



LOWER MINNESOTA RIVER WATERSHED DISTRICT

Executive Summary for Action

Lower Minnesota River Watershed District Board of Managers Meeting

Wednesday, March 17, 2021

Agenda Item

Item 5. B. - Authorize 2021 Cost Share Project for Jefferson High School Earth Corps

Prepared By

Linda Loomis, Administrator

Summary

An application for a rain garden was received from the Earth Corps at Jefferson High School in Bloomington. The City of Bloomington is providing technical assistance for the project. The Earth Corps has also informed the City's Sustainability Commission, which is supportive of the project.

I met with the three students of the Earth Corps, the Club's Advisor, Elizabeth Erdmann and Jack Distel, Water Resource Specialist for the City of Bloomington to discuss what the District expects from the Cost Share program. The biggest impediment to the project was the long term maintenance of the project, since the members of the Jefferson Earth Corps were mostly seniors and would not be students able to see that maintenance continued. The Earth Club has worked with the school district to overcome the long-term maintenance obstacle, by getting other High School clubs involved and working with the school's maintenance staff. The only thing missing from the application is the signature of the Jefferson High School Principal, who is waiting to hear from the school's legal counsel before signing.

The cost share worksheet shows the total requested funds is \$100 more than the match. This has not been discussed with the applicant; however, the LMRWD can approve a maximum grant amount of \$3,200 which would make the grant and the match equal.

Staff recommends approving the Cost Share application for a maximum amount of \$3,200 and contingent upon the application being signed by an authorized person.

Attachments

2021 Cost Share application by Earth Corps for Unity Garden at Jefferson High School

Cost Share Worksheet

Bloomington Public School's criteria for proposed landscaping project dated March 2021

Additional Document #1; supplement to application

Recommended Action

Motion to approve Cost Share application by Jefferson High School Earth Corps for Unity Garden for a maximum amount of \$3,200, contingent upon application being signed by an authorized person



Application type (check one) Homeowner Non-profit - 501(c)(3) School
 Business or corporation Public agency or local government unit

Project type (check all that apply) Raingarden Vegetated Swale Infiltration Basin
 Wetland restoration Lake/creek/wetland buffer Conservation practice
 Shoreline/bank stabilization Pervious hard surface
 Other Native/pollinator garden, natural learning space

Applicant Information

Name of Organization or Individual Applying for Grant (to be named as Grantee):

Bloomington Jefferson High School Earth Corps (student environmental club)

Address (street, city and ZIP code):

4001 W 102nd St, Bloomington, MN 55437

Phone: 952-806-7600 Email address: _____

Primary Contact (if different from above)

Name of Organization or Individual Applying for Grant (to be named as Grantee):

Elizabeth Erdmann (Club Advisor), Yanyan Zeng (Club President)

Address (street, city and ZIP code):

Phone: 952-806-7820 Email address: eerdmann@isd271.org

(and/or
zengx210@gmail.com)

Project location

Address (street, city and ZIP code):

4001 W 102nd St, Bloomington, MN 55437

Property Identification Number (PID)

19-027-24-11-0014

Property Owners:

Independent School District 271 Category: Commercial, Exempt

Project Summary

Title Earth Corps Unity Garden

Total Project Cost \$6,400 Grant amount requested \$3,250 (50.78% of total)

Estimated start date 3/1/2021 Estimated completion date 10/1/2022 (actual installation will be completed by end of '21)

Is project tributary to a water body? No, water remains on site Yes, indirectly Yes, directly adjacent

Project description:

In alignment with Earth Corps' goals of benefitting wildlife, combating climate change, and encouraging the community to live more sustainably, the club created the Unity Garden project. The Unity Garden is a native plant, rain, and pollinator garden at Jefferson High School designed to bring together individuals, organizations, and businesses from both inside and outside the school. The Garden will have a variety of natural benefits, including water filtration and carbon sequestration. Long-term maintenance of the garden will be done in collaboration between Earth Corps members, other school organizations, and members of the community.

