schools.	June 30, 2029
Partner schools visits reflect an increase of 25%+ at the end of the cycle.	June 30, 2029

Activity 2: Increase summer programming in environmental outdoor education to students and families in Fergus Falls and surrounding areas.

Activity Budget: \$16,500

Activity Description:

Summer programming will include Biology Camp for 5th-6th graders and Monarch Tagging, two established programs that remain popular for visitors. Additional programs that impact preschool through adult learners will be encouraged. Some programs that bring attention to the prairie pothole region are book-related "walk 'n talks": "Braiding Sweetgrass for Young Adults" and "Plant a Pocket of Prairie" for children. Reflections related to prairie restoration might include journaling and/or a drawing component. Twice monthly age-specific programs may include Nature Tots for ages 4-5 with an adult and Nature Programs for K-6th grades. Sample Topics: Birds; Reptiles & Amphibians; Plants; and Monarch Mania. A focus on evening programming may include interpretive programs such as a Firefly Walk.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Increase Summer Programming in Environmental Education for all ages to 8 workshops/events.	August 31, 2027
VC and Store staffed by Naturalist Educators seasonally May 15-Labor Day 3+da/wk	September 30, 2027
Increase Summer Programming in Environmental Education for all ages to 8 workshops/events.	June 30, 2028
VC and Store staffed by Naturalist Educators seasonally May 15-Labor Day 3+da/wk	September 30, 2028
Increase Summer Programming in Environmental Education for all ages to 8 workshops/events.	June 30, 2029

VC and Store staffed by Naturalist Educators seasonally May 15-Labor Day 3+da/wk;	June 30, 2029
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Activity 3: Encourage Community Engagement

Activity Budget: \$1,500

Activity Description:

Survey students and their families to assist in determinizing programming for summer. Include programs/events from previous summer; use social media and/or Friends of Prairie Wetlands Learning Center website as appropriate to request preregistration for events. Continue to offer engaging summer programming and track student participation by school district and/or citites' and towns' summer programming.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Weekly social Media Posts (update website as needed)	June 30, 2027
Creation of event or program flyers/posters	June 30, 2028
Informal surveys of the community to assist in program planning ideas	June 30, 2029

Project Partners and Collaborators

Name	Organization	Role	Receiving Funds
Naomi Baucom	US Fish and Wildlife Service	Supervisory Ranger/Director of the Prairie Wetlands Learning Center. Supervises staff and oversees projects involving the PWLC. Will be providing the Friends with support, updates and progress reviews.	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?

The historical features of the PWLC have been well-documented since the idea for this unique set-aside first began with the purchase of acreage in 1971. The Friends of PWLC have data that has tracked school district visits by number of students and adults since 2005 through a Yellow Bus Fund. This program subsidizes a portion of transportation costs to applicants. To supply documentation for this grant, the FPWLC will report on any increases in the number of partner schools that visit, the number of students who visit, how frequently they return, and what specific programs they take part in.

Project Manager and Organization Qualifications

Project Manager Name: Jane Stock

Job Title: Past President, Friends of the Prairie Wetlands Learning Center

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

As past President and continuing grant writing volunteer for the Friends of the Prairie Wetlands Learning Center, I am in a position to manage the distribution of funds made available to the Friends of the Prairie Wetlands Learning Center by this MN State Granting agency. The association of Friends groups was originally set up in accordance with USFWS for the purposes of the maintenance of environmental programming to the public.

Organization: Friends of the Prairie Wetlands Learning Center

Organization Description:

Friends of the Prairie Wetlands Learning Center was established in 1990 after incorporation as a 501.c 3 with the State of Minnesota by way of the Office of the Secretary of State in accordance with the IRS and request for tax exempt status (EIN 41-1699443). Annual reports are submitted to the Minnesota Attorney General Office as required by the Minnesota Charitable Solicitation Act. As an incorporated group that is part of the US Fish and Wildlife Service, the Friends of PWLC exist to support the environmental programming of the National Wildlife Refuge System at the local level. As presented in the original Bylaws of this organization, its purpose (Article IV) is to establish, maintain, support, endow, and assist in operating in the City of Fergus Falls ... a learning center advocating the preservation of prairie wetlands and grasslands, promoting of general environmental education for all persons, entities, corporations, and interested parties; enhancing implementation of Prairie Wetlands Learning Center goals; enhancing awareness of the PWLC and soliciting community, regional, state, and federal support, including soliciting funds for the PWLC.

