

Final Abstract

Final Report Approved on November 26, 2024

M.L. 2020 Project Abstract

For the Period Ending June 30, 2024

Project Title: Yes! Students Take On Water Quality Challenge II

Project Manager: Kalley Pratt

Affiliation: Prairie Woods Environmental Learning Center

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City/State/Zip: Spicer, MN 56288

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E-mail: kalley@yesmn.org

Website: <http://www.prairiewoodselc.org>

Funding Source:

Fiscal Year:

Legal Citation: M.L. 2021, First Special Session, Chp. 6, Art. 5, Sec. 2, Subd. 05g

Appropriation Amount: \$199,000

Amount Spent: \$195,734

Amount Remaining: \$3,266

Sound bite of Project Outcomes and Results

Since the start of this grant, 650 students across 35 YES Teams have completed 130 eco-action projects, impacting over 65,000 community members. Students volunteered 2,800 hours, partnering with 145 experts. Projects addressed water conservation, invasive species, and more, with over 36 workshops held statewide.

Overall Project Outcome and Results

Over the course of two years, Youth Eco Solutions (YES) successfully engaged 650 students across 35 teams, surpassing the goal of recruiting 200 students in over 20 communities. These students selected and led water quality projects, reaching over 65,000 community members and working with 145 experts, including 16 water quality professionals. YES provided 36 workshops, educating students on water quality issues - at times using the 3-Step Water Awareness Model. This training equipped students with the skills to implement impactful projects, while fostering collaboration with local watershed experts to ensure effective action plans.

YES Teams completed 130 eco-action projects, including over 30 new water quality and conservation initiatives. More than 200 students developed and executed these projects, addressing issues such as water quality monitoring, invasive

species, and water conservation. These projects positively impacted 20 local watersheds, with students taking a hands-on role in identifying solutions for their communities. In total, YES Students contributed over 2,800 volunteer hours, mobilizing their peers and local volunteers to support these initiatives.

In addition to project work, YES hosted 200 educational events, further raising awareness and providing opportunities for community engagement. The annual Water Quality Stewardship Award recognized outstanding student efforts, including the New London - Spicer Middle School YES Team in 2021-22, the Harbor City International YES Team in 2022-23 and all YES Participants in the 2023-24 season.

By successfully achieving these goals, YES has fostered environmental leadership, increased awareness of water quality issues, and built strong community partnerships. Thanks to ENRTF, the YES program has been able to make a lasting impact on both students and their communities, creating a foundation for continued action and advocacy in water conservation and stewardship.

Project Results Use and Dissemination

Effective communication of YES Teams' achievements is a top priority. We keep YES Coaches connected through Bi-Weekly updates to foster community and mutual support. Our monthly e-newsletter highlights team accomplishments, events, website updates, and new blog posts. Social media plays a vital role in quickly sharing success stories, strengthening our online presence. Additionally, we publish the annual YES Team Accomplishments Brochure, celebrating the project's highlights. YES is also actively engaged in key events like the MN State Fair, MN Science Teachers Conference and Earth Day at Prairie Woods. We work closely with media and highlight ENRTF as our main supporter.



Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

M.L. 2020 Approved Final Report

General Information

Date: December 11, 2024

ID Number: 2020-069

Staff Lead: Noah Fribley

Project Title: Yes! Students Take On Water Quality Challenge II

Project Budget: \$199,000

Project Manager Information

Name: Kalley Pratt

Organization: Prairie Woods Environmental Learning Center

Office Telephone: (320) 894-8538

Email: kalley@yesmn.org

Web Address: <http://www.prairiewoodselc.org>

Project Reporting

Final Report Approved: November 26, 2024

Reporting Status: Project Completed

Date of Last Action: November 26, 2024

Project Completion: June 30, 2024

Legal Information

Legal Citation: M.L. 2021, First Special Session, Chp. 6, Art. 5, Sec. 2, Subd. 05g

Appropriation Language: \$199,000 the second year is from the trust fund to the commissioner of natural resources for an agreement with Prairie Woods Environmental Learning Center to mobilize local watershed stewardship efforts in approximately 20 communities through student-driven action projects.

Appropriation End Date: June 30, 2024

Narrative

Project Summary: Students from YES! teams in over 20 communities will help fill the urgent need for citizen participation to protect and clean-up Minnesota waters through hands-on youth-led water related action projects

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

Youth Eco Solutions (YES!) teams will mobilize local watershed stewardship efforts in over 20 communities and help fill the urgent need for broad citizen participation to protect and clean-up Minnesota waters. Completing over 1,400 ecological action projects since 2007, YES! has empowered youth to be active contributors to real solutions by mobilizing their communities.

Starting in 2018, YES! shifted its experiential learning opportunities to a clear focus on water quality, completing over 50 water related projects. As one student commented, "I learned the power of what just 5 people can do to make a difference in my community." Training more students to engage their communities in water stewardship efforts helps ensure citizens are informed and valuable water quality knowledge and data is acquired to benefit Minnesota's waterways. Student teams will receive hands-on training from local professionals in the areas of aquatic invasive species (AIS), water quality monitoring and water quality improvements and extend their skills through real-world projects in their communities. Projects may include AIS and water quality testing, reporting and monitoring; water conservation techniques; Adopt-a-Drain; solar boat design and build; prairie, lakeshore and habitat restorations; and community awareness events.

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.

PWELC is seeking \$199,000 to implement the 3-Step Water Awareness method developed during Phase I which includes: 1) student and coach orientation to aquatic invasive species (AIS) and training in water quality surveying techniques, 2) student-driven surveying and monitoring of local waterbodies, and 3) completion of student-led action projects and organized public education events. This project is a triple win for Minnesota – youth acquire water quality knowledge, skills and career exposure; communities become more engaged and aware; and the state gains valuable data from its waterways.