Is this work required as part of a permit? No Yes

(If yes; describe how the project provides water quality treatment beyond permit requirement on a separate page.)

Project Details

Checklist To be considered complete the following must be included with the application.

- location map
- project timeline
- site plan & design schematic
- proof of property ownership (May not be available. School is looking into this request)
- itemized budget or contractor bid
- plant list & planting plan (if project includes plants)

Description

Describe the current site conditions, as well as site history, and past management

For decades, the grounds of Jefferson High School have been covered in many acres of turf grass and a few ornamental plants that provide little value to wildlife. Our proposed garden site is located at the bottom of a small hill where water will naturally flow during a rain event. Snow is often piled at the top of the hill during the winter, and the melted remains tend to form a puddle in this area in the spring. The area is currently maintained by Jefferson High School's Buildings and Grounds department.

What are the project objectives and expected outcomes? Give any additional project details.

We were not able to fit our response in the given space. Please see "Additional Document #1" for our response.

List other key participants and their roles (provide contact information for each partner and his/her expected contribution to the project)

We were not able to fit our response in the given space. Please see "Additional Document #2" for a list of other key participants.

Which cost share goals does the project support? (check all that apply)

- improve watershed resources
- Foster water resource stewardship
- increase awareness of the vulnerability of watershed resources
- increase familiarity with and acceptance of solutions to improve waters

How does the project support the goals you checked?

The Unity Garden, located in the Lower Minnesota River Watershed District, will have native plants to help filter out pollutants that would otherwise end up in storm drains and eventually, the river. Earth Corps, as well as the Jefferson Science Department, will also use the garden to educate people about the vulnerability of watershed resources, the solutions for improving waters, and proper water resource stewardship. Students and community members will be able to observe firsthand how rain gardens help save water and keep it clean.

Project Details (continued)

Benefits Estimate the project benefits in terms of restoration and/or **annual** pollution reduction. If you are working with a designer or contractor, they can provide these numbers. If you need help contact the district Administrator.

| Benefit | Amount | |
|--------------------|-----------|---|
| Water captures | 0 | gal/year (water flows over the swale but is not captured) |
| Water infiltrated | 2,314,000 | gal/year |
| Phosphorus removed | 0.2 | lbs/year |
| Sediment removed | 58.5 | lbs/year |
| Land restored | 2600 | sq. ft. (area of the garden) |

How will you share the project results with your community?

We will measure the Unity Garden's benefits to soil, water, and pollinator ecosystems through visual observation and data collection. Results will be shared through the Earth Corps website, Instagram account (@jhs.earthcorps), and the JHS news show (S.P.O.T.S). Earth Corps leaders will also be in regular contact with school administration, supporting organizations, the Sustainability Commission, and the City of Bloomington to give updates about the garden and its environmental impact.

Are there other projects that could be initiated as a result of this one?

The central rain/pollinator/native garden is Phase I of our multi-stage Unity Garden project. Phase II would involve the addition of a community vegetable garden (see garden design for details) to help improve nearby residents' access to fresh food and further unite the community. Phase III would include an amphitheater for outdoor classes and a colorful mural that represents the sense of togetherness that the garden will bring. We also hope to assist the environmental club at Kennedy High School with implementing a garden of their own.

Evaluation

How will the project be monitored and evaluated?

Earth Corps members, other student organizations, and community volunteers will be regularly involved in monitoring the health of the garden and doing necessary maintenance. Jefferson's National Honor Society (volunteer organization) has also agreed to partner with Earth Corps for planting and maintenance this year and we expect this to continue for many years into the future. About eight members of Oak Grove Presbyterian Church have also expressed interest in regular garden maintenance. We also plan to hire Andy Scott from Rewild MN during the following growing season for further monitoring and will consult with Jack Distel if needed. Earth Corps will conduct surveys throughout the year to evaluate the garden's social impact and will observe any changes in plant life, animal life, or water behavior.

