



# LOWER MINNESOTA RIVER WATERSHED DISTRICT

## Executive Summary for Action

Lower Minnesota River Watershed District Board of Managers Meeting  
Wednesday, November 15, 2023

### Agenda Item

#### Item 6. G. – Education & Outreach

#### Prepared By

Linda Loomis, Administrator

#### Summary

The LMRWD sent a communication about the educator mini-grant program to educators that serve students living within the LMRWD (even though schools may be located outside the boundaries of the LMRWD). Four applications were received and evaluated by the Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC).

A total of \$1,800 was requested. Technical Memorandum – Lower Minnesota River Watershed District Educator Mini-Grant Program Award Recommendation dated November 7, 2023, is attached to inform the Board of the CAC's recommendations. Grant applications are attached to the Technical memorandum.

#### Attachments

Technical Memorandum – Lower Minnesota River Watershed District Educator Mini-Grant Program Award Recommendation dated November 7, 2023

#### Recommended Action

Motion to approve the recommendations of the CAC and awards educator mini-grants as follows:

- Nicollet Middle School Green Team - \$500;
- Pilot Knob STEM Magnet School - \$300;
- Chaska high School - \$500; and
- Redtail Ridge Elementary School - \$500

# Technical Memorandum

**To:** Linda Loomis, Administrator  
Lower Minnesota River Watershed District (LMRWD)

**From:** Jen Dullum, Education and Outreach Coordinator  
Suzy Lindberg, Communications Manager

**Date:** November 7, 2023

**Re:** Lower Minnesota River Watershed District (LMRWD) Educator Mini-Grant Program Award Recommendation

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The LMRWD Educator Mini-Grant Program (Program) was approved in the fall of 2022. Before the end of the 2022-23 school year, Young Environmental Consulting Group (Young Environmental) sent a flyer to over 100 schools informing them of the program and preparing educators for the upcoming fall application period. The flyer (attached) provided them with a menu of funding options to spark interest and help provide educators with ideas for possible programming grant requests. In September 2023, Young Environmental opened the Program application period for the 2023-24 school year and shared the Program details with over 650 individual educators and organizations by email (contact list can be made available by request). The Program details were also shared via the LMRWD website and social media platforms.

We received the attached applications from the four educators listed below before the application process closed on October 20, 2023:

- Peg Challgren, Nicollet Middle School Green Team, Burnsville, MN
- Michele Link-Valenstein, Pilot Knob STEM Magnet School, Eagan, MN
- Kelly Dreier, Chaska High School, Chaska, MN
- Caren Hudak, Redtail Ridge Elementary School, Savage, MN

The applicants were prescreened per the managers' approved criteria and then forwarded to the Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) for evaluation. The CAC reviewed the applications and scored them prior to their November 7, 2023, meeting. Individual score sheets can be made available upon request.

Applications scoring 5 or more points, as summarized in the table below, are forwarded for consideration.

Educator/School	Average Score	Requested Amount	Eligible Expenses
<b>Peg Challgren</b> Nicollet Middle School Green Team	7	\$500	Water testing field trip <u>OR</u> canoe paddle field trip to study floodplain forest.
<b>Michele Link-Valenstein</b> Pilot Knob STEM Magnet School	8	\$300	Minnesota Zoomobile at STEM fair.
<b>Kelly Dreier</b> Chaska High School	8	\$500	Turbidity tubes and dissolved oxygen probe.
<b>Caren Hudak</b> Redtail Ridge Elementary School	6.8	\$500	Microscope document cameras and Minnesota watershed/wetland lesson plans.

### **Recommendation**

Based on the information presented and the evaluation completed by the CAC, Young Environmental recommends awarding Nicollet Middle School Green Team \$500, Pilot Knob STEM Magnet School \$300, Chaska High School \$500, and Redtail Ridge Elementary School \$500 for a total of \$1,800 in 2023 Educator Mini-Grants.