During Phase I, the number of water quality related projects completed by students more than doubled from 12 to over 50! These projects will serve as models for Phase II including: water quality testing and evaluation, public events and peer education, planting rain gardens, lakeshore and river restoration and clean-up, storm water awareness, building aquaponics systems, AIS monitoring and reporting, tracking of water usage, and designing and building of solar boats to demonstrate water pollution prevention. Project Guides created by teachers will provide models and resources for projects in Phase II. YES! will work in partnership with Ney Nature Center and Laurentian Environmental Learning Center to engage Minnesota's youth statewide.

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, YES! seeks to protect, conserve and preserve Minnesota's water quality by achieving the following project outcomes:

- Complete 30 or more new student-driven water quality and citizen science projects and public events
- Mobilize over 200 youth and 2,000 or more community members from 20 communities in local water quality issues
- Improve up to 20 valuable Minnesota water bodies by monitoring, testing, and reporting data. Data will contribute to the DNR EDDMapS
- Partner with local experts to provide 10 customized water quality workshops and trainings
- Recognize accomplishments through statewide Water Quality Stewardship competition/award

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

Activities and Milestones

Activity 1: Recruit, Educate, and Train YES! Students in the 3-step Water Awareness model

Activity Budget: \$81,365

Activity Description:

Building on our past experience, YES! students will learn from local and state water quality experts to complete up to 20 water quality and conservation projects over 2 years. In order to raise community awareness of water quality best practices in the local community, students will participate in the 3-step Water Awareness method and identify challenges in their community.

YES! Coordinators recruit new YES! teams and retain existing teams to complete water quality projects. By partnering with local water quality experts to put on a Fall Summit and up to 2 workshops per region, YES! students will receive training in aquatic invasive species (AIS) testing and reporting, Adopt-A-Drain, citizen science, water stewardship, shoreline and buffer restoration best practices. Training will include hands-on identification of aquatic invasive species, how to correctly use water quality measurements such as a Secchi disk, how to accurately record water temperature, and how to identify what watershed they are located in. After training is completed, students educate community members about water quality issues and select and complete one or more water quality projects. Specific metrics will be developed for each water quality project. Some workshops may be delivered virtually in order to reach more students.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Recruit 200 students in over 20 communities to select water quality projects over 2 years	November 30, 2022
Educate and train 20 YES! teams through customized water quality workshops over 2 years	April 30, 2023
Evaluate project impact by number of students, community members and volunteers participating.	June 30, 2023

Activity 2: Take Action! Over 30 New Student Driven, Hands-on Water Quality and Conservation Projects and Public Events Completed in Minnesota

Activity Budget: \$117,635

Activity Description:

YES! will mobilize over 20 YES! student-driven teams (200+ students) in partnership with local watershed experts to implement the 3- Step Water Awareness method which includes: 1) student and coach orientation to aquatic invasive species (AIS) and training in water quality and conservation techniques, 2) surveying and monitoring of local water bodies and prairies, student-drive completion of 30 new eco action projects, and 3) student organized public education events to promote community awareness to protect and improve local water quality.

YES! coordinators work with local experts to support YES! teams and their projects, organize community events, and supply water crafts for on the water activities. YES! teams assess needs in their communities and schools, evaluate and help find local resources to meet these needs, and create an action plan to implement their projects with the support of their adult coach, YES! staff, and local water experts. Projects topics may include: Adopt-a-Drain, AIS testing and monitoring of local water bodies, citizen science, Secchi disk readings, shoreline. prairie and habitat restoration and clean up, educational events, visits to water treatment facilities and landfills, and solar boat design and build. We will recognize exemplary work by awarding the Watershed Stewardship award each year.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Engage over 20 YES! teams to select local water quality projects over 2 yrs	November 30, 2022

Mobilize over 200 students to develop action plans and complete over 30 new water over 2 years	June 30, 2023
Partner with local watershed experts to implement the 3-Step Water Awareness method 20 communities	June 30, 2023
Recognize student achievements through the annual Water Quality Stewardship award	June 30, 2023

Project Partners and Collaborators

Name	Organization	Role	Receiving Funds
Becky Pollack Executive Director	Ney Nature Center, Henderson, MN	Ney Nature Center will be a program partner to facilitate YES! in the southern region by serving as a host site for YES! events, providing oversight to the southern YES! coordinator, processing billing and to ensure the ENRTF project outcomes are met.	Yes
Karl Brown, Executive Director	Laurentian Environmental Center in Britt, MN	Laurentian Environmental Center will be a program partner to facilitate YES! in the northeast region by serving as a host site for YES! events, providing oversight to the northeast YES! coordinator, processing billing, and to ensure the ENRTF project outcomes are met.	Yes
Jonathan Morales, Water Technician	Middle Fork Crow River Watershed District (MFCRWD)	MFCRWD will be a collaborator in providing local expertise in water quality and conservation best practices. Morales and others will share their expertise at YES! events and workshops in order to train and prepare students to do water quality testing and to implement conservation practices.	No
Water Technician	Sauk River Watershed District (SRWD)	SRWD will be a collaborator and we will look to their water quality experts on aquatic invasive species (AIS), seechi disc reading techniques and water testing for compounds that can be reported to the DNR for training and expertise.	No
Marte Kitson, Environmental Literacy Extension Educator	Minnesota Sea Grant Program	Sea Grant will be a collaborator and serve as a local expert in water quality and conservation best practices especially as it relates to Lake Superior and its tributaries. Kitson may present at northeast workshops and events to train students so they can do their testing of local waterways.	No
Bill Grantges	Itasca County Soil and Water Conservation District	Grantges serves as the Itasca County Aquatic Invasive Species Program Coordinator. The SWCD will be a collaborator and Grantges may serve as a water quality expert providing training on aquatic invasive species (AIS), seechi disc reading techniques and water testing for compounds that can be reported to the DNR.	No
Students and Teachers	School Districts in Minnesota	Will be a partner to support youth in participating in water quality projects. Funds will support project seed funds.	Yes
University of Minnesota	Aquatic Invasive Species Department	Will be a collaborator and provide expertise, resources and training.	No
County AIS Coordinators	County Departments	County AIS Coordinators can serve as a water quality expert providing training on aquatic invasive species (AIS), seechi disc reading techniques and water testing for compounds that can be reported to the DNR.	No
Volunteers	Lake Associations	Lake association may be a collaborator and serve as volunteer support for projects.	No
Kimberly Musser	Water Resources Center at Minnesota State University - Mankato	Will be a collaborator for connecting teams to water data and experts in the Minnesota River Basin	No
Lee Ganske	MN Pollution Control Agency	Ganske is the Surface Water Monitoring Coordinator. MPCA will be a collaborator by supporting students collecting data to monitor water quality.	No
Brooke Hacker	MN DNR	Hacker is the Regional Clean Water Legacy Specialist. MN DNR will be a collaborator as a resource for students doing projects related to hydrology in southern MN.	No

