

**Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund
2016 Request for Proposals (RFP)**

Project Title:

ENRTF ID: 117-C

Nature Walk at Como Park Zoo and Conservatory

Category: C. Environmental Education

Total Project Budget: \$ 9,300

Proposed Project Time Period for the Funding Requested: 1 year, July 2016 to June 2017

Summary:

Nature Walk empowers teens to share Como's unique animal and plant collections with visitors. Requested funding would create a Monarch Station to teach visitors about the value of butterfly conservation.

Name: Susie Van Blaircom

Sponsoring Organization: Como Friends

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Location

Region: Metro

County Name: Dakota, Hennepin, Ramsey, Washington

City / Township:

Alternate Text for Visual:

Nature Walk volunteers meet visitors at interpretive stations arranged around the campus of Como Park Zoo and Conservatory.

_____ Funding Priorities	_____ Multiple Benefits	_____ Outcomes	_____ Knowledge Base
_____ Extent of Impact	_____ Innovation	_____ Scientific/Tech Basis	_____ Urgency
_____ Capacity Readiness	_____ Leverage	_____ TOTAL	_____ %



PROJECT TITLE: Monarch Conservation Station at Como Park Zoo and Conservatory

I. PROJECT STATEMENT

In 2016, requested funding would allow teen Nature Walk volunteers at Como Park Zoo and Conservatory to introduce a new interpretive station aimed at teaching visitors about conservation threats to the Monarch butterfly and what individuals can do to make a difference for this important pollinator.

Nature Walk is a unique environmental education program that empowers 45 trained teen conservationists each summer to share their knowledge of Como Park Zoo and Conservatory’s animal and plant collections with an estimated 200,000 visitors each year. Launched in the mid-90s, this youth-driven conservation program has become a signature part of Como’s environmental programming, and a proven means of modeling the value of environmental education to our youngest visitors. Recruited from more than 30 metro area high schools, teen Nature Walk volunteers are trained to reach out to Como visitors, introducing them to live animal ambassadors, unique plants, and cultural artifacts at a series of interpretive stations positioned across Como’s campus during the busiest summer months. With nearly two million annual visitors each year, including more than 950,000 school age children, Nature Walk is an important tool for encouraging young visitors and their families to get closer to Como’s natural resources, and consider their own role as stewards of the environment.

Interpretive stations that cover topics such as rainforests and amphibians all help to connect visitors to different aspects of Como’s collections, from the immersive Tropical Encounters habitat to behind-the-scenes breeding efforts for endangered amphibians. In 2016, Como will introduce a new Butterfly exhibit to the enclosed garden site near the historic Carousel that will allow visitors to encounter a variety of live species while learning about butterfly conservation issues. To expand on that environmental message, Nature Walk teens will add a new Monarch Butterfly Conservation station to their interpretive roster, providing visitors information about the current population crisis, the intersection between insects, people, and plants, and take-away information about how to create butterfly gardens and other efforts that can make a positive impact for Minnesota’s environment.

II. PROJECT ACTIVITIES AND OUTCOMES

Activity 1: Creating a Monarch Conservation Station for Como’s Nature Walk Program **Budget:** \$ 9,300

Como’s education department will work with Nature Walk Volunteers to identify key conservation messages to expand the interpretive reach of Como’s Butterfly Exhibit while highlighting current conservation challenges of Monarchs and other important Midwest pollinators.

Outcome	Completion Date
<i>1. Como’s Education staff directs conservation research with Nature Walk Teens</i>	<i>April 2016</i>
<i>2. Nature Walk teens identify key conservation messages for interpretive station</i>	<i>May 2016</i>
<i>3. Nature Walk teens assemble and implement interpretive materials and tools</i>	<i>May 2016</i>
<i>4. Nature Walk teens develop teaching materials, including interactive displays, slideshows, or quizzes for iPads at Nature Walk Stations</i>	<i>June 2016</i>
<i>5. New Monarch station joins Nature Walk interpretive roster</i>	<i>July 2016</i>



