

# Final Abstract

Final Report Approved on December 11, 2024

## M.L. 2021 Project Abstract

For the Period Ending June 30, 2024

**Project Title:** The Voyageurs Classroom Initiative

**Project Manager:** Christina Hausman Rhode

**Affiliation:** Voyageurs Conservancy

**Mailing Address:** 144 Glenwood Avenue Suite 120

**City/State/Zip:** Minneapolis, MN 55405

**Phone:** (612) 333-5424

**E-mail:** vnpa@voyageurs.org

**Website:** <https://www.voyageurs.org/>

**Funding Source:**

**Fiscal Year:**

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

**Appropriation Amount:** \$348,000

**Amount Spent:** \$347,410

**Amount Remaining:** \$590

### Sound bite of Project Outcomes and Results

The future of Minnesota's water, land, and wildlife depends on today's efforts to engage our communities and youth in conservation. Voyageurs Conservancy programs inspired 6,600 students with hands-on environmental education, connected 4,800 community members to nature through immersive programming, and launched 22 young professionals into conservation careers.

### Overall Project Outcome and Results

Inspiration begins with access. Over three years, Voyageurs Conservancy tackled a pressing need: connecting diverse communities and students to Minnesota's landscapes. By expanding access to experiential learning, conservation careers, and community engagement, this project fostered deep connections to the outdoors and environmental stewardship.

The Voyageurs Classroom Initiative surpassed its goal of 5,000 students, engaging over 6,600 K-12 students with standards-aligned education programs that interconnect science, nature, and history. Students embarked on field trips and place-based activities, immersing them in the region's ecosystems. Our mobile classroom and innovative virtual

programs brought Minnesota's rich natural heritage to schools statewide, including underserved areas in Duluth and rural communities lacking access to nature-based education.

The Teen Ambassador Program fostered new relationships with Indigenous communities to connect teens with their ancestral lands. Fall programming empowered local teens to explore Rainy Lake through science and leadership activities, strengthening their ties to the wonders in their own backyard. Our Field Fellows program provided transformative experiences for 22 college-aged professionals, offering field experience in wildlife research, wetland restoration, fisheries, and more. Fellows advanced conservation efforts in Voyageurs National Park while gaining invaluable career experience.

Through the Love Your Park initiative, over 4,800 Minnesotans of all ages experienced community-based programs around Voyageurs National Park, Duluth, and the Twin Cities. This included popular dark sky events, collaborations with artists and astronomers, and hands-on citizen science projects that inspired stewardship.

A major project achievement included building a network of strategic partnerships across Minnesota to amplify our impact, working alongside organizations including Mississippi Park Connection, Friends of the Boundary Waters, Bell Museum, Voyageurs Wolf Project, Bois Forte Band of Chippewa, Minnesota DNR, and Wilderness Inquiry.

These initiatives expanded our reach to diverse communities and youth across Minnesota, ensuring the continued protection and enhancement of the state's natural heritage.

### **Project Results Use and Dissemination**

Our work was sustained through a robust evaluation process, incorporating teacher feedback, stakeholder interviews, and ongoing program assessments. The dissemination of our programs was bolstered by strong outreach through social media, news outlets, and digital platforms, ensuring our story and mission reached a broad audience statewide. Please reference the Dissemination Update August 2024, as well as the Voyageurs Classroom Programs Handout and Updated Voyageurs Classroom 1-Page Visual Aug 2024 in the Attachments for examples and more information.



## Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

M.L. 2021 Approved Final Report

### General Information

**Date:** December 18, 2024

**ID Number:** 2021-186

**Staff Lead:** Tom Dietrich

**Project Title:** The Voyageurs Classroom Initiative

**Project Budget:** \$348,000

### Project Manager Information

**Name:** Christina Hausman Rhode

**Organization:** Voyageurs Conservancy

**Office Telephone:** (612) 333-5424

**Email:** vnpa@voyageurs.org

**Web Address:** <https://www.voyageurs.org/>

### Project Reporting

**Final Report Approved:** December 11, 2024

**Reporting Status:** Project Completed

**Date of Last Action:** December 11, 2024

**Project Completion:** June 30, 2024

### Legal Information

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

**Appropriation Language:** \$348,000 the first year is from the trust fund to the commissioner of natural resources for an agreement with Voyageurs Conservancy to launch a new initiative to connect Minnesota youth, young adults, and their families to Voyageurs National Park by learning about the park's waters, wildlife, and forests and by engaging in the park's preservation.

**Appropriation End Date:** June 30, 2024

## Narrative

**Project Summary:** The Voyageurs Classroom will connect 5,000 Minnesota youth to Voyageurs National Park over three years to learn about its waters, wildlife, forests and skies, and engage in its preservation.

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

This project will connect Minnesota youth to Voyageurs - their National Park.

To protect our park for generations to come, we must create meaningful contexts for youth to become Voyageurs' stewards and champions—this begins with environmental education, for all ages.

Voyageurs is both a state treasure and an exceptional outdoor classroom encompassing ecological, cultural, and geologic wonders. However, its public programming is extremely limited. Voyageurs is 40% water which creates barriers for many to experience the park's waterways.

The park's current environmental education program serves only 1,200 youth annually. Opportunities for high school/college youth are particularly limited. Internships lack stipends and structured partnerships which limits diverse representation and access to career pathways.

Community surveys and exploratory meetings tell us families, teachers, and partners are eager for increased education opportunities in the park. A life-long International Falls resident remarked, "I didn't step foot in the park until I was 18 years old. I'm trying to change that for my kids."

Currently, Voyageurs National Park has no sustainable programming for environmental education beyond K-6, internships, distance learning, or neighboring families. VNPA will address this need and remove barriers for more youth to experience the park.

**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.**

With support from LCCMR and private philanthropy, VNPA will grow its public-private partnership with the National Park Service and drastically expand public engagement by implementing a Voyageurs Classroom suite of programs for children, college students, and families. VNPA and the Park Service will collaboratively launch a joint education initiative - the Voyageurs Classroom - to grow the number of youth and young adults we serve from 1,200 to over 3,000 annually by the end of phase one.

By establishing new partnerships with schools and colleges, growing volunteerism, and leveraging existing resources, VNPA will deliver bolstered environmental education programs for a wider and more diverse audience, including:

- Additional programs for K-6 students including floating classroom experiences and virtual learning
- An expanded Teen Ambassador initiative
- Field Fellows program for undergraduate and graduate students
- In-park event and program opportunities for families

VNPA is the only dedicated 501c3 program partner of the park. Since 2012, VNPA has engaged 200 high schoolers in the award-winning National Park Teen Ambassador program, and piloted 'Love Your Park' events reaching over 2,500 people in 2019. VNPA recently hired an education manager to support growth innovation in park programs alongside NPS staff.

**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?**

Voyageurs National Park's 218,000 acres comprise lakes and wetlands designated as Outstanding Resource Value Waters, rare geology, diverse species and ecosystems, and 655 miles of undeveloped shoreline. The park provides for current and potential land management, research, education, and preservation opportunities. Yet without the means to reinforce personal connections to Voyageurs, public support for its ongoing stewardship will wane. Established programming that provides meaningful and reliable opportunities in the park and in the classroom will ensure increased access for younger and more diverse audiences, and an ongoing partnership with park neighbors empowering them to care for the park.