Erik Cedarleaf Dahl, Planning Director	Environmental Quality Board (EQB)	Dahl works in policy and rule making for the EQB. He recently researched and wrote the 2020 Water Quality Plan for Minnesota. He was a featured workshop presented for YES! in 2020.	No
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Dissemination

Describe your plans for dissemination, presentation, documentation, or sharing of data, results, samples, physical collections, and other products and how they will follow ENRTF Acknowledgement Requirements and Guidelines.

Information, updates and reports will be made available via the YES! website (www.yesmn.org), YES! e-newsletter (3 times/year), Prairie Woods newsletter (Warbler), Laurentian Environment Center, and Ney Nature Center newsletters and websites. YES! produces an annual Team Accomplishments featuring highlights from the year. YES! will present at opportunities such as Earth Day events, MN Science Teachers Association, SciMathMN, and conferences and other relevant events. Project accomplishments are recognized and publicized via website, newsletters, conference presentations and local, regional and state-wide news media.

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?

YES! has completed its 14th year by leveraging over \$1.5 million in local support of projects in the form of in-kind contributions, matching funds, major grants, and volunteer hours. In addition, YES! will seek private and public partnerships, fundraisers, and sponsorships. YES! provides teams with a Team Funding Toolkit.

The results from this project will leave a lifetime legacy of improved waterways and informed citizens through the various water quality improvement and conservation projects.

Other past supporters of YES! include McKnight, Bush Foundation, Initiative Foundations, Waste Management, LYFT Career Pathways, CERTs, businesses, utilities, corporate sponsorships, and individual donors.

Other ENRTF Appropriations Awarded in the Last Six Years

Name	Appropriation	Amount Awarded
Youth-led Sustainability Initiatives in 40 Greater Minnesota Communities	M.L. 2014, Chp. 226, Sec. 2, Subd. 09b	\$350,000
Youth-Led Sustainability Projects in 50 Minnesota Communities – Phase III	M.L. 2016, Chp. 186, Sec. 2, Subd. 05c	\$400,000
YES! Students Take on Minnesota Water-Quality Challenge	M.L. 2018, Chp. 214, Art. 4, Sec. 2, Subd. 05b	\$213,000

Budget Summary

Category / Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Purpose	Gen. Ineligible	% Benefits	# FTE	Classified Staff?	\$ Amount	\$ Amount Spent	\$ Amount Remaining
Personnel										
Project Manager		To manage project budget, reporting and staff to achieve desired project outcomes and lead water quality and conservation projects with youth teams in Northwestern/Central MN.			25%	1.3		\$84,300	-	-
Regional Coordinator		To coordinate and lead Water Awareness & Water Quality Project initiatives in West Central Minnesota and has also supported Northeastern Minnesota teams (due to the temporary closure of Laurentian Environmental Center).			25%	1		\$50,000	-	-
Office Manager		To provide bookkeeping, process payroll, project seed fund distributions and other office duties			25%	0.24		\$10,400	-	-
Team Manager		To coordinate and support student-driven teams to complete natural resource initiatives in Minnesota.			25%	0.7		\$1,677	-	-
							Sub Total	\$146,377	\$146,376	\$1
Contracts and Services										
Ney Nature Center	Subaward	To facilitate Water Awareness Method, connect teams of youth with local water quality experts and support hands-on student-driven water quality/conservation and ecological projects in southern Minnesota. With additional support to Northern Minnesota teams due to the temporary closure of Laurentian Environmental Center.				0.6		\$30,323	\$30,323	-
							Sub Total	\$30,323	\$30,323	-
Equipment, Tools, and Supplies										

	Tools and Supplies	Supplies for events, workshops and water quality award. Boat rental as needed in some regions. In many regions, boats will be provided through in-kind support.	To enable water quality education and testing with students across Minnesota					\$1,080	\$1,080	-
							Sub Total	\$1,080	\$1,080	-
Capital Expenditures										
							Sub Total	-	-	-
Acquisitions and Stewardship										
							Sub Total	-	-	-
Travel In Minnesota										
	Miles/ Meals/ Lodging	Coordinators & Project Manager travel: 500 miles/month x 24 months = 12,000 miles x .56 = \$6,720	Travel required to support and meet with teams and partners and to coordinate activities in over 20 communities across Minnesota.					\$6,720	\$6,186	\$534
							Sub Total	\$6,720	\$6,186	\$534
Travel Outside Minnesota										
							Sub Total	-	-	-
Printing and Publication										
							Sub Total	-	-	-
Other Expenses										
		Project Seed Funds; Up to \$400 per team x 10 teams = \$4,000 x 2 years = \$8,000.	Allows for teams to purchase materials and services necessary to initiate projects for water quality and conservation related					\$8,000	\$8,000	-

			projects, events, and event registrations to raise awareness, monitoring, testing and reporting.							
		School District/Community Expense allowance	To facilitate student participation, funds will be available for reimbursement to support: 1. Substitute teachers to allow YES! coaches/adult advisors to attend YES! events during the school day, and 2. Transportation expenses for buses or vans for students and coaches/adult advisors to travel to events.					\$6,500	\$3,769	\$2,731
							Sub Total	\$14,500	\$11,769	\$2,731
							Grand Total	\$199,000	\$195,734	\$3,266