Maintenance agreement

I acknowledge that receipt of a grant is contingent upon agreeing to maintain the project for the number of years outlined in the cost share guidelines. Yes

Authorization

Name of landowner or responsible party Jaysen Anderson

Signature _____ Date 3/10/2021

Type or handwrite your answers on this form. Attached additional pages as needed

(For questions, contact Linda Loomis at Naiad Consulting@gmail.com or call 763-545-4659.)

Mail the completed application to:

or Email to:

Lower Minnesota River Watershed District
c/o Linda Loomis, Administrator
112 E. Fifth St., Suite 102
Chaska, MN 55318

Linda Loomis, Administrator
naiadconsulting@gmail.com

Labor Costs (Contractors, Consultants, In-Kind Labor)

| Service Provider | Task | # Hours | Rate/Hour | Requested Funds from LMRWD | Matching/In-Kind Funds | Total |
|---|--------------------------|---------|-----------|----------------------------|------------------------|------------|
| Jack Distel, City of Bloomington Water Specialist | Admin | 10 | \$50 | | \$500 | \$ 500 - |
| Earth Corps Members | Site prep labor | 10 | | | \$650 | \$650 |
| Andy Scott, ReWild MN | Garden design and budget | | | | \$500 | \$500 |
| Andy Scott, ReWild MN | Plant installation | 20 | \$65 | | \$1,300* | \$1,300 |
| Andy Scott, ReWild MN | Professional maintenance | 10 | \$65 | \$450 | \$200* | \$650 |
| | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | |
| Total: | | | | \$ 450 - | \$3,150 - | \$ 3,600 - |

Project Materials

| Material description | Unit Cost | Total # of Units | Requested funds from LMRWD | Matching/In-Kind Funds | Total |
|--|-----------|------------------|----------------------------|------------------------|------------|
| Plants (full list with quantities available) | Varies | 606 | \$2,800 | | \$ 2,800 - |
| | | | | | \$ - |
| | | | | | \$ - |
| | | | | | \$ - |
| | | | | | \$ - |
| | | | | | |
| | | | | | |
| | | | | | |
| Total: | | | \$2,800 - | \$ 0 - | \$ 2,800 - |

| | | |
|------------------------------------|-------------|-----|
| Total Requested Funds from LMRWD*: | \$ 3,250**- | (A) |
| Total Matchin/In-Kind Funds: | \$ 3,150 - | (B) |
| Project Total: | \$ 6,400 - | (C) |

*We hope to receive these funds through a grant from the Audubon Society of Minnesota.

**50.78% of the project total

*Please note: total requested funds (A) cannot be more than 50% of the Project Total (C)



Criteria for Proposed Landscaping Projects March 2021

The goal and responsibility of the district's Buildings and Grounds Department is to ensure our facilities and grounds are well maintained resulting in an exemplary display that's perceived favorably from a public perspective. Provided criteria is intended to preserve this high aesthetic standard. The following are required as appropriate to the project.

- 1) 10-yr plan committing sustainable long-term resources to maintain the planting. Provide written statements from active participants and outside entities highlighting their commitment to annually care for the landscape improvement to:
 - a) establishing plants, typically a two year commitment on an every other day basis - plant and weather dependant
 - b) weed pulling as needed
 - c) remove trash and debris as needed
 - d) replace mulch in void areas or if erosion is evident
 - e) inspect plants and shrubs to evaluate their health
 - f) remove any dead or severely diseased plants or shrubs
 - g) replace plants and shrubs as necessary

Semi-annual care:

- h) inspect and remove any sediment and debris build-up
- i) cut back and remove previous year's plant material and remove accumulated leaves, if needed
- j) if a rain garden check to ensure water is infiltrating within 48 hours of a rain event

Every 3-5 year care:

- j) replace and or add mulch to a depth of 3-4"