## 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?**

Statewide

**When will the work impact occur?**

During the Project

## Activities and Milestones

### Activity 1: Engage 5,000 K-12 youth in Voyageurs Classroom programs in the park and in the classroom.

**Activity Budget:** \$250,375

#### Activity Description:

Activity 1 focuses on expanding K-12 learning opportunities through the Voyageurs Classroom Initiative. Program capacity will expand by adding staff, training volunteer educators, providing teacher stipends, and collaborating with University of Minnesota-Duluth's environmental education program. VNPA will also adapt current curriculum for classroom and virtual learning and host collaborative workshops with teachers and students to innovate current programs with new subject matter that is relevant to diverse audiences and aligns with school standards. Activity 1 has three main components:

- VNPA will increase programs for K-6 students to experience park trails, field days, and floating classroom opportunities that get children in the park via its waterways. Activities will provide hands-on enrichment on ecology, history, and geology.
- The successful Teen Ambassador program will expand to serve 300 high school youth, especially from local, urban, and tribal areas. Students will participate in single and multi-day park excursions centered on our changing lakes and forests, and environmental careers. In turn, future Voyageurs stewards will be more representative of diverse communities.
- Current park programs will be adapted to include virtual and classroom components, broadening the reach of VNPA's environmental education programs to those beyond the park's neighboring communities.

#### Activity Milestones:

| Description  | Approximate Completion Date |
|--|-----------------------------|
| Train 8 volunteer and teacher educators.   | October 31, 2022            |
| Engage 1,500 K-6 youth in education programs at park and virtually/in the classroom.                       | October 31, 2022            |
| Adapt two existing K-6 programs for virtual/classroom learning and pilot to 15 classes.                    | October 31, 2022            |
| Engage 3,500 K-6 youth in education programs in education programs at park and virtually/in the classroom. | October 31, 2023            |
| Develop and implement program evaluation and create project report.  | June 30, 2024               |
| Engage 300 high school students in 1-day and multi-day Teen Ambassador program experiences.                | June 30, 2024               |

### Activity 2: Deliver Love Your Park series to connect regional families to the National Park in their backyard.

**Activity Budget:** \$37,325

#### Activity Description:

By establishing the park as a truly accessible resource that provides real experiential value for local kids and families, we can further develop a local conservation ethic and love of the park. Tension that existed between Voyageurs National Park and its neighboring communities in the park's early formation lingers today. VNPA will expand its Love Your Park program series piloted in 2019 with an education and recreation series for families to further reinforce lessons kids experience in K12 programs. Love Your Park aims to get people of all ages, abilities, and skill levels recreating in and connecting to Voyageurs National Park. Programming will be year-round and include guided hikes and winter snowshoe walks, volunteer work days, 'how to' workshops, and special speakers and performances. VNPA will work with current partners and programmatic leaders, such as the Boreal Observatory, to bring learning opportunities to the park. Through this effort, local families and community members will gain a greater understanding of the park's resources, how they can recreate safely, and an increased sense of responsibility for their public lands.

#### Activity Milestones:

| Description  | Approximate Completion Date |
|--|-----------------------------|
| Pilot monthly series to engage families in learning and recreation in Voyageurs National Park. | June 30, 2022               |
| Deliver year-round monthly series to engage families in learning and recreation in the park.   | December 31, 2023           |
| Evaluate program effectiveness and impact.   | May 31, 2024                |

### Activity 3: Establish Field Fellows program to empower young adults with environmental career experience at Voyageurs National Park.

**Activity Budget:** \$60,300

**Activity Description:**

Voyageurs National Park offers an exceptional outdoor classroom for future conservation professionals to gain hands-on experience. However, the park currently lacks a structured internship program and established college/university partnerships. VNPA will launch a Field Fellows program to ensure the Voyageurs Classroom Initiative creates professional opportunities for undergraduate and graduate students.

In phase one, VNPA will support a minimum of 15 Field Fellows (undergraduate or graduate students) over a 3-year period in coordination with National Park Service staff. Fellows will perform project and research activities involving water quality, invasive species, wildlife science, environmental education, and historic preservation, among other areas. Paid internships for undergraduate and graduate students will help increase accessibility and diversity. Projects will be designed with both university and park priorities in mind. Under the Voyageurs Classroom, Field Fellows will contribute to educational programs, field work, and conservation efforts in VNP, while representing a new and diverse generation of public land professionals.

**Activity Milestones:**

| Description   | Approximate Completion Date |
|---|-----------------------------|
| Sponsor 6 Field Fellows in park positions engaging in hands-on career experience. | September 30, 2022          |
| Sponsor 9 Field Fellows in park positions engaging in hands-on career experience. | May 31, 2024                |
| Evaluate program effectiveness and impact.  | June 30, 2024               |

## Project Partners and Collaborators

| Name               | Organization   | Role   | Receiving Funds |
|--------------------|--|--|-----------------|
| Joel Halvorson     | Boreal Observatory   | Joel Halvorson is a Science Communications Consultant and a designated External Service Provider, supporting the University of Minnesota-Duluth's public engagement efforts. VNPA will partner with the Boreal Observatory and its collaborators to expand learning opportunities in the park for children and families. | No              |
| Brian Meyer        | Southwest High School & AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination)                                    | Brian Meyer partners with VNPA to connect Teen Ambassador program opportunities to students he works with.   | No              |
| Brian Harmon       | National Park Service  | Brian C. Harmon, Chief of Cultural and Natural Resource Management at Voyageurs National Park, will help oversee internship program development and supervision for the Field Fellows program.   | No              |
| Laurie A. Bitter   | Indus School   | Laurie Bitter, principal, will collaborate with VNPA and NPS to connect her K-12 students to our environmental education programs in the park.   | No              |
| Bob DeGross        | National Park Service  | Bob DeGross, Superintendent of Voyageurs National Park, will oversee and advise on the growth and development of the Voyageurs Classroom Initiative and help support outreach to partners and communities.   | No              |
| Julie Athman Ernst | Center for Environmental Education, Department of Applied Human Sciences, University of Minnesota - Duluth | Julie Athman Ernst, Ph.D., Director of Master of Environmental Education Program, will advise on education program development and support student recruitment for the Field Fellows program.  | No              |
| Ingrid Schneider   | Forest Resources, University of Minnesota  | Ingrid Schneider, Ph.D. will advise on program development and support student recruitment for the Field Fellows program.  | No              |
| Joseph K. Bump     | Conservation Sciences Graduate Program, University of Minnesota, Institute on the Environment              | Joseph K. Bump, Ph.D. will advise on program development and support student recruitment for the Field Fellows program.  | No              |
| Suzanne Huggett    | Wilderness Inquiry   | Suzanne serves as our partner on trip coordination for multi-day aspects of the National Park Teen Ambassador program. VNPA contracts with Wilderness Inquiry to lead these trips.   | Yes             |
| Tawnya Schoewe     | National Park Service  | Tawnya Schoewe is Chief of Interpretation at Voyageurs National Park and will serve as the lead National Park Service liaison on all joint education program planning.   | No              |



## 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.**

Voyageurs National Park Association will share Voyageurs Classroom Initiative resources with teachers, students, and partners throughout with Minnesota with a particular focus on St. Louis and Koochiching Counties as well as the Twin Cities metro area. Each year, the education and outreach manager, in conjunction with the environmental educator, will collect quantitative and qualitative data, including the number of program participants, location and demographic data for participating schools and students, and evaluation forms submitted by educators, students and volunteers.

In addition to LCCMR reporting, information and updates regarding the Voyageurs Classroom project will be made available the Voyageurs National Park Association's website ([www.voyageurs.org](http://www.voyageurs.org)), e- newsletter, print newsletter, social media, and press releases to local media and public presentations at relevant community events.

