



Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

2025 Request for Proposal

General Information

Proposal ID: 2025-065

Proposal Title: Outdoor School for Minnesota K-12 Students

Project Manager Information

Name: Bryan Wood

Organization: Osprey Wilds Environmental Learning Center

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Email: wood@ospreywilds.org

Project Basic Information

Project Summary: Minnesota's five accredited outdoor schools will provide life-changing, immersive multi-day outdoor learning experiences at their campuses to a minimum statewide distribution of 20,000 K-12 students, achieving ENRTF's goals.

ENRTF Funds Requested: \$5,200,000

Proposed Project Completion: June 30, 2028

LCCMR Funding Category: Environmental Education (C)

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

Narrative

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

Children today are increasingly deprived of time in nature (only 7 minutes daily compared to 7-10 hours on screens daily), resulting in an increasing lack of awareness, understanding and contact with the environment. Meanwhile, over 70% of Minnesota's metro area schools face budget deficits and rising costs. Currently, only 30% of Minnesota's K-12 students experience a trip to a Minnesota outdoor school. Through recent feedback from schools, we've learned that scholarship support alone is not enough, as it fails to address two other crucial funding issues. In this proposal, we add transportation funding and teacher stipends to address those realities. By covering all three of the necessary funding areas to make an outdoor school trip occur, we will provide meaningful hands-on nature experiences to children across the state. Through our programs, Minnesota's five accredited outdoor schools (Deep Portage, Eagle Bluff, Long Lake, Osprey Wilds, Wolf Ridge) will build on our current reach by providing a minimum of 300,000 instruction hours to MN K-12 students with immersive multi-day outdoor learning experiences. Every student experience will include multiple courses that are directly focused upon the learning outcomes of the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund's (ENRTF) constitutionally declared goals and objectives.

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.

We will provide student tuition funding, transportation funding and teacher stipends as needed, with each K-12 student spending a minimum of one night and two days onsite. We will reach a statewide population of K-12 students, with eligible schools showing a clear financial need through our application process. Our current ENRTF grant provides important scholarship assistance, but we have learned that is only one part of the financial consideration for these trips. There is also a clear need for teacher compensation, as the vast majority of coordinating teachers work outside of contract hours and receive no compensation for their time and effort to make these impactful experiences happen. In addition, bus transportation costs are a severe barrier to these field trips. Even if schools have no student tuition costs, transportation costs alone are enough to prevent trips from occurring. By supporting teachers and helping with transportation costs, we make it more likely that schools will participate in outdoor school programs. Our work helps Minnesota reach its ENRTF goals with our younger citizens by increasing the number of children recreating and learning outdoors in an immersive way not possible in day-use nature centers, fostering Minnesota's outdoor heritage for the next generation.

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?

Provide a minimum of 300,000 instruction hours to a minimum of 20,000 Minnesota K-12 students through multi-day learning experiences at Minnesota's outdoor schools. Every student during a two-night, 3-day visit receives a minimum of 15 instruction hours. By giving K-12 students extended time in nature, we help Minnesota achieve ENRTF's goals and help students develop environmental awareness, appreciation and interest. Instructional hours will be documented in the LCCMR strategic plan focal areas of water, outdoor recreation, wildlife, plants, climate change, and habitat management. Through financial support to underserved student populations, we address social, economic, and physical barriers.

Activities and Milestones

Activity 1: Increasing K-12 Student Residential Environmental Learning Experiences

Activity Budget: \$5,200,000

Activity Description:

Provide a minimum of 300,000 hours (20,000 learners) of environmental education instruction for Minnesota K-12 students by offering student tuition fees, as well as teacher stipends and transportation funding for school visits to Minnesota’s outdoor schools. Multi-day residential environmental learning experiences will occur at one of Minnesota's five accredited residential environmental learning centers (outdoor schools). To measure the development of environmental awareness, appreciation, and interest in K-12 students, each outdoor school will conduct on-site student and teacher surveys and evaluations before each school departs to gather information on how their awareness, appreciation and interest in the environment has changed. Each outdoor school will receive funds proportionate to their on-site capacity. If one outdoor school cannot distribute their initial funding amount, they will release their funds to the other outdoor schools to use to ensure the most students possible can be reached. Each outdoor school will have a scholarship assistance, teacher stipend, and transportation assistance application to fill out and submit. It will vary based on each request what the amount funded is for each school, based on the school's requested need, attending teachers and the amount of funds available.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Reach out to Minnesota's Schools about the scholarship opportunities through print, electronic and verbal communications	December 31, 2025
Provide a minimum of 75,000 K-12 student instruction hours through outdoor school funding assistance	June 30, 2026
Provide a minimum of 100,000 K-12 student instruction hours through outdoor school funding assistance	June 30, 2027
Provide a minimum of 125,000 K-12 student instruction hours through outdoor school funding assistance	June 30, 2028