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	\$ Amount Spent	\$ Amount Remaining
State						
Cash	LYFT Career Pathways, a program of Southwest West Central Service Cooperative has committed \$25,300 to Prairie Woods Environmental Learning Center. Launch Your Future Today (LYFT) is a rural career and technical education (CTE) pathway initiative with the purpose of rebuilding CTE in southwest and west central Minnesota. The goal of LYFT Pathways is for every secondary student in the region to gain marketable skills through meaningful CTE courses and opportunities which lead to further education and careers that match our region's labor market needs.	The funds will be used to support YES! staff time and travel to provide new opportunities for students in SWWC Minnesota including 1) Green Career workshops and 2) the implementation of an "Eco-Solutions" program rotation at PWELC.	Secured	\$25,300	\$25,300	-
			State Sub Total	\$25,300	\$25,300	-
Non-State						
Cash	Each participating YES! team pays a fee of \$600. We estimate 20 schools will participate in the school years of 2021-2022 and 2022-2023. These are teams that are specifically participating in water related projects. YES! may have up to 30 teams each year. 20 x 2 years = 40 teams total x \$600 = \$24,000	Participation fees cover costs not eligible for reimbursement from ENRTF and additional needed support such as staff, travel, food for events, t-shirts, and office supplies.	Potential	\$24,000	\$14,888	\$9,112
In-Kind	In-kind from Prairie Woods Environmental Learning Center and our partners Ney Nature Center and Laurentian Environmental Center.	PWELC \$24,000 + LEC \$5,000 + NNC \$ 10,000 for 2 years = ; Student volunteer time average is 327 hrs per team x 20 teams for 2 yrs at \$13/hr = \$85,400; Teacher volunteer time average is 98 hrs per team x 20 teams for 2 yrs at \$35/hr = \$68,600; Professional/expert volunteer time average is 33 hrs per team x 20 teams at \$45/hr = \$29,700. Above in-kind is based on past history of previously quantified data.	Potential	\$222,700	\$128,809	\$93,891
			Non State	\$246,700	\$143,697	\$103,003

			Sub Total			
			Funds Total	\$272,000	\$168,997	\$103,003

Attachments

Required Attachments

Visual Component

File: [2f57e1dc-550.pdf](#)

Alternate Text for Visual Component

The visual illustrates the project's goals to complete 30 new student-driven water quality projects, engage and train over 200 youth in 20 communities about local water related issues and improve 20 or more valuable Minnesota water bodies. The visual includes photos of students in kayaks during a paddling sessions to monitor local lakes for aquatic invasive species (AIS), students during a rain garden planting workshop and students stenciling stormwater drains to educate the public on the imp...

Financial Capacity

File: [fc182901-0d2.pdf](#)

Board Resolution or Letter

Title	File
PWELC Board Resolution Letter	3b1828ff-d9a.pdf

Supplemental Attachments

Capital Project Questionnaire, Budget Supplements, Support Letter, Photos, Media, Other

Title	File
LEC Letter of Commitment_2020	a4db8b66-a7e.pdf
NNC Letter of Commitment_2020	ad4c4d8f-ec4.pdf
Forest Lake_Letter of Support	319c4574-538.pdf
Discovery Woods_Letter_of_Support	cb35b658-7c0.pdf
DREAM Academy_Letter_of_Support	ee9f2431-a4f.pdf
Sleepy_Eye_Letter_of_Support	34cfeb83-f70.pdf
Mankato_West_Letter_of_Support	74339aa0-b43.pdf
New London-Spicer_Letter_of_Support	8fd2e9e0-d76.pdf
Northern_Lights_Community_Letter_of_Support	bc14383e-d3a.pdf
New Prague_Letter_of_Support	e19ba73a-d45.pdf
Wrenshall_Letter_of_Support	824363e8-332.pdf
YES! 2019-20 Team Accomplishments	ae8ce931-d81.pdf
YES! 2018-19 Team Accomplishments	b99a69de-eba.pdf
YES! 2020-21 Team Accomplishments	acb04c9f-1ff.pdf
Background Check Certification	9e2968a4-59e.pdf
YES 2022-23 Team Accomplishments	db5bac47-ce6.pdf
YES 2021-22 Team Accomplishments	6e79af76-a02.pdf
Water Protection and Indigenous Leadership Workshop - Harbor City International YES Team	35000ce3-5b0.pdf
Evergreen Collective Workshop	579f5712-9ce.pdf
December 2023 Newsletter To YES Supporters	4bd0f2d5-3f8.pdf
January 3, 2024 - Newsletter to YES Coaches - Highlighting a YES Student Blog	ce3c3860-9e5.pdf
January 10, 2024 - Newsletter to YES Coaches - Highlighting Upcoming Winter Workshops	1e7301c7-03c.pdf
2023-24 YES Team Accomplishments	a45bb8c8-358.pdf

Media Links

Title	Link
YES! (Youth Eco Solutions)	www.yesmn.org
Mankato West interview with KMSU radio in Mankato	https://soundcloud.com/kmsu/youth-eco-solutions-yes-06172021?in=kmsu/sets/earth-week-2021
Youth Eco Solutions Instagram Account	https://www.instagram.com/youth_eco_solutions/
Blog: Kick-Off To The YES 2023-24 Season Was Rock (Climb) in'	https://yesmn.org/kick-off-to-the-yes-2023-24-season-was-rock-climb-in/
Blog: YES: A Student's Perspective	https://yesmn.org/yes-a-students-perspective/
Blog: Evergreen Collective Workshop with Taylor Hall	https://yesmn.org/evergreen-collective-workshop-with-taylor-hall/
Blog: Climate Change Photography with MCAD (Minneapolis College of Art and Design)	https://yesmn.org/climate-change-photography-with-mcad-minneapolis-college-of-art-and-design/
Blog: Lake Minnewaska – January 28, 2024	https://yesmn.org/lake-minnewaska-january-28-2024/
Blog: Royalton YES Team Learns About Aquatic Invasive Species, Energy Efficiency & Forest Migration	https://yesmn.org/royalton-yes-team-learns-about-energy-efficiency-forest-migration-aquatic-invasive-specie/
Blog: Cultivating Connections at the 2023-2024 YES Spring Showcase	https://yesmn.org/cultivating-connections-at-the-2023-2024-yes-spring-showcase/
YES in the News - West Central Tribune Article	https://yesmn.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/West-Central-Tribune-YES.pdf