The Minnesota Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund (ENRTF) will be acknowledged through use of the trust fund logo or attribution language on project print and electronic media, publications, signage, and other communications per the ENRTF Acknowledgement Guidelines.

## 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?**

Voyageurs National Park Association is completely supported through philanthropy and is fortunate to receive funding from a wide variety of sources including individuals, businesses neighboring the park, Minnesota corporate partners, and local and national foundations. VNPA is committed to including the Voyageurs Classroom Initiative as a key component of our programming and our diverse sources of support will ensure continuity. VNPA will leverage the LCCMR grant to scale up environmental education and to attract additional private donations.

## Budget Summary

| Category / Name                                 | Subcategory or Type | Description  | Purpose   | Gen. Ineligible | % Benefits | # FTE | Classified Staff? | \$ Amount        | \$ Amount Spent  | \$ Amount Remaining |
|---|---------------------|--|---|-----------------|------------|-------|-------------------|------------------|------------------|---------------------|
| <b>Personnel</b>                                |                     |  |   |                 |            |       |                   |                  |                  |                     |
| Environmental Educator                          |                     | Deliver K-12 and Love Your Park programming and train others to deliver programming. 1.5 FTE = 3 yrs .5 FTE +10% benefits 3 yrs  |   |                 | 10%        | 1.5   |                   | \$59,040         | -                | -                   |
| Education and Outreach Director/Project Manager |                     | Oversee implementation of Voyageurs Classroom programming, develop partnerships, coordinate volunteers, oversee program evaluation and expansion. 2.5 FTE = 1 yr .5 FTE + 2 yrs 1.0 FTE ; 10% Benefits 1 yr, 20% benefits 2 yrs 153000 |   |                 | 20%        | 2.5   |                   | \$156,000        | -                | -                   |
|   |                     |  |   |                 |            |       | <b>Sub Total</b>  | <b>\$215,040</b> | <b>\$215,040</b> | -                   |
| <b>Contracts and Services</b>                   |                     |  |   |                 |            |       |                   |                  |                  |                     |
| Wilderness Inquiry                              | Subaward            | Transportation, equipment, guides, food, gear for 150 students on multi-day excursions in Voyageurs  |   |                 |            | 0     |                   | \$52,260         | \$52,260         | -                   |
|   |                     |  |   |                 |            |       | <b>Sub Total</b>  | <b>\$52,260</b>  | <b>\$52,260</b>  | -                   |
| <b>Equipment, Tools, and Supplies</b>           |                     |  |   |                 |            |       |                   |                  |                  |                     |
|   | Equipment           | Education Trunks   | Materials for educators to use in roving or classroom formats (\$480 x 5) (Education trunks typically contain, a binder with lesson plans, "show and tell" props such as animal pelts, period items, or content related tools, supporting books and other multimedia materials, and lesson pouches with activity supplies such as laminated cards and posters.) |                 |            |       |                   | \$2,400          | \$2,400          | -                   |

|                                     |                       |  |  |  |  |  |                  |                |                |   |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------|--|--|--|--|--|------------------|----------------|----------------|---|
|                                     |                       |  |  |  |  |  | <b>Sub Total</b> | <b>\$2,400</b> | <b>\$2,400</b> | - |
| <b>Capital Expenditures</b>         |                       |  |  |  |  |  |                  |                |                |   |
|                                     |                       |  |  |  |  |  | <b>Sub Total</b> | -              | -              | - |
| <b>Acquisitions and Stewardship</b> |                       |  |  |  |  |  |                  |                |                |   |
|                                     |                       |  |  |  |  |  | <b>Sub Total</b> | -              | -              | - |
| <b>Travel In Minnesota</b>          |                       |  |  |  |  |  |                  |                |                |   |
|                                     | Miles/ Meals/ Lodging | Mileage (\$0.58 per mile) and lodging (1 trip x 3 years) VNPA headquarters to park | For education program planning, volunteer training, partnership development                              |  |  |  |                  | \$3,450        | \$3,450        | - |
|                                     | Miles/ Meals/ Lodging | Mileage (\$0.58 per mile) or car rental  | For program manager and educator travel to deliver education programs throughout park and regionally     |  |  |  |                  | \$1,500        | \$1,500        | - |
|                                     |                       |  |  |  |  |  | <b>Sub Total</b> | <b>\$4,950</b> | <b>\$4,950</b> | - |
| <b>Travel Outside Minnesota</b>     |                       |  |  |  |  |  |                  |                |                |   |
|                                     |                       |  |  |  |  |  | <b>Sub Total</b> | -              | -              | - |
| <b>Printing and Publication</b>     |                       |  |  |  |  |  |                  |                |                |   |
|                                     | Printing              | Outreach and dissemination materials   | Flyers, brochures and postcards to promote environmental education learning opportunities (\$.30 x 5000) |  |  |  |                  | \$1,500        | \$1,500        | - |
|                                     | Printing              | Classroom kits   | Materials for classroom and virtual learning (\$.80 x 2000)  |  |  |  |                  | \$1,600        | \$1,600        | - |
|                                     |                       |  |  |  |  |  | <b>Sub Total</b> | <b>\$3,100</b> | <b>\$3,100</b> | - |
| <b>Other Expenses</b>               |                       |  |  |  |  |  |                  |                |                |   |
|                                     |                       | Environmental education graduate student stipend (\$7,500 x 2 years)               | To support the adaption and expansion of current curriculum for classroom and                            |  |  |  |                  | \$15,000       | \$15,000       | - |

|  |  |   |   |  |  |  |                    |                  |                  |              |
|--|--|---|---|--|--|--|--------------------|------------------|------------------|--------------|
|  |  |   | virtual learning and improve relevancy for diverse audiences.   |  |  |  |                    |                  |                  |              |
|  |  | Field Fellowship stipends (\$3000 x 15) | To remove financial barriers for students to be able to engage in hands-on environmental career experience. |  |  |  |                    | \$53,000         | \$53,000         | -            |
|  |  | Facility rental and permit fees         | To secure locations for programming.  |  |  |  |                    | \$750            | \$505            | \$245        |
|  |  | Zoom web based platform                 | For virtual classroom learning opportunities.   |  |  |  |                    | \$1,500          | \$1,155          | \$345        |
|  |  |   |   |  |  |  | <b>Sub Total</b>   | <b>\$70,250</b>  | <b>\$69,660</b>  | <b>\$590</b> |
|  |  |   |   |  |  |  | <b>Grand Total</b> | <b>\$348,000</b> | <b>\$347,410</b> | <b>\$590</b> |

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        | \$ Amount Spent  | \$ Amount Remaining |
|------------------|---|--|----------------------------|------------------|------------------|---------------------|
| <b>State</b>     |   |  |                            |                  |                  |                     |
|                  |   |  | <b>State Sub Total</b>     | -                | -                | -                   |
| <b>Non-State</b> |   |  |                            |                  |                  |                     |
| In-Kind          | National Park Service   | Staff time, boat transportation, housing, curriculum and program materials   | Secured                    | \$115,000        | \$115,000        | -                   |
| In-Kind          | Voyageurs National Park Association individual, business, and foundation donors | Additional staff support from the Voyageurs National Park Association Executive Director and Operations Coordinator (\$10,822 x 3 years) | Secured                    | \$32,466         | \$32,466         | -                   |
|                  |   |  | <b>Non State Sub Total</b> | <b>\$147,466</b> | <b>\$147,466</b> | -                   |
|                  |   |  | <b>Funds Total</b>         | <b>\$147,466</b> | <b>\$147,466</b> | -                   |

## Attachments

### Required Attachments

#### *Visual Component*

File: [fb7ef8d9-c53.pdf](#)

#### *Alternate Text for Visual Component*

Three photos depict:

- 1) A young adult taking a water quality sample with text "Launch Field Fellows program giving young adults National Park Service and environmental career experience"
- 2) An adult and two children in a canoe with the text "Deliver Love Your Park family program series"
- 3) Two high school students swimming in a Voyageurs lake with the text "Connect 5,000+ K-6 students, 300 Teen Ambassadors to Voyageurs on the water and in the classroom"...