2) Site diagram (Required)

- a) placement measurements
- b) dimensions
- c) topography indicating direction of surface runoff
- d) plantings

3) Finance plan

- a) identify all initial funding sources including reserve plan if over budget

- b) financial commitment to replace plants, shrubs, and mulch as necessary

4) Terms and conditions

- a) All proposed projects must be submitted to Building and Grounds department to determine if proposal fits the current Master Facility Plan
 - i) If a proposal doesn't fit in plan, it will be denied
 - ii) Denied plans may be held for consideration when the Master Facility Plan is updated
 - iii) Master Facilities plans are usually updated in combination with the District Strategic Plan.
- b) Grant recipients hold an obligation to resurrect in another location if the landscape improvement becomes displaced from other site improvements
- c) grant recipients hold an obligation to resurrect in another location if the landscape improvement becomes displaced from other site improvements
- d) If criteria above is not adhered to, the district reserves the right to remove and restore back to its previous condition
 - i) The District will help coordinate compliance to criteria but won't be providing resources for maintaining compliance

Please contact Tim Rybak 952.806.8766 or Rod Zivkovich 952.681.6433 if you have any questions about these guidelines.

Additional Document #1: Responses to “What are the project objectives and expected outcomes?”

OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOMES:

1. **Improve our school’s natural environment and our community’s watershed resources.**
 - a. The garden will be a habitat for native plants, birds, butterflies, and pollinators. It will keep the soil and water healthy by absorbing and filtering pollutants, reducing erosion, and increasing the soil’s capacity to store water with deep-rooted plants.
2. **Raise awareness about climate change, natural ecosystems, and indigenous lands.**
 - a. In addition to using the garden to educate our own members about these subjects, we will promote the incorporation of the garden into Science, History, English, Physical Education, Art, Technical education, and other curriculums.
3. **Create initiatives that reduce Jefferson High School’s carbon footprint.**
 - a. Building a garden will act as a carbon sink and create habitats for pollinators that are impacted by climate change.
4. **Create an opportunity for Jefferson High School students and staff, community members, local organizations, and businesses to unite over our project.**
 - a. Many different parties will be involved in the enjoyment and maintenance of the garden. Individuals who enjoy the mental and emotional benefits of the garden will be motivated to be involved in keeping it healthy.
5. **Provide students with disabilities, including those in the Special Education Department at Jefferson High School, with the mental and physical health benefits of the garden.**
 - a. The garden can be a helpful environment for students who have sensory needs or would like to spend time outdoors.

Jefferson High School Earth Corps Unity Garden - Project Timeline, 2021-2022

2021

February-April:

- Apply for and receive grant funding
- Reach out to community members, environmental organizations, and local businesses for financial and volunteer support
- Solidify site preparation, planting, and maintenance plans with school administration

May:

- Begin site preparation, either by mulch-smothering or sod-cutting
- Recruit school groups and community members to perform manual labor

June-August:

- Planting: Earth Corps members, other school groups, community volunteers, and youth organizations will meet periodically on-site. We plan to receive guidance from Andy Scott (the garden designer) and Jack Distel (the City of Bloomington Water Specialist)
- Maintenance: several individuals and groups from both within and outside the school have expressed interest in helping to maintain the garden after it is planted. We also plan to hire Andy Scott for occasional professional check-ins to ensure that everything is running smoothly.

September-December:

- (Tentative) Hold a dedication ceremony
- Continue maintenance
- Recruit additional school volunteers
- Set up a survey to collect community feedback on the garden
- (Tentative) Organize a fundraiser for further professional maintenance of the garden

2022

January-April:

- Prepare for spring growing season
- Recruit more volunteers and students
- (Tentative) Begin planning for phase 2, which could include a community/vegetable garden

May:

- (Tentative) Plant additional bulbs
- Spring maintenance (weeding, watering, etc.)

June-August:

- Continue maintenance