Difference between Proposal and Work Plan

Describe changes from Proposal to Work Plan Stage

Only minor changes were made to the work plan from the original proposal such as reviewing and updating project collaborators, reviewing and updating milestones and completion dates. Staff comment ID #862 and #863 have been revised and completed. Three new attachments were added to demonstrate the potential of student-driven projects for this project including our 2018-19, 2019-20, and 2020-21 Team Accomplishments.

Additional Acknowledgements and Conditions:

The following are acknowledgements and conditions beyond those already included in the above workplan:

Do you understand and acknowledge the ENRTF repayment requirements if the use of capital equipment changes?

N/A

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

Work Plan Amendments

Amendment ID	Request Type	Changes made on the following pages	Explanation & justification for Amendment Request (word limit 75)	Date Submitted	Approved	Date of LCCMR Action
1	Project Manager	Previous Manager: Joseph Dunlavy (joe.dunlavy@yesmn.org) New Manager: Jennifer Swenson (jennifer.s@prairiewoodselc.org)	Joe Dunlavy leaving his position	August 3, 2022	Yes	August 3, 2022
2	Amendment Request	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project Collaborators - Project Manager Info • Budget - Professional / Technical Contracts • Budget - Personnel 	Due to the temporary closure of Laurentian Environmental Center (a partner on this project) we have instead relied on other Personnel and Ney Professionals to maintain support of these Northeastern YES Teams. Therefore, their hours have been increased. I would like to amend the budget to reflect this shift.	March 1, 2023	Yes	March 6, 2023
3	Completion Date	Previous Completion Date: 07/31/2023 New Completion Date: 06/30/2024	We request an additional twelve months to align with the appropriation end date - allowing us to continue to use the funds allotted for our water quality activities.	May 23, 2023	Yes	May 23, 2023
4	Project Manager	Previous Manager: Jennifer Swenson (jennifer.s@prairiewoodselc.org) New Manager: Kalley Pratt (kalley@yesmn.org)	Kalley Pratt was recently hired as the new Director of Youth Eco Solutions. She began her new position on May 1, 2023, and assumes primary ownership of the mission and provides strategic and collaborative leadership in the program, grants, fundraising and program development. Due to this, she will take over as project manager for this grant.	May 23, 2023	Yes	May 23, 2023
5	Amendment Request	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budget • Project Collaborators - Project Manager Info 	We request to shift \$10,497 in funds from "Professional Service Contract: Ney Nature Center" to "Personnel". YES maintains support from NEY Nature Center in educational and potential facility use capacities, at this time, YES will no longer hire staff through formal partnership contracts with other Cohorts. YES seeks to improve efficiency within and	October 3, 2023	Yes	October 3, 2023

			across jobs, functions and teams, and the systems required to enable optimum outcomes. YES Team support can be improved by streamlining.			
6	Amendment Request	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budget - Personnel • Budget - Professional / Technical Contracts 	We request to shift \$10,497 in funds from "Professional Service Contract: Ney Nature Center" to "Personnel". YES maintains support from NEY Nature Center in educational and potential facility use capacities, at this time, YES will no longer hire staff through formal partnership contracts with other Cohorts. YES seeks to improve efficiency within and across jobs, functions and teams, and the systems required to enable optimum outcomes. YES Team support can be improved by streamlining.	October 28, 2023	Yes	November 9, 2023
7	Amendment Request	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budget • Other • Budget - Personnel • Budget - Professional / Technical Contracts • Budget - Capital, Equipment, Tools, and Supplies • Budget - Travel and Conferences • Budget - Other 	Adjustments to the Amendment Request made on October, 28, 2023, need to be altered after reimbursement requests were submitted and up to date. Rather than shifting \$10,497 - only \$1677 should have been shifted from "Professional Service Contract: Ney Nature Center" to "Personnel Team Manager". That means the total funds reimbursed under "Professional Service Contract: Ney Nature Center" equals \$30,323.	January 12, 2024	Yes	January 19, 2024

Status Update Reporting

Final Status Update August 14, 2024

Date Submitted: November 20, 2024

Date Approved: November 26, 2024

Overall Update

Since its inception in 2007, Youth Eco Solutions (YES) has made a profound impact, reaching 5,080 students and connecting with 7,330 local businesses, organizations, and experts. Through collaborative efforts, YES has extended its influence to benefit an additional 366,333 students and community members. During the "YES! Students Take On Water Quality Challenge II" initiative, YES successfully achieved its objective of completing over 30 new student-led projects and public events focused on water quality and citizen science. Over 200 youth and 2,000 community members across 20 communities actively participated, addressing local water quality issues and enhancing over 20 Minnesota water bodies, including Lake Superior, St. Louis Estuary, and Crow River Watershed, through rigorous monitoring and reporting.

Throughout the 2023-2024 season, YES continued to foster environmental awareness, particularly in water quality, exemplified by initiatives such as the Harbor City International YES Team's winter workshop on water preservation and indigenous leadership, the Mankato East YES Team's research on stormwater drainage impact, and the Royalton YES Team's aquatic invasive species workshop. YES celebrated these achievements on May 11 at Prairie Woods Environmental Learning Center, where each team showcased their projects and learned from about community engagement and transformation.