#### *Financial Capacity*

File: [fb5ce8be-062.pdf](#)

#### *Board Resolution or Letter*

| Title                 | File                             |
|-----------------------|----------------------------------|
| VNPA Board Resolution | <a href="#">276abf8d-df8.pdf</a> |

### Supplemental Attachments

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

| Title   | File                              |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| Letter of support from National Park Service  | <a href="#">ccb08967-096.pdf</a>  |
| Background Check Signed Doc   | <a href="#">2dc4a70d-970.pdf</a>  |
| 2022 Voyageurs National Park Summer Program Calendar  | <a href="#">80cc7221-647.pdf</a>  |
| LCCMR Voyageurs Classroom Update Dec 2022   | <a href="#">a102ef49-b1b.pdf</a>  |
| VC Fall Newsletter 2022   | <a href="#">7846fe54-4a5.pdf</a>  |
| Dark Sky Classroom 2022-2023 Flyer  | <a href="#">e99c0e50-9cb.pdf</a>  |
| 2023 Spring Field Trip Photo A  | <a href="#">30420ca0-5e1.jpe</a>  |
| 2023 Spring Field Trip Photo B  | <a href="#">df51d9ab-02b.jpe</a>  |
| 2023 Spring Field Trip Photo C  | <a href="#">544e05a7-ec4.jpe</a>  |
| 2023 Summer Program Schedule  | <a href="#">09731aca-ff3.pdf</a>  |
| Photo - Mobile Classroom Van (with LCCMR logo)  | <a href="#">495893e8-1f8.png</a>  |
| Photo - Voyageurs Mobile Classroom  | <a href="#">f48f1406-d75.png</a>  |
| VC Northern Wake Print Newsletter   | <a href="#">280b64b7-795.pdf</a>  |
| Field Fellow doing field research with Voyageurs Wolf Project                                 | <a href="#">a4df39ed-941.jpe</a>  |
| Summer Fishing Instruction along the dock with Park Ranger and youth                          | <a href="#">41248569-57a.jpe</a>  |
| Mobile Classroom student instruction Fall 2023  | <a href="#">54ea9814-461.jpe</a>  |
| 2024 Dissemination Update   | <a href="#">2e758a7a-5b6.docx</a> |
| Voyageurs Classroom Initiative Theory of Change   | <a href="#">d34231ee-117.pdf</a>  |
| Master's Thesis: Effects of Nature-Based Learning on Elementary Students' Sustained Attention | <a href="#">f8d12418-43b.pdf</a>  |
| Voyageurs Classroom Programs Handout  | <a href="#">93743f17-588.pdf</a>  |
| Dissemination Update August 2024  | <a href="#">c099e35e-bd0.docx</a> |
| Updated Voyageurs Classroom 1-Page Visual Aug 2024  | <a href="#">b2cf9c5e-779.pdf</a>  |
| Project 2021-186 The Voyageurs Classroom Initiative Final Abstract                            | <a href="#">971a322b-6b4.docx</a> |
| Debrief 2024 - Boreal Stargazing Week Evaluation Tool   | <a href="#">168d35a7-1b4.docx</a> |

## Media Links

| Title                           | Link  |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Winter 2023 Teacher Newsletter  | <a href="https://mailchi.mp/voyageurs/educator-newsletter-winter-2023">https://mailchi.mp/voyageurs/educator-newsletter-winter-2023</a> |
| Spring 2023 Teacher Newsletter  | <a href="https://mailchi.mp/voyageurs/educator-newsletter-spring2023">https://mailchi.mp/voyageurs/educator-newsletter-spring2023</a>   |
| Fall 2023 Teacher Opportunities | <a href="https://www.voyageurs.org/news/voya-classroom-fall-23">https://www.voyageurs.org/news/voya-classroom-fall-23</a>               |

## Difference between Proposal and Work Plan

### *Describe changes from Proposal to Work Plan Stage*

We reduced the number of youth served through the program and removed items from the budget where we can seek funding from other philanthropic sources.

I removed the potentially ineligible virtual classroom equipment set up expense and added more detail to the school education travel trunks budget item.



## 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            | Amendment Request | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Budget - Professional / Technical Contracts</li> <li>• Budget - Personnel</li> </ul>   | <p>AMENDMENT REQUEST</p> <p>We are requesting funds be shifted from the Personnel budget line to Professional/Service Contract budget line. Personnel budget reduced by \$3,460. Professional/Service Contract budget increased by \$3,460 to a revised total budget for that category of \$52,260 (from \$48,800).</p> <p>Additionally, within the Professional/Service Contract category, we request shifting \$1,600 from 508 Program Compliance to Wilderness Inquiry contract expense.</p> <p>Our project outcomes remain the same.</p> | December 14, 2023 | Yes      | January 3, 2024      |
| 2            | Amendment Request | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Budget</li> <li>• Other</li> <li>• Budget - Personnel</li> <li>• Budget - Professional / Technical Contracts</li> <li>• Budget - Travel and Conferences</li> <li>• Budget - Printing and Publication</li> <li>• Budget - Other</li> <li>• Budget - Non-ENRTF Funds Contributed</li> <li>• Attachments</li> </ul> | <p>BUDGET AMENDMENT We are requesting funds be shifted from the Personnel budget line to the Other Budget line for Field Fellows. The Personnel budget is reduced by \$8,000 and Other increased by 8,000 to a revised budget total of \$53,000 for Field Fellows. Field Fellows project outcomes increase - we will have a cohort of 20 students instead of 15. The budget change is also due to a stipend increase to \$1200.</p>  | July 17, 2024     | Yes      | July 23, 2024        |
| 3            | Completion Date   | <p>Previous Completion Date: 06/30/2024</p> <p>New Completion Date: 12/31/2024</p>  | Temporary Administrative Action by LCCMR Staff   | July 23, 2024     | Yes      | July 23, 2024        |
| 4            | Completion Date   | <p>Previous Completion Date: 12/31/2024</p> <p>New Completion Date: 06/30/2024</p>  | Administrative Action by LCCMR Staff   | July 23, 2024     | Yes      | July 23, 2024        |

# Status Update Reporting

## Final Status Update August 14, 2024

**Date Submitted:** August 27, 2024

**Date Approved:** September 6, 2024

### Overall Update

Over the course of three years, Voyageurs Conservancy developed and sustained a multifaceted educational program that evolved through continual learning and refinement. Our educational programming successfully connected with Minnesota schools near Voyageurs National Park, Duluth, and beyond through virtual offerings and special events. We engaged over 6,600 students, surpassing our original goal of 5,000. Community-focused programming also flourished, as we reached more than 4,800 participants through our Love Your Park initiative. Voyageurs Conservancy supported 22 Field Fellows as they participated in environmental and park service field experiences.