Budget Summary

Category / Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Purpose	Gen. Ineligible	% Benefits	# FTE	Classified Staff?	\$ Amount
Personnel								
Naturalist Educator		Instruct visiting students on Environmental Education			15%	3		\$151,000
Naturalist Educator		Instruct visiting students on Environmental Education			15%	3		\$151,000
							Sub Total	\$302,000
Contracts and Services								
Molly Stoddard	Service Contract	Guest Instructor #1-Teaching in the Outdoor Classroom				3		\$4,500
Mona Davis	Service Contract	Guest Instructor #2-Teaching in the Outdoor Classroom				3		\$4,500
							Sub Total	\$9,000
Equipment, Tools, and Supplies								
	Equipment	field guides, office supplies, classroom educator supplies, field supplies etc	Indoor and outdoor education tools					\$3,400
							Sub Total	\$3,400
Capital Expenditures								
							Sub Total	-
Acquisitions and Stewardship								
							Sub Total	-
Travel In Minnesota								
	Miles/ Meals/ Lodging	3 trips (1/year), 1200 miles, 2 people, lodging 24 nights (2 rooms/trip), per diem	training					\$5,000
							Sub Total	\$5,000

Travel Outside Minnesota								
							Sub Total	-
Printing and Publication								
	Printing	copies, booklets, flyers, posters	Advertising, workshops and school materials					\$600
							Sub Total	\$600
Other Expenses								
							Sub Total	-
							Grand Total	\$320,000

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
State				
			State Sub Total	-
Non-State				
Cash	Friends of the Prairie Wetlands Learning Center	The Friends of the Prairie Wetlands Learning Center will provide 100% of funds for the FPWLC Part-time Administrator who will receive payments and track progress on reporting for ENRTF by way of the USFWS Ranger/Director of PWLC (currently Naomi Baucom) and Micayla Nelson, President of the Friends of the Prairie Wetlands Learning Center.	Secured	\$7,636
In-Kind	US Fish & Wildlife Service, Fergus Falls Wetlands Management District, Prairie Wetlands Learning Center	USFWS will provide office space, equipment, and supplies for Naturalist Educators during their full-time employment at the Prairie Wetlands Learning Center. The value of supervision and mentoring of Naturalist Educators hired by the Friends of the Prairie Wetlands Learning Center is not included in the in-kind estimate.	Secured	-
			Non State Sub Total	\$7,636
			Funds Total	\$7,636

Total Project Cost: \$327,636

This amount accurately reflects total project cost?

Yes

Attachments

Required Attachments

Visual Component

File: [ef26b22c-f24.pdf](#)

Alternate Text for Visual Component

2024 IRS Form 990 EZ, Tax Summary, and Letter from MN Secretary of State...

Administrative Use

Does your project include restoration or acquisition of land rights?

No

Do you understand that travel expenses are only approved if they follow the "Commissioner's Plan" promulgated by the Commissioner of Management of Budget or, for University of Minnesota projects, the University of Minnesota plan?

Yes, I understand the Commissioner's Plan applies.

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

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 pre-design, design, construction, or renovation of a building, trail, campground, or other fixed capital asset costing \$10,000 or more or large-scale stream or wetland restoration?

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 as "the provision of care, treatment, education, training, instruction, or recreation to children")?

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

Provide the name(s) and organization(s) of additional individuals assisting in the completion of this proposal:

Micayla Nelson, President, Grant Writing Committee member, Friends of the Prairie Wetlands Learning Center

Do you understand that a named service contract does not constitute a funder-designated subrecipient or approval of a sole-source contract? In other words, a service contract entity is only approved if it has been selected according to the contracting rules identified in state law and policy for organizations that receive ENRTF funds through direct appropriations, or in the DNR's reimbursement manual for non-state organizations. These rules may include competitive bidding and prevailing wage requirements

Yes, I understand