III. PROJECT STRATEGY

A. Project Team/Partners

Nature Walk is one of the signature programs of Como's Education Department, which serves more than 500,000 adults and children each year in free and fee-based classes. The education department is led by Education and Conservation Curator Susie Van Blaircom, who has presided over the six-fold growth of education programs at Como over the last decade. Education specialist Lorrie Cashman, who has directed the program 2001, will supervise and manage the content expansion outlined in this request. Como is also in the process of hiring a Facility and Program manager, a new position that will oversee volunteer efforts, which includes Nature Walk. Teen Nature Walk volunteers will be responsible for the implementation of the new interpretive station, and for engaging Como's audience with these additional conservation resources in the summer of 2016. Como Friends, Como's nonprofit fundraising partner, will also provide oversight of the program to ensure that the activities outlined meet the expectations of Como's audience, statewide science standards, Minnesota Lottery Fund requirements and other measures of excellence and impact.

B. Project Impact and Long-Term Strategy

This is the first time that Como Friends has sought funding support from the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund for any environmental education program at Como Park Zoo and Conservatory. Since the opening of Como's Visitor Center in 2005, educational engagement at Como has grown six-fold, reaching more than 20,000 students annually in fee-based classes, and nearly 500,000 each year through free, value-added programs. Through grants from committed education funders and donations from private individuals, Como Friends has provided new funding streams that have helped to supplement the development and growth of Como's environmental education offerings. Currently, contributions from Como Friends and other private sources help to underwrite about 30 percent of all education programs at Como. Requested ENRTF Funding would be invested exclusively in the expansion and implementation of this new Nature Walk interpretive station.

As attendance and educational engagement have increased at Como Park Zoo and Conservatory, Como Friends has adopted a five-year growth strategy aimed at engaging new corporate and philanthropic partners, driving membership and sponsorship programs, and advocating for public funding to secure a sustainable future for Minnesota's most visited cultural attraction. Thanks to the generous support of the community, Como Friends is currently meeting and exceeding the fundraising benchmarks set in this strategy.

C. Timeline Requirements

Nature Walk is a seasonal program at Como that starts each year with a recruitment call for interested students through January and February. Como's education department conducts interviews with candidates in March, and brings together the full crew of 45 Nature Walk volunteers for conservation education and interpretive training in April and May. Students begin their volunteer shifts starting after Memorial Day, serving at a variety of interpretive stations throughout the summer. Each Nature Walk volunteer is required to provide 18 interpretive shifts each summer. Program retention is high. Though about 20 percent of volunteers age out of the 13-17 year age provisions each year, an average of 75 percent of Nature Walk volunteers serve consecutive years.

The new interpretive station proposed in this request would be designed and researched by Nature Walk volunteers in spring 2016, and pending the outcome of requested funding, would be fully operational on Como's campus by August 2016. Thereafter, the Monarch Conservation Station will be in permanent rotation with the Nature Walk program which runs through summer and on high-traffic holiday weekends during the school year.

2016 Detailed Project Budget

Project Title: Nature Walk Monarch Conservation Station at Como Park Zoo and Conservatory

IV. TOTAL ENRTF REQUEST BUDGET [1] years















BUDGET ITEM		
Personnel:		
Professional/Technical/Service Contracts:	\$	-
Equipment/Tools/Supplies: Interpretive Cart	\$	6,000
Equipment/Tools/Supplies: Handouts for public and how to guides	\$	2,000
Equipment/Tools/Supplies: Props and biofacts	\$	1,300
Acquisition (Fee Title or Permanent Easements):	\$	-
Travel:	\$	-
Additional Budget Items:	\$	-
TOTAL ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES TRUST FUND \$ REQUEST =		\$ 9,300

V. OTHER FUNDS *(This entire section must be filled out. Do not delete rows. Indicate "N/A" if row is not applicable.)*

SOURCE OF FUNDS	AMOUNT	Status
Other Non-State \$ To Be Applied To Project During Project	N/A	
Other State \$ To Be Applied To Project During Project Period:	N/A	
In-kind Services To Be Applied To Project During Project Period:	\$ 950	<i>Pending</i>
Funding History: <i>Indicate funding secured but to be expended prior to July 1, 2016, for activities directly relevant to this specific funding request, including past and current ENRTF funds. State specific source(s) of fund and dollar amount.</i>	N/A	
Remaining \$ From Current ENRTF Appropriation:	N/A	

COMO PARK ZOO & CONSERVATORY

MAP LEGEND

-  First Aid
-  Emergency Defibrillator
-  Restrooms
-  Telephone
-  ATM
-  Gift Shop
-  Information
-  Parking
-  Shuttle Stop
-  Food & Beverage
-  Amusement Ride Ticket Booth
-  Vending Machine
-  Main Entrance
-  Como Town Entrance

\$10 OFF COMO MEMBERSHIP

Did you know you can be a member of Como Park Zoo & Conservatory?