In addition to these key grant activities, the Voyageurs Conservancy spent time connecting with community partners to better deliver programs within the existing network of educators and partners in Minnesota. Additionally, an important effort to modernize and improve our program delivery was to conduct community listening sessions with the Bois Forte Band of Chippewa to better understand their perspective on the education lessons we provide, and to give guidance on how to develop new programs inclusive of their perspective. This project will continue outside of ENRTF funding, and be complete in winter of 2024 and will inform our educational programs moving forward.

### Activity 1

Our goal for the Voyageurs Classroom was to reach 5,000 youth in programs in the park and in the classroom. Overall we provided over 6,600 student experiences through in-park field trips, virtual classroom programs, and classroom visits, with 522 of those students in the Teen Ambassador program. We provided programs for local students to use Voyageurs National Park throughout the year, including snowshoeing, canoeing, and standards-aligned lessons. Virtual programs brought dark skies into classrooms to learn about northern lights, light pollution, and moon phases. And a brand new mobile classroom vehicle brought Voyageurs Classroom programs to schoolyards, connecting students to nature and Minnesota's national park through hands-on learning.

Throughout the grant, we evaluated program outcomes using teacher surveys, stakeholder interviews, and student work, continually improving our offerings. Teacher feedback was overwhelmingly positive, with one educator noting, "The lessons are always engaging". These evaluations helped ensure that our programs met educational standards while fostering a meaningful connection to Minnesota's only national park. Our evaluation is mapped out in the attached Theory of Change that shows our strategies and outcomes. We have also included the thesis project of our Environmental Education Field Fellow - Effects of Nature-Based Learning on Elementary  
*(This activity marked as complete as of this status update)*

### Activity 2

The "Love Your Park" program expanded dramatically during this grant period, growing from around 300 participants annually to over 3,000, for a total of 4,800 participants over the three years. These programs highlighted the intersection of science and culture within Voyageurs National Park, engaging visitors and local families through a variety of experiences. Dark sky programming became particularly popular, with events such as dark sky snowshoeing and northern lights viewing attracting hundreds of participants throughout the year.

We also collaborated with artists, astronomers, and guest experts who brought their craft to the park, creating lasting memories for participants. These experiences deepened public connection to the park's unique resources and inspired

conservation and stewardship. In order to ensure that we evaluated program effectiveness and impact we monitored multiple types of data including program attendance, participant feedback, and comprehensive post-program debrief meetings for larger events. To show an example of this evaluation and how it impacted our programs we've attached the Debrief 2024 - Boreal Stargazing Week, sharing the process of how we ensure programs continue to improve meet our goals.

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

### **Activity 3**

The Field Fellows program successfully placed 15 Field Fellows who completed their terms and an additional 7 began their fellowship in spring of 2024. Fellows contributed to key conservation and education programs, gaining experience in outdoor leadership while helping Voyageurs National Park meet its educational and conservation goals. During this establishment phase we learned from fellows and supervisors about how to best create a program that supports the fellows' educational needs and gives them real world professional experience in environmental careers.

A key component of the program is professional development that supports the fellows in mapping out their desired career pathway, encourages them to utilize the fellowship term to find mentors, and supports them in completing their portfolio project. At the end of their season the fellows present their portfolio to community members and program leadership.

Survey feedback from both Fellows and supervisors indicated high levels of satisfaction with the program, and several Fellows have gone on to further careers in environmental education and conservation. One fellow shared that "This fellowship supported me through my first experience in a professional work environment. It was great as it allowed me to learn about everything as I was also doing it."

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

### **Dissemination**

Voyageurs Conservancy proudly acknowledges the support of the Minnesota Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund (ENRTF) across all of our Voyageurs Classroom digital promotions, print materials, and the Voyageurs Classroom Educator Newsletter. Through these efforts, we've reached an audience of 25,000 individuals. Additionally, the ENRTF logo is displayed on all summer programming flyers in Voyageurs National Park's three visitors centers, reaching thousands of visitors and community members.

This cycle, our Voyageurs Classroom gained significant recognition, with our Dark Sky Programs and Voyageurs Star Party earning state-wide and national attention in prominent publications such as The Smithsonian Magazine, Outside Online, The Star Tribune, and MPR News. This exposure has attracted attention to our programs that connect people of all ages and backgrounds to the natural and cultural wonders of Voyageurs' starry skies.

Additionally, our work has been featured in various outlets including Smithsonian Magazine, Outside Online, MPR News, The Timberjay, Rainy Lake Gazette, Fort Frances Times, and R&J Broadcasting. For links to these articles, please refer to the attachments tab. We are deeply appreciative of the ongoing support and recognition, which have amplified our outreach efforts, allowing us to deliver enriching educational programs to communities across the state.

# Additional Status Update Reporting

## Additional Status Update August 14, 2024

**Date Submitted:** June 18, 2024

**Date Approved:** July 23, 2024

### **Overall Update**

Per LCCMR staff guidance, due to system logic this is place holder text to all the submission of required reporting.

### **Activity 1**

Per LCCMR staff guidance, due to system logic this is place holder text to all the submission of required reporting.

### **Activity 2**

Per LCCMR staff guidance, due to system logic this is place holder text to all the submission of required reporting.

### **Activity 3**

Per LCCMR staff guidance, due to system logic this is place holder text to all the submission of required reporting.

### **Dissemination**

Per LCCMR staff guidance, due to system logic this is place holder text to all the submission of required reporting.

# Status Update Reporting

## Status Update June 1, 2024

**Date Submitted:** June 18, 2024

**Date Approved:** July 23, 2024

### Overall Update

The Voyageurs Classroom Initiative has been incredibly successful, reaching our milestones over the course of the project, and building a larger and more impactful environmental education program at Voyageurs National Park. Because of this investment from the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund we have been able to dramatically increase the number of students we serve annually with expanded programs for K-6 students at the park, in classrooms, and virtually. From December 2023 - April 2024 Voyageurs Conservancy connected 43,224 students to Voyageurs National Park, with 3,174 of those students from Minnesota.

Our teen programming reached new audiences, including partnering with Indigenous communities to connect youth with their ancestral lands, as well as providing fall programming that connects rural teens to the incredible resource in their backyard.

Love Your Park programming connected more people than ever to behind-the-scenes science, the wonder of dark skies, and the joy of recreating in Minnesota's incredible landscapes preserved in Voyageurs National Park.

Young professionals gained experience, built connections, and explored their career pathways through hands-on field work and reflective professional development work throughout their term. Our 2024 summer Field Fellow season is our largest cohort ever with 8 fellows together.

### Activity 1

During December 2023 - April 2024, Voyageurs Classroom programs connected 43,224 students to Voyageurs National Park through in-park snowshoeing programs, virtual Dark Sky experiences, and one very large livestream program that reached 41,000 students across the country to share about Minnesota's National Park. Of the total number reached over this time period, 3,174 were from Minnesota.

Over the course of the last three years we have built Voyageurs Classroom programming that is robust and consistent, with park-based field trips in September, February, March, and May; virtual programming in fall and spring; and a special educational event - the winter Boreal Stargazing Week. We have also piloted the Voyageurs Mobile Classroom, and are ready to launch during the 2024-2025 school year. Our programs bring high quality environmental education to teachers and students that connect them to the land and waters of Voyageurs National Park.

### Activity 2

Love Your Park programs connected 2,350 people to Voyageurs National Park during the reporting period.