Activity 1

YES has successfully achieved its Activity 1 goals and continues to thrive within school districts and communities. Despite enduring the lasting effects of COVID-19, our organization proudly reports that over the past three years, we have established 35 YES Teams across Minnesota. We have remained steadfast in providing water quality education and fostering connections through both physical and virtual workshops. In recent years, YES Staff have organized more than thirty-six workshops covering diverse topics such as Aquatic Invasive Species, team-building with Friends of the Boundary Water Canoe Area Wilderness, loon safety and water quality with Minnesota Pollution Control Agency's Get The Lead Out Program, and local waterways in collaboration with City Waste Treatment Facilities.

On April 4, 2024, the Royalton YES Team hosted an aquatic invasive species workshop in which over 40 students participated, investigating local water quality and identifying native and invasive species. The impact of Activity 1 has been extensive: during the 2023-2024 YES Season, 175 YES Students engaged in projects and workshops, with YES Coaches and Students contributing over 500 volunteer hours. Additionally, 95 community members volunteered more than 170 hours, and 1,145 students were reached through educational outreach events.

(This activity marked as complete as of this status update)

Activity 2

YES has surpassed expectations by engaging 35 teams in selecting local water quality projects, reflecting our students' dedicated commitment to community betterment and a sustainable future centered on water quality. In the 2022-23 period, YES students accomplished 24 new projects, sustained 16 ongoing initiatives, and launched 5 new endeavors. Notably, 8 of these projects targeted water quality improvements, while 5 focused on water conservation efforts.

During the 2023-24 season, 175 YES Students actively participated in 16 workshops, which included activities like identifying aquatic invasive species with the Middle Fork Crow River Watershed District, exploring city wastewater

treatment processes and local watersheds, and collaborating with People of the Estuary to deepen their understanding of the St. Louis Estuary and Lake Superior. Subsequently, YES Students successfully executed 26 projects, positively impacting nine waterways, including Lake Superior and the Crow River Watershed. These projects were pivotal in promoting both water conservation practices and enhancing water quality within their local environments.

YES continues to empower students to take proactive roles in environmental stewardship, fostering a generation that values and safeguards our natural resources for years to come.

(This activity marked as complete as of this status update)

Dissemination

Ensuring effective communication of the remarkable achievements of YES Teams remains a top priority. We maintain regular Bi-Weekly updates with our YES Coaches to foster community and mutual encouragement among teams. Additionally, our quarterly e-newsletter is sent to YES supporters, spotlighting team accomplishments, upcoming events, website updates, new blog posts, and our active social media platforms.^[1]_{SEP}

Social media plays a crucial role in swiftly sharing YES Team achievements, bolstering our robust online presence. We are pleased to affirm that YES maintains a strong digital footprint. Furthermore, we annually produce the YES Team Accomplishments Brochure, showcasing each year's teams and their notable highlights.

Externally, YES remains engaged by participating in key events such as the MN Science Teachers conference and Earth Day at Prairie Woods Environmental Learning Center. We continue to cultivate relationships with local media outlets and politicians to broaden awareness of our initiatives. Throughout, the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund remains prominently acknowledged as a major supporter of our endeavors.

Status Update Reporting

Status Update February 1, 2024

Date Submitted: January 12, 2024

Date Approved: January 19, 2024

Overall Update

Since its establishment in 2007, Youth Eco Solutions (YES) has positively impacted the lives of over 5,080 students by collaborating with more than 7,310 local businesses, organizations, and experts. This collective effort has extended its reach to benefit an additional 365,263 students and community members. Committed to empowering Minnesota's youth, YES has provided a platform for its students to express themselves through the YES Blog.

A testament to the organization's impact comes from a New-London Spicer YES Team Member who shared, "YES is an organization that helps teach kids about keeping our environment clean and healthy." Motivated by curiosity, this student emphasizes the importance of YES in educating students about environmental stewardship. The 2023 Fall Summit, held on October 11, 2023 focused on water conservation and quality, addressing topics such as aquatic invasive species, the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness, and lead contamination in fishing tackle.

The enthusiasm for environmental awareness - specifically water quality - continues as demonstrated by the Harbor City International YES Team, who recently participated in a winter workshop on water preservation and indigenous leadership. YES remains dedicated to fostering environmental knowledge through upcoming winter workshops, eager to continue to support students.

Activity 1

YES has made substantial progress on Activity 1 goals and continues to thrive both in school districts and communities. There have been long term effects from COVID, our organization is proud to report that over the past two and a half years, we have had 35 YES Teams across the state of Minnesota. We continue to provide water quality education through our workshops - both physically and virtually. Within these recent years, YES staff has organized over twenty-eight workshops including topics such as Aquatic Invasive Species, Boundary Water Canoe Area Wilderness, Minnesota Pollution Control Agency's Get The Lead Out Program, and City Wastewater Treatment Facilities. On January 10, 2024, the Harbor City International YES Team attended "Water Preservation and Indigenous Leadership Workshop" in which eighteen students connected to two water quality experts that shared ways to protect the local St. Louis River and Estuary. The impact of Activity 1 has a far reach including 65,000 community members impacted, 75 ecological and business experts - of which 16 are water quality professionals - partnered with YES, and over 2,300 volunteer hours provided by students and teachers.

Activity 2

YES proudly exceeded its goals by involving 35 teams in selecting local water quality projects. Our students demonstrate a passionate commitment to actively contribute to their communities, emphasizing a better future with a focus on water quality. In the 2022-23 period, YES students achieved 24 new projects, maintained 16 ongoing ones, and initiated 5 new endeavors. Notably, 8 of these projects addressed water quality, while 5 focused on water conservation.