Join Como Friends as a member and your support lasts for 12 months. Members receive valuable perks and help the plants and animals too! Stop by Garden Safari Gifts and sign up today. *Mention this ad for \$10 off a Family/Grandparent or above membership level.*



VISITOR CENTER

Visitor Services • Meeting & Banquet Rooms
 Garden Safari Gifts • Lockers • Education
 Zöbota Café • Stroller & Wheelchair Rental
 Birthday Parties • Wedding Receptions

Other Available Amenities



MARJORIE MCNEELY CONSERVATORY



← TO HAMLINE AVENUE

COMO TOWN SOARING EAGLE ZIP RIDE

COMO TOWN AMUSEMENT PARK

A family amusement park featuring more than 18 rides and attractions.

Also Featuring

Game Arcade • Birthday Parties • Picnics

TROPICAL ENCOUNTERS EXHIBIT

An authentic neo-tropical rainforest combining both the plant and animal world.

→ TO LABYRINTH & GATES AJAR

COMO PARK ZOO AND CONSERVATORY

Project Manager Qualifications

Jackie Sticha, Como Friends President

Jackie Sticha has a Bachelor of Arts degree in Sociology and English and a Master's degree in Public Administration, both from Drake University. Ms. Sticha has two decades of experience in fundraising and nonprofit executive management. Ms. Sticha led two private sector capital campaigns which raised more than \$26 million for the new Visitor Center, Polar Bear Odyssey, and The Ordway Gardens at Como Park Zoo and Conservatory. In addition, she directs annual fundraising efforts at Como Friends. Under her leadership, Como Friends has contributed more than \$33 million to Como Park Zoo and Conservatory.

Michelle Furrer, Como Campus Manager

Michelle Furrer has been the Como Campus Manager at Como Park Zoo and Conservatory, a division of Saint Paul Parks and Recreation since 2008. Prior to this appointment she served as Marketing & Public Relations Manager at Como, and also has more than ten years of experience managing entertainment attractions in the private sector, including Underwater Adventures Aquarium, ValleyFair, Ted Paul Theater, and the Minnesota Renaissance Festival. Ms. Furrer has led many major expansion projects including *Polar Bear Odyssey* and *Gorilla Forest*, along with managing the day to day operations at Como Park Zoo and Conservatory.

Susie Van Blaircom, Como Education and Conservation Curator

Susie Van Blaircom has her degree in Life Science and Secondary Education from the University of St. Thomas. She has worked in the education departments of zoos and aquariums for more than 20 years, and has guided the six-fold increase in Como's educational outreach efforts over the last decade. Ms. Van Blaircom has developed and offered programs for preschool children through adults. In her work at the Aquarium of the Pacific in Long Beach, California, she handled all off-site public programs and all daily presentations by aquarium staff.

Michael Hahm, Director, Saint Paul Parks and Recreation

Michael Hahm has a Bachelor of Science Degree from the University of St. Thomas in Business Administration and Finance. He has two decades of experience managing programs and facilities within Saint Paul Parks and Recreation with a record of strong management and goal achievement. Mr. Hahm has successfully managed large operations with multi-million dollar annual budgets. He has extensive project management experience having developed operation and special event protocols for the \$15 million Harriet Island Regional Park project and led the related successful planning efforts and on-site logistics for Grand Excursion 2004. He managed the \$4.5 million Highland Golf renovation and negotiated prominent contracts locating the University of Minnesota Centennial Showboat at Harriet Island and converting the management of both the Watergate Marina and Como Lakeside Pavilion to private service partners.

Organization Description

"An environment-based education movement--at all levels of education--will help students realize that school isn't supposed to be a polite form of incarceration, but a portal to the wider world."