Our growth in numbers is partially the result of the development of robust partnerships throughout Minnesota. In December, our Education Specialist, Jesse Gates, partnered with the MN DNR to connect 1,500 participants to the science and splendor of the Northern Lights. In February, Boreal Stargazing Week connected Minnesotans throughout the state to the wonder of dark skies in Voyageurs National Park and the BWCAW with programs in both locations, as well as in Duluth, the Twin Cities and virtually. 511 community members participated in-person. Seven major partner organizations bolstered the event including NPS, Bell Museum, Starry Skies North, Forest Service, Friends of the Boundary Waters, Duluth Planetarium, Wood Lake Nature Center, and NASA Goddard.

Our winter programming highlighted the ways the public can continue to recreate in Minnesota's cold with dark sky viewing, snowshoeing, and cross country skiing. In spring, we shared programming with Twin Cities participants about lichens, "leave no trace," wolves, and ranger programs about navigating the waters of Voyageurs. We continue to build our outreach to ensure that Minnesotans know and love Voyageurs National Park.

### **Activity 3**

We successfully completed Activity 2 by April 2024 with nine students participating in the Voyageurs Field Fellows program since 2023. In addition, we recruited Fellows for the summer cohort of 2024 and have our largest group yet, with eight fellows spending their summer season at Voyageurs National Park implementing wildlife research, aquatic monitoring, cultural resources, natural resources, and facilities management projects.

The Field Fellows program has been successful in building the capacity of public lands and natural resource young professionals, and supporting a culture of mentoring at Voyageurs National Park. The provided professional development opportunities as well as the end of season portfolio projects allow the Fellows to explore their career goals and prepare for the next phase of their professional journey.

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

### **Dissemination**

Voyageurs Conservancy recognizes the Minnesota Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund (ENRTF) in all of our Voyageurs Classroom digital promotions, print materials, and Voyageurs Classroom Educator Newsletter. The combined reach of the Voyageurs Conservancy media is 20,000 members.

Quetico Superior News highlighted our Voyageurs Classroom Initiative with a comprehensive article. There were also articles about our work from UMD News Center, Fort Frances Times, USA Today, National Parks Traveler, Boreal Community Media and the Duluth News Tribute. Links to these articles are found in the attachments tab.

# Status Update Reporting

## Status Update December 1, 2023

**Date Submitted:** December 1, 2023

**Date Approved:** January 3, 2024

### Overall Update

As we build the Voyageurs Classroom Initiative, we continued to improve and refine summer/fall education program offerings. We served 1,923 students and community members, connecting them to Voyageurs National Park and the outdoors through hands-on learning on the water, hiking trails, and in classrooms.

This year we brought Voyageurs National Park into classrooms with a new Mobile Classroom strategy, allowing our lessons and activities to reach audiences that can't travel to the park. This pilot program reached 251 students in Duluth area elementary schools and encouraged classrooms to get outside at their own schoolyard as part of the experience. One teacher shared, "The whole visit was wonderful. The students were engaged, had good questions, and enjoyed being outside exploring".

The growth of the Voyageurs Classroom Initiative has brought Voyageurs National Park to Minnesotans in new ways, creating more connections throughout the state with Minnesota's National Park. We are confident that as we complete this grant in June 2024 we will have met and exceeded our original goals, and built a strong community of environmental stewards in the Voyageurs region and statewide.

### Activity 1

From June to November 2023, Voyageurs Classroom programs reached 1,213 K-12 students, connecting them to Voyageurs National Park through in-Park experiences, classroom visits, and virtual programs.

We completed milestone 3: to engage 3,500 K-6 youth in education programs. Over the course of our grant to date we've served 11,584 K-6 students, building their skills in recreation, achieving learning targets based on standards, and connecting them with the natural world using Voyageurs National Park as our learning laboratory.

We've also completed milestone 2, to engage 300 high school students. Since 2020 we've brought 548 teens to Voyageurs National Park to build leadership skills, interpersonal skills, and foster future stewards of our public lands through connection to Minnesota's National Park. The career exploration and place-based skill building builds a foundation for teens to continue to recreate in and protect Minnesota's natural resources.

Additionally, we've shifted our summer teen overnight experience to bring Indigenous youth and community members to the Park. We are also building relationships with the Bois Forte Band of Chippewa, specifically gathering community feedback to revise and update curriculum materials and program delivery to better serve both the general public and Indigenous youth in our region.

### Activity 2

Our Love Your Park events were attended by 710 participants between June and November 2023, participating in telescope stargazing, family learn-to-fish workshops, scientist-led hikes, film screenings, and our summer Star Party. Programs were held at Voyageurs National Park and the Twin Cities.

Love Your Park programs Hike with a Scientist, hosted during the busy summer and fall season at Voyageurs National Park, pulls back the curtain of the scientific work happening at Voyageurs National Park. Visitors learn the importance of



understanding and preserving the vital ecosystems of the northern boreal forests, and learn more about the keystone species, like beavers, that shape those ecosystems. We also explored deep into the geologic past, visiting 2.8 billion year old rocks that are found in Voyageurs National Park.

The Star Party drew a record number of participants for family-friendly outdoor activities, night-time canoeing, s'mores and stories by the fire, as well as renowned regional astronomer Bob King giving telescope tours of the night sky. One family visiting for the first time was there because their fourth grade student participated in a Dark Sky Classroom program during the school year and brought her family from the Twin Cities to the Star Party!

### **Activity 3**

The third year of the Field Fellows program was successful and rewarding, with a full slate of six summer Fellows, as well as a seventh Education Field Fellow who began in late summer. We have learned over the course of the program the importance of the cohort model which builds the confidence of the Field Fellows and supports them in making the most of their opportunity. One Fellow shared that "I appreciated the recognition but also encouragement the Conservancy provides the Fellows as young professionals. It balanced the occasional inexperience I felt when working with the long-time staff and highly educated professionals".

Field Fellows appreciate the experience of building professional skills within such a unique and beautiful site, sharing that they would: "Let people know this is an education park! Working here is becoming a naturalist of the area, because what makes it cool is the little things - the billions of years old stuff that can be seen by both the naked eye and the insane telescopes we have".

We have 2 Field Fellows joining this winter, in wolf research and dark skies. We will reach our Milestone 2 of nine fellows by the end of April 2024.

### **Dissemination**

Voyageurs Conservancy recognizes the Minnesota Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund (ENRTF) in all of our Voyageurs Classroom digital promotions, print newsletters, program flyers, and Voyageurs Classroom Educator Newsletter. Additionally, we write regular blog posts highlighting the work of the Voyageurs Classroom Initiative, including Fall K-12 program opportunities, see attachments. The combined reach of the Voyageurs Conservancy email/social media is 20,000 members.

The 3rd Annual Voyageurs Star Party drew the most media attention this summer, with articles posted in the National Parks Traveler, Duluth News Tribune, The Pioneer Press, Fort Francis Times, and Apple News. Additionally, guest astronomer Bob King shared his story about the weekend in The Duluth News Tribune. We also had a journalist at Duluth News Tribune shadow a Voyageurs Mobile Classroom visit this fall and will share that article when it is available.

# Status Update Reporting

## Status Update June 1, 2023

**Date Submitted:** June 1, 2023

**Date Approved:** June 9, 2023

### Overall Update

The Voyageurs Classroom has experienced significant growth in this reporting period, connecting 9,478 students of all ages to Voyageurs National Park through enhanced programming. With support from LCCMR, we leveraged new strategic partnerships with state and national partners to bring Voyageurs Classroom to its next stage and reach new audiences.