The 2023 Fall Summit sparked an interest in water quality for the Royalton YES Team, leading to their investigation of local aquatic invasive species. Similarly, it inspired the New London-Spicer and Willmar Community Education YES Teams to participate in a workshop and canoe trip centered around local aquatic invasive species. The Harbor City International YES Team continues their dedicated efforts to protect their local water bodies, including Lake Superior and the St. Louis River and Estuary.

Recognition for the dedication of all YES students to preserve Minnesota's water bodies awaits at the YES Spring Showcase on May 11, 2024.

Dissemination

Communicating the YES Teams' amazing accomplishments remain a top priority. We continue to deliver information via Bi-Weekly updates with our YES Coaches to create a sense of community and encouragement between the teams along with sending our quarterly e-newsletter to our YES supporters highlighting individual team accomplishments, YES events, website, new blog posts and our social media platforms. Social media platforms allow YES to share team achievements in a quick and relevant way. We are proud to announce that YES has a healthy online presence that continues to steadily grow. Within the last 90 days, the YES Facebook account has reached 305 profiles, while the YES Instagram account has reached an additional 95 profiles. Along with our online presence, we produce our annual YES Team Accomplishments Brochure that features the year's teams and highlights. Externally, YES continues to participate in the MN Science Teachers conference, the Prairie Woods Environmental Learning Center Earth Day and building relationships with local media and politicians. As always, the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund is accredited throughout as a major funder.

Status Update Reporting

Status Update August 1, 2023

Date Submitted: July 28, 2023

Date Approved: August 9, 2023

Overall Update

YES has supported over 4,910 students in working with more than 7,303 local businesses, organizations and experts to impact an additional 365,093 students and community members. Our actions will impact the future generations; we're invested in bringing together the future leaders of our country, and instilling a passion for protecting our planet, understanding our environment, and living in healthier ways. When asked, "In your opinion, how important is it that programs like YES are available to students? Why?", a YES graduating senior states, "I think that it is very important. Because so many people do care about environmental issues, but often times they don't have the outlet or don't know about the resources available. If they know that there is something like the YES club available it gives them the outlet to make a positive impact." We've not only held water quality workshops and built relationships with experts including Ryan Granlund from the City of Duluth Sustainability Office, but our YES Teams have protected, conserved and preserved Minnesota's water quality by improving or protecting 14 valuable waterbodies and watersheds including Lake Superior, Minnesota River and Mississippi River.

Activity 1

YES has made substantial progress on Activity 1 goals and continues to thrive both in school districts and communities. There have been long term effects from COVID, our organization is proud to report that over the past two years, we have had 25 YES Teams across the state of Minnesota. We continue to provide water quality education through our workshops - both physically and virtually. Within these recent two years, YES staff has organized over twenty workshops including topics such as Waste Water Treatment, Aquatic Systems, a Panel, Waste and Energy, Green Jobs, Soil Health and Gut Health, and Forestry. On February 28, 2023, the Harbor City International YES Team attended "Duluth Water Quality Workshop" in which they connected to four water quality experts; a YES student stated, "The best part of this workshop for me was learning about how the salting of our roads, especially in Duluth MN, has an effect on the quality of our water...". The impact of Activity 1 has a far reach including 65,000 community members impacted, 66 ecological and business experts - of which 14 are water quality professionals - partnered with YES, and 2,300 volunteer hours provided by students and teachers.

Activity 2

YES is proud to announce that over the past two years, we have surpassed our goal and engaged 25 teams to select local water quality projects; our students are passionate to be active in their communities and build a better future by focusing on water quality. In addition to the 2021-22 statistics, the 2022-23 YES students completed 24 new projects, maintained 16 old projects and started 5 uncompleted projects; of these projects, 8 pertained to water quality and 5 pertained to water conservation. Students are recognized through the annual Water Quality Stewardship award. On May 14, 2023, standing on the home plate of the Minnesota Twins Stadium, the Harbor City International YES Team received the Water Stewardship Award. As this team lives right on Lake Superior, these students not only focused on habitat creation and restoration, water conservation and water quality, but also on environmental education in which they taught elementary students both the importance of protecting waters and ways in which these young students could protect the great lake. It was an honor to celebrate the 2023 students and their achievements together! We look forward to continue to learn about water this coming season.

Dissemination

Communicating the YES Teams' amazing accomplishments remain a top priority. We continue to deliver information via Bi-Weekly updates with our YES Coaches to create a sense of community and encouragement between the teams along

with sending our quarterly e-newsletter to our YES supporters highlighting individual team accomplishments, YES events, website, new blog posts and our social media platforms. Social media platforms allow YES to share team achievements in a quick and relevant way. We are proud to announce that YES has a healthy online presence that continues to steadily grow. Along with our online presence, we produce our annual YES Team Accomplishments Brochure that features the year's teams and highlights. Externally, YES continues to participate in the MN Science Teachers conference, the Prairie Woods Environmental Learning Center Earth Day and building relationships with local media and politicians. As always, the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund is accredited throughout as a major funder.

Status Update Reporting

Status Update February 1, 2023

Date Submitted: January 26, 2023

Date Approved: February 3, 2023

Overall Update

Since its inception in 2007, YES! has supported over 4,700 students in working with more than 7,250 local businesses, organizations and experts to impact an additional 345,848 students and community members. We continue to acknowledge that our actions, whether positive or negative, will impact the future generations; we're especially invested in bringing together the future leaders of our country, and instilling a passion for protecting our planet, understanding our environment, and living in healthier ways. A student belonging to the YES! Sleepy Eye Team states, "I learned so much about the opportunities I have to help the planet within my very own community...I liked feeling so connected with others over saving the planet." Through the work of our YES! Teams, we've not only held water quality workshops and built relationships with experts, but we have also been able to protect, conserve and preserve Minnesota's water quality by improving or protecting 16 valuable waterbodies plus 3 "area lakes, rivers, streams" plus 1 for "Mississippi River Watershed." Now, in our 16th Season of YES! we're evolving in our capacity to continue to empower youth to create solutions to today's ecological challenges and build key skills for future success.