Project Partners and Collaborators

Name	Organization	Role	Receiving Funds
Lindsay Bjorklund	Deep Portage Learning Center	Executive Director	Yes
Colleen Foehrenbacher	Eagle Bluff Environmental Learning Center	Executive Director	Yes
Dave McMillan	Long Lake Conservation Center	Manager	Yes
Pete Smerud	Wolf Ridge Environmental Learning Center	Executive Director	Yes

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?

Minnesota's outdoor schools establish relationships with attending schools helping them plan and schedule their experiences, and regularly providing them with fundraising support. Each outdoor school will work with their schools to help them build a diverse fundraising strategy that creates long term stability. As each outdoor school works with dozens of different schools, lessons learned are shared for community-based fundraising ideas. Minnesota's outdoor schools are economic drivers in their communities, collectively employing over 200 individuals annually across our five sites. Work is currently underway to pass Outdoor School For All Minnesota legislation to fund every K-12 student this learning experience.

Other ENRTF Appropriations Awarded in the Last Six Years

Name	Appropriation	Amount Awarded
Increasing K-12 Student Learning to Achieve ENRTF's Goals	M.L. 2022, , Chp. 94, Art. , Sec. 2, Subd. 05b	\$1,602,000

Project Manager and Organization Qualifications

Project Manager Name: Bryan Wood

Job Title: Executive Director

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

Bryan Wood has served as Executive Director of Osprey Wilds for 15 years. During that time, he has managed an annual of budget of approximately \$2 million, and a staff of 30 employees. He has been the grant writer and administrator for three previous LCCMR grants totaling nearly \$1.9 million, and has applied for and received other large grants including the MN Land Trust (\$865,000), Shuttered Venue Operators Grant (\$866,000), two Payroll Protection Program grants (\$397,000) and numerous five-figure grants over the years. Bryan has worked at Osprey Wilds for 17 years and been involved with environmental education for over 20 years. Bryan has been working with and collaborating with Minnesota's residential environmental learning centers since 2009, when he helped secure a \$1.5 million appropriation

from Congressman Jim Oberstar for energy conservation, efficiency and renewable technology upgrades at Osprey Wilds, Long Lake, Laurentian, Deep Portage and Wolf Ridge.

Organization: Osprey Wilds Environmental Learning Center

Organization Description:

Osprey Wilds Environmental Learning Center (formerly Audubon Center of the North Woods) is a private, 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization located on 783 acres near Sandstone in Pine County, MN whose mission is "to instill a connection and commitment to the environment in people of all communities through experiential learning". Since 1969, this has been accomplished with a wide variety of environmental learning programs for audiences K-12 to seniors. Each year more than 4,000 K-12 students attend Osprey Wilds for residential environmental learning experiences, participating in outdoor learning on our 783-acre campus.

Budget Summary

Category / Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Purpose	Gen. Ineligible	% Benefits	# FTE	Classified Staff?	\$ Amount
Personnel								
							Sub Total	-
Contracts and Services								
Deep Portage Learning Center	Sub award	Award minimum of 3,060 scholarships for K-12 student tuition, teacher stipends, and transportation funding assistance				0		\$795,600
Long Lake Conservation Center	Sub award	Award minimum of 3,240 scholarships for K-12 student tuition, teacher stipends, and transportation funding assistance				0		\$842,400
Eagle Bluff Environmental Learning Center	Sub award	Award minimum of 4,340 scholarships for K-12 student tuition, teacher stipends, and transportation funding assistance				0		\$1,128,400
Wolf Ridge Environmental Learning Center	Sub award	Award minimum of 6,520 scholarships for K-12 student tuition, teacher stipends, and transportation funding assistance				0		\$1,695,200
							Sub Total	\$4,461,600
Equipment, Tools, and Supplies								
							Sub Total	-
Capital Expenditures								
							Sub Total	-
Acquisitions and Stewardship								
							Sub Total	-
Travel In Minnesota								