Our winter and spring field-based programs are connecting rural school partners with recurring year-round EE opportunities and developing students as stewards of Minnesota's national park. A 4th grade teacher from International Falls, MN, shared, "We come to everything they [Voyageurs Classroom] have for us... We have this treasure in our backyard, there's no reason for us not to be here."

New special education events like Boreal Stargazing Week and winter Love Your Park family programs reached statewide and national audiences while bringing in new MN partners. We continue to survey participants and partners to make our programs sought after, relevant, and responsive to community needs. With new technology, partnerships, and a growing network of teachers, we are poised to reach all goals in 2023-24.

### Activity 1

Voyageurs Classroom programs reached 9,478 K6 students through live programs November 2022 through May 2023. 18,681 students registered to access recorded education programs.

We had great success engaging northern Minnesota classrooms in field trips at Voyageurs National Park. 194 local students went snowshoeing and 304 students participated in outdoor spring field trips featuring animal adaptations, Ojibwe lifeways, and macro-invertebrates (photos attached). A teacher reported, "I can't say enough good things about the programs that Ranger Jesse and Ranger Moss have created for our students. They are unmatched in student engagement, management and learning!"

February, we leveraged partnerships with local and national partners including Expeditions in Education, Friends of the Boundary Waters, and local Indigenous knowledge holders to bring Minnesota's dark skies to youth through live virtual programming. Our inaugural Boreal Stargazing Week reached 8,623 students, including participating classrooms from Minnesota, Maryland, California, Florida, and Tennessee. Programs highlighted northern Minnesota's star-bright skies and empowered students to engineer solutions to protect natural darkness. We engaged an additional 293 students through other Dark Sky programs.

This spring, we developed new partnerships to welcome Indigenous leadership and youth into our Teen Ambassador program and grow the student audiences we serve.

### Activity 2

Love Your Park events engaged 814 participants with snowshoe hikes, stargazing experiences, a film screening, and mobile classroom activities. These programs reached Minnesotans in Duluth, the Twin Cities, and multiple rural neighboring communities of Voyageurs National Park

In partnership with the National Park Service, we created a joint summer program calendar to promote upcoming Love Your Park programs. After evaluating our pilot programs, the Voyageurs Classroom is offering enhanced family-friendly programs that deepen community members' and visitors' connection to Minnesota's national park. These programs include meeting a Park Scientist and learning about their fascinating field work, discovering the night sky at a Dark Sky Program, and learning how to fish at a Junior Ranger Angler Program.

We are expanding creative, immersive opportunities to connect Minnesotans to the rich natural and cultural resources of Voyageurs National Park. In January 2023, we secured an 18" telescope to cultivate wonder and increase accessibility to Minnesota's dark skies. We also leveraged funding from another partner to purchase a vehicle to develop a mobile classroom to bring programming around the park and around the state (photos attached). Our expanding Love Your Park program bolsters Minnesota tourism while inspiring a conservation ethic in all ages.

### **Activity 3**

After a highly-successful Summer 2022 cohort of Field Fellows, Voyageurs Conservancy connected with program alumni, the National Park Service, and university partners to evaluate and enhance the Field Fellows program. We formalized components of the program that previous Fellows have highlighted as valuable, indirect benefits of their fellowship, including public speaking and presentations, resume building, gaining insight on government agencies and nonprofits, and more.

During November 2022 - May 2023, our Environmental Education Field Fellow worked on a project to enhance nature-based learning opportunities for Minnesota youth that complimented the students' professional development goals and Master's thesis. The fellow delivered and enhanced environmental education programs to over 400 students, mainly in the Duluth area, and has been a key contributor to adapting programs for our new Voyageurs Mobile Classroom to take the program statewide.

Voyageurs Conservancy will support seven Field Fellows in the upcoming Summer 2023 cohort in wildlife and wetland ecology, aquatics & fisheries, wolf ecology research, digital media, environmental education, and cultural resources. The Field Fellowship program invests in our future conservation leaders and preserves Minnesota's outdoor heritage.

### **Dissemination**

Voyageurs Conservancy recognizes the Minnesota Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund (ENRTF) in all of our Voyageurs Classroom digital promotions, print materials, and Voyageurs Classroom Educator Newsletter (attached). Most notably, ENRTF was acknowledged as a key supporter of our Boreal Stargazing Week, which reached 18,681 educators and students nationally.

The Voyageurs Classroom and Boreal Stargazing Week were featured on two major newsletter outlets with large national reaches - 'The Green & Gray Report' (National Park Service) and 'Environmental Education in Focus' (National Environmental Education Foundation). These programs received additional recognition in state-wide and national news outlets including the Rainy Lake Gazette, Quetico Superior Wilderness News, National Parks Traveller, NewsBreak, and Boreal.org.

ENRTF is acknowledged for their support of the Voyageurs Classroom in our 2023 Summer Program Calendar (attached) and Mobile Classroom van (photo attached) that will be visible to Voyageurs National Park visitors this summer.

Voyageurs Conservancy continues to highlight the Voyageurs Classroom and LCCMR support through its own blog posts, social media, and newsletters with a reach of 20,000 members. Promotions and press coverage will be bolstered in the upcoming months through our Love Your Park summer programs, Field Fellows, and National Park Teen Ambassadors programs.

# Status Update Reporting

## Status Update December 1, 2022

**Date Submitted:** December 1, 2022

**Date Approved:** December 14, 2022

### Overall Update

The Voyageurs Classroom, to date, has reached 1,441 students and over 600 community members through outdoor experiences and classroom-based programming. With support from LCCMR, this program is creating positive connections with nature and innovative experiences for students. One teacher who works with deaf and hard of hearing students shared, "We have participated in a variety of educational programs in the last ten years--all of them meaningful experiences--but few have provided the helpful structure, opportunities to interact, and visual stimulation that the presentations that you delivered have."

During this reporting period, we drastically expanded K-12 education opportunities in the park, established the Field Fellows internship program, and created new events for families. The Conservancy's education team worked with stakeholders, partners, the National Park Service, and schools to create a multi-year education program framework. We established community-based goals and systems that lay a strong foundation for a sustainable program that will serve students long-term. Our staff spent time building networks especially with Minnesota educators.

The foundational work we've conducted on the education framework and state network will ensure we will be successful in reaching our goals in 2023-24. Our impact is highlighted in the attached visual LCCMR Voyageurs Classroom Update.

### Activity 1

The Voyageurs Classroom has reached 1,441 students at the park and in the classroom since the beginning of our LCCMR grant. We are connecting with rural students and building new networks throughout Minnesota to share Voyageurs National Park with more students than ever before.

- Our student programs included deep dive experiences at Voyageurs National Park - visiting summer groups had exposure to park scientists, guided hikes, and telescope programs. Fall Field Experiences brought 4th and 6th grade students on the water for a Floating Classroom, and younger students had a chance to become voyageurs, investigate trees, and learn about the weather patterns in Northern Minnesota. All fall experiences were aligned with Minnesota state standards to support classroom learning goals.
- Our Teen Ambassador program served 208 students through one-day and multi-day paddling experiences, and time spent exploring conservation careers, environmental stewardship and leadership.
- We piloted, refined, and launched Dark Sky virtual programs for students who can't visit the park to have a Voyageurs experience. See our attached flyer for the 2022-2023 school year.
- We worked with 9 volunteer teachers and community leaders to build curriculum, reimagine old programs, and create new and dynamic programs for students.