Activity 1

YES! has made substantial progress on Activity 1 goals and continues to thrive both in school districts and communities - reaching 457 students and 100 plus communities. Though there have been long term effects from COVID, our organization is proud to report that over the past two years, we have had 25 YES! Teams across the state of Minnesota. We continue to provide water quality education through our workshops - both physically and virtually. Within these recent two years, YES! staff has organized twenty workshops including topics such as Waste Water Treatment, Aquatic Systems, a Panel, Waste and Energy, Green Jobs, Soil Health, and Forestry. The impact of Activity 1 has a far reach including 45,000 community members impacted, 61 ecological and business experts - of which 10 are water quality professionals - partnered with YES!, and 1,400 volunteer hours provided by students and teachers. As we continue with Activity 1, YES! is on track for completion by 6/30/2023.

Activity 2

YES! is proud to announce that over the past two years, we have surpassed our goal and engaged 25 teams to select local water quality projects; our students are passionate to be active in their communities and build a better future by focusing on water quality. 2021-22 YES! students totaled 33 projects and 8 public events about water quality/conservation that were completed, or ongoing, as of April 2022. Of these 33 projects, 18 were new projects and 15 were continued efforts. Unfortunately four teams did not submit their Final Report, so their water projects could not be included in our records. For the 2022-23 YES! season, the number of water projects will be determined in June 2023 once teams have submitted Final Reports. Students are recognized through the annual Water Quality Stewardship award. Our 2022 recipient was the New London-Spicer YES! Team for their legacy project of spreading prairie seeds to help contain and buffer water from their parking lot at school, and their work with the Middle Fork Crow River Watershed district to paint "No Dumping – Drains to River" on storm drains in their community. We look forward to celebrating the 2023 students and their achievements together!

(This activity marked as complete as of this status update)

Dissemination

Communicating the YES! Teams' amazing accomplishments remain a top priority. We continue to deliver information via the Prairie Woods Warbler, the publication of Prairie Woods Environmental Learning Center. In addition, we share Bi-Weekly updates with our YES! Coaches to create a sense of community and encouragement between the teams along

with sending our quarterly e-newsletter to our YES! supporters highlighting individual team accomplishments, YES! events, website, new blog posts and our social media platforms. Social media platforms allow YES! to share team achievements in a quick and relevant way. We are proud to announce that YES! has a healthy online presence that continues to steadily grow; within the last 90 days, our accounts engaged on Instagram have increased by 30%. Along with our online presence, we produce our annual YES! Team Accomplishments that feature the year's highlights. Externally, YES! continues to participate in the MN Science Teachers conference, the Prairie Woods Environmental Learning Center Earth Day and building relationships with local media and politicians. As always, the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund is accredited throughout as a major funder.

Status Update Reporting

Status Update August 1, 2022

Date Submitted: August 8, 2022

Date Approved: August 11, 2022

Overall Update

Progress on YES! outcomes continued to be hampered this year by the ongoing COVID pandemic. Challenges included school gathering restrictions as well as additional burdens on teaching staff who act as our Team Coaches. Still, this spring saw the close of the 15th season of YES! We were happy to have a total of 14 teams participating throughout the school year and across the state. These teams worked on 49 projects that engaged over 45,000 total individuals. Participation from 52 area ecological and business experts along with over 1,400 volunteer hours by student members and their coaches allowed YES! to serve over 100 communities! 45 educational events were offered and delivered by student teams to their fellow classmates as well as the broader public. Additionally, 9 workshops were conducted and centered on green jobs, ecology, environmental stewardship, and water quality. Furthermore, a presentation by YES! and fellow ecological partners was given to the MN Science Teachers Association in the fall of 2021. In all, YES! students and their communities impacted 20 waterbodies this year.

Activity 1

YES! has made substantial progress on Activity 1 goals, despite the ongoing difficulties presented by COVID. This year, students worked on 49 projects and we expect a similar number of projects for the second year. Something YES! is quite proud of is the delivery of workshops. Because of COVID, YES! shifted models to be capable of delivering workshops virtually. Virtual workshops were successfully delivered throughout the state and focused on careers surrounding sustainability and protecting water quality. Additional workshops were conducted in-person when the pandemic waned. In-person workshops focused on water quality and environmental health. One such workshop involved a water treatment facility where students learned first-hand the hard work that goes into protecting the environment and water quality after human use.

Activity 2

Activity 2 goals centered around team recruitment and engagement. While individual student engagement remains very high in YES!, recruitment suffered during COVID. While 14 teams were on the roster for the year, YES! was not able to acquire additional teams to bring the total up to 20. However, those 14 teams did such an excellent job of engagement, our total number of students was well above 200. YES! remains a student-driven organization and it is through our existing students that we continue to see promise. As we look forward to the coming school year, we hope to expand the number of teams being served and further deepen our commitment to engagement. One way YES! continues to show our commitment to both student success and environmental goals is through the Water Stewardship Award. During our annual competition this year, teams displayed an impressive array of projects focused on water quality and sustainability. Projects ranged from river quality sampling to stenciling storm drains to developing a school spill-response plan. YES! was happy to deliver another Water Stewardship award at this year's annual awards ceremony at Target Field.

Dissemination

Communicating the amazing accomplishments of YES! remains of paramount importance. We have continued to deliver information via the Prairie Woods Warbler, the publication of Prairie Woods Environmental Learning Center. Additionally, we have a healthy online presence in social media and regularly share updates and team accomplishments through those avenues. YES! participate in a MN Science Teachers conference in the fall of 2021, participating with other partners working in a similar space. Earth Day 2022 was a huge success at Prairie Woods ELC where an annual event is held that includes dozens of vendor booths representing many non-profits and government agencies as well as a used gear sale, rock climbing, and biking. YES! enjoyed many visitors to our booth and got to talk to some local politicians

about the importance of YES! for our students and the broader community. And as always, the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund is accredited throughout as our major funder.