							Sub Total	-
Travel Outside Minnesota								
							Sub Total	-
Printing and Publication								
							Sub Total	-
Other Expenses								
		K-12 Scholarships, Transportation & Teacher Assistance	Award minimum of 2,840 scholarships for K-12 student tuition, teacher stipends, and transportation funding assistance					\$738,400
							Sub Total	\$738,400
							Grand Total	\$5,200,000

Classified Staff or Generally Ineligible Expenses

Category/Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Justification Ineligible Expense or Classified Staff Request
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Non ENRTF Funds

Category	Specific Source	Use	Status	Amount
State				
Cash	MN DNR	Outdoor School For All bill funds	Potential	\$10,000,000
			State Sub Total	\$10,000,000
Non-State				
Cash	Wolf Ridge Environmental Learning Center	K-12 Scholarship Support	Secured	\$180,000
Cash	Deep Portage Learning Center	K-12 Scholarship Support	Secured	\$120,000
Cash	Aitkin County	Long Lake Conservation Center Support	Secured	\$75,000
Cash	Osprey Wilds Environmental Learning Center	K-12 Scholarship Support	Secured	\$75,000
Cash	Eagle Bluff Environmental Learning Center	K-12 Scholarship Support	Secured	\$60,000
Cash	Long Lake Conservation Center Foundation	K-12 Scholarship Support	Potential	\$15,000
			Non State Sub Total	\$525,000
			Funds Total	\$10,525,000

Total Project Cost: \$15,725,000

This amount accurately reflects total project cost?

Yes

Attachments

Required Attachments

Visual Component

File: [f2790e3d-5ee.pdf](#)

Alternate Text for Visual Component

The attached document shows what percentage of K-12 students within each Minnesota House of Representative's district currently attend an accredited outdoor school....

Financial Capacity

Title	File
2023 Osprey Wilds 990	1b22a28b-c6f.pdf
2023 Osprey Wilds Audited Financials	fe76b03e-0a7.pdf
Osprey Wilds Secretary of State: Certificate of Good Standing	9be47ccd-cc0.pdf

Board Resolution or Letter

Title	File
Osprey Wilds' Board Resolution	596f84c0-b77.pdf

Supplemental Attachments

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

Title	File
K-12 Student Attendance Percentage Per MN Senate District	61dc1af1-683.pdf
Aitkin County Letter of Support	38650e70-516.pdf
Eagle Bluff Bd of Directors Letter of Support	a0f7edb5-a38.pdf
Deep Portage Bd of Directors Letter of Support	a3882798-9a4.pdf
Wolf Ridge Board of Directors Letter of Support	f3e659f4-fb3.pdf
Lake County Commissioners Letter of Support	d4ecd78e-0e6.pdf

Administrative Use

Does your project include restoration or acquisition of land rights?

No

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

No

Do you understand and acknowledge IP and revenue-return and sharing requirements in 116P.10?

N/A

Do you wish to request reinvestment of any revenues into your project instead of returning revenue to the ENRTF?

N/A

Does your project include original, hypothesis-driven research?

No

Does the organization have a fiscal agent for this project?

No

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

No

Do you propose using an appropriation from the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund to conduct a project that provides children's services (as defined in Minnesota Statutes section 299C.61 Subd.7 as "the provision of care, treatment, education, training, instruction, or recreation to children")?

Yes

Do you certify that background checks are performed for background check crimes, as defined in Minnesota Statutes, section 299C.61, Subd. 2, on all employees, contractors, and volunteers who have or may have access to a child to whom children's services are provided by your organization?

Yes

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

Colleen Foehrenbacher, Eagle Bluff Environmental Learning Center; Lindsay Bjorklund, Deep Portage Learning Center; Dave McMillan, Long Lake Conservation Center; Pete Smerud, Wolf Ridge Environmental Learning Center