### Activity 2

Love Your Park events connect families to recreation and learning opportunities in Voyageurs National Park. Over 600 participants engaged in star gazing, hiking, outdoor art experiences, and even deep-dives into the 2.8 billion year

geologic history of Voyageurs National Park. The expansion of in-park programming supports local businesses and tourism, while engaging more Minnesotans in their state's outdoor heritage.

Over the course of our pilot season we learned:

- Participants love “behind the scenes” of the park, connecting directly with park scientists to understand more about bird surveys, wolf research, and invasive species management.
- Dark Sky programs and our Star Party celebration engaged visitors and locals with the unique night sky views of an International Dark Sky Park. There is growing demand for these programs.
- Charismatic megafauna (wolves!) always bring in participants. Our partnership with the Voyageurs Wolf Project supports both of our programs, and community members and visitors love to hear about the wolf population of the Voyageurs National Park region.

As we design our 2023 programs, we are applying what we learned from this pilot season, and look forward to a successful year of expanded programming.

### **Activity 3**

We served seven Field Fellows, exceeding our goal of six. These fellows contributed to major conservation initiatives in wetland ecology, fisheries and water quality, education, and wildlife research. Additionally, each fellow presented components of their research to the public through Love Your Park outreach events, and spent time developing portfolios reflecting on their career pathways and what they learned through their time with Voyageurs Conservancy. Feedback from one fellow shared how the range of activities beyond research supported their career goals: “I really enjoyed the opportunities to interact with the public.... I need more exposure like that to gain confidence and professionalism in sharing scientific information in an understandable and impactful way. “

Field Fellows were appreciated and key members of the various teams at Voyageurs National Park, Voyageurs Wolf Project and Voyageurs Conservancy. One supervisor shared that “[Our Fellow] did a fantastic job with us, so I want to make sure that you and others at the Conservancy know that he was a major help and that the Field Fellows are valuable to the Aquatic Ecology Program at VNP.”

### **Dissemination**

We created a new Voyageurs Classroom Educator Newsletter. This circulates to teachers and partners interested in our education programming at Voyageurs National Park. The newsletter is sent to teachers approximately 3-4 times per year, and provides updates on field trips, educator resources, and more. <https://mailchi.mp/voyageurs/teacher-newsletter-fall-22>. Our distribution list of the first newsletter reached over 200 teachers and educators.

Voyageurs Classroom media coverage was widespread, and includes the following partner and press outlets:  
Voyageurs Star Party: Minnesota Live - KSTP News, Fox, AARP, Explore Minnesota, Quetico Superior Wilderness News, Duluth News Tribune, The Timberjay, National Parks Traveler, Apple News, Minnesota Monthly.

Love Your Park Sam Zimmerman Community Artist & Educator at the Park: Duluth News Tribune, Rainy Lake Gazette, Cook County News Herald, R&J Broadcasting, Brainerd Dispatch, Pine Journal

K-12 Education Programs: National Park Foundation, Great Lakes Echo, Quetico Superior Wilderness News, Rainy Lake Gazette, Burnsville High School

Finally, Voyageurs Conservancy continues to highlight the Voyageurs Classroom programs and LCCMR support through our own blog posts, social media, and newsletters. See our attached Fall 2022 Newsletter with stories about the Community Artist at the Park, Sam Zimmerman, and two of our summer Field Fellows.

# Additional Status Update Reporting

## Additional Status Update April 1, 2022

**Date Submitted:** June 1, 2022

**Date Approved:** July 12, 2022

### Overall Update

With funding from the ENRTF and other sources, the Voyageurs Conservancy brought on two new education staff to develop and expand the Voyageurs Classroom Initiative. Though there was a slight delay in hiring (fall vs summer 2021), we are still on track to spend our grant and achieve metrics within our proposed timeframe.

Despite the pandemic's continuation and impact on schools, we have still been able to serve nearly 1000 kids through education programs on the waters and trails of Voyageurs National Park and at home and in the classroom through our Dark Sky virtual lessons. In just a year, we expanded our existing National Park Teen Ambassador program from serving 30 high school students per year to almost 200. ENRTF funds also allowed us to take our Field Fellows program from its pilot phase to a full cohort of college student interns stationed at the park this summer. Developing partnerships and teacher networks has been a primary focus to build our capacity to scale up to serve more students and to establish the Voyageurs Classroom as a high quality, standards-based education resource that teachers seek out year after year.

### Activity 1

Voyageurs Conservancy is expanding traditional K12 education opportunities at Minnesota's only National Park. We connected a total of 959 students to Voyageurs through:

- K-6 student programs: In the 2021-2022 school year, we successfully brought students back to the park for the first time since the pandemic began. K-6 students from Koochiching and St. Louis Counties attended outdoor field trips.
- Dark Sky Classroom: Voyageurs Conservancy developed new virtual programming focused on 4th and 5th graders throughout Minnesota.
- Teen Ambassadors: We expanded our existing Teen Ambassador program to get middle and high school students from both urban and rural areas on one-day and multi-day camping and paddling experiences in the park.

We have worked to build a plan and foundation for new methods of program delivery, establish a network of teachers and schools to partner with, and deliver environmental education programs to students both in the park and in new formats. Over the summer, we will review feedback and update our program delivery methods to focus on scaling up and serving more students during the 2022-2023 school year. We did experience some challenges with getting classrooms involved in our programs due to teacher fatigue and COVID impacts.

### Activity 2

For the first time ever, the National Park Service and Voyageurs National Park released a joint summer programming calendar, increasing opportunities for the public to connect to Voyageurs National Park through hands-on stewardship and recreation.

We hosted a Dark Sky Snowshoe Hike in February 2022, with strong participation even on a night that reached -18 degrees. Pilot 'Love Your Park' programs for this summer include weekly telescope viewing opportunities, bird watching hikes with park scientists, community art projects focused on Voyageurs National Park, aquatic invasive species exploration, local and visiting speakers, and more.

These planned activities will include opportunities for visitors and community members to give feedback to Voyageurs Conservancy, so we can understand the impact of these learning opportunities at Voyageurs National Park, so we can best design and implement a strong slate of programs moving forward.

See "Voyageurs National Park Summer Program Calendar" in the Attachments page for more details.

### **Activity 3**

In the first year of our project, the Voyageurs Field Fellows Program has developed into a program that supports student career exposure and learning opportunities, while engaging paid internship opportunities to support vital work within the park.

We have two alumni of the Field Fellows program who completed a term with Voyageurs Conservancy supporting Environmental Education and Aquatics/Fisheries. These positions allowed us to pilot the best way to develop a joint internship program between a nonprofit partner and federal agency. For the summer 2022 season, four Field Fellows have been selected and already began their work in May. These positions are focused on wildlife research and aquatics and fisheries. Additionally, one Fellow has been selected for an Environmental Education Field Fellowship who will begin September 2022. Finally, we are working with another department within the park to create one more position, to begin in August or September 2022. We expect to have a full slate of 6 Fellows in 2022, and already have broad interest in more Field Fellowship positions in 2023.

### **Dissemination**

Voyageurs Conservancy has shared education program opportunities with over 40 schools throughout Minnesota; ENRTF is recognized on program curriculum and materials shared with teachers and on our website where we direct teachers to find program offerings: <https://www.voyageurs.org/voyageurs-classroom>. In addition, ENRTF is recognized in our summer program publication which is used digitally and in print format reaching thousands of park visitors (see “Voyageurs National Park Summer Program Calendar” in the Attachments page). Recognition in our print and email newsletters of ENRTF support for the Voyageurs Classroom Initiative has reached approximately 7,000 readers.