### **Attachments:**

Applications

Mini-Grant flyer



# Educator Mini-Grant Program Application

Name of School/Organization:

Nicollet Middle School Green Team

First Name:

Peg

Last Name:

Challgren

Email:

pchallgren@isd191.org

Phone:

952-567-9971

Describe your current role?

Science teacher and co-Green Team leader

If you are a student, please provide the name and email of your supervising educator.

## Address of School/Organization

Street Address:

400 E. 134th St.

Address line 2:

City:

Burnsville

State:

MN

Zip Code:

55337

## Name and Address Where Activity Will Take Place (if Different from Above)

Street Address:

Address line 2:

City:

State:

Zip Code:

What age(s) are the participants?

K–5<sup>th</sup> grade

6–12<sup>th</sup> grade

18+ years

Senior

Estimated number of participants:

35-40

Describe your proposed activity or project and how it relates to water resources and wildlife habitat education. Include project goals and learning objectives for participants.

We would like to take a field trip with Wilderness Inquiry focused on water testing on the Mississippi River or through the Chain of Lakes to analyze wildlife sanctuaries and how the waterways affect wildlife populations in those areas. Or, partner with WI and the Mississippi Park Connection groups to paddle across from the Bdote confluence of the Mississippi and MN Rivers for a tour of the Crosby Farm Park tree sanctuary. Analyze the sustainability of specific tree species and how they play a role in maintaining the tree canopy of the flood plain forest.

Project goals for the middle schoolers would be to instill an appreciation for the interconnectivity of water ways and wildlife habitat. Our hope is that our students would have the opportunity to learn about the interconnectivity of water resources and habitat, which will then translate into them becoming more informed and engaged citizens. We want to educate and encourage the next generation of environmental activists :)

When is this activity/project scheduled to take place?

Spring of 2024

Total requested amount (maximum \$500):

\$500.00

Specify how funds will be allocated (e.g. supplies, materials, and transportation):

Transportation, materials

**I understand that if my funding request is approved, I must complete and submit the Program Project Reporting and Reimbursement form to receive payment. Any photos submitted may be used by the LMRWD in future communications.**

Signature:

Date:

09/20/2023



LOWER MINNESOTA RIVER  
WATERWAYS COMMISSION

# Educator Mini-Grant Program Application

Name of School/Organization:

Pilot Knob STEM Magnet School

First Name:

Michele

Last Name:

Link-Valenstein

Email:

michele.linkvalenstein@isd197.c

Phone:

651-428-1634

Describe your current role?

STEM Teacher/ Magnet Facilitator

.org

If you are a student, please provide the name and email of your supervising educator.

Address of School/Organization

Street Address:

1436 Lone Oak Road

Address line 2:

City:

Eagan

State:

MN

Zip Code:

55121

Name and Address Where Activity Will Take Place (if Different from Above)

Street Address:

Address line 2:

City:

State:

Zip Code:

What age(s) are the participants?

K-5<sup>th</sup> grade

6-12<sup>th</sup> grade

18+ years

Senior

Estimated number of participants:

200-300

Describe your proposed activity or project and how it relates to water resources and wildlife habitat education. Include project goals and learning objectives for participants.

One of the large scale events we host at Pilot Knob is a STEM Fair. In the past, this event has focused on Engineering. Our goal is to reconfigure this event to represent all components of STEM. Students must understand that science is in the natural world all around us and that we can use STEM to become stewards of the land and animals. As a district, we are located two miles from the confluence of the Minnesota and Mississippi Rivers. We want to honor the heritage that comes with this location and incorporate that into our STEM programming.

Many of our Earth and Life Sciences standards revolve around wildlife habitats. We would like to represent that at our STEM fair by inviting the Minnesota Zoomobile Booth to present. A Zoomobile booth would provide a naturalist and animals with a connection to a local conservation theme. This addition would allow us to educate students and families about wildlife animals that live in the Watershed District alongside us.

When is this activity/project scheduled to take place?

March 2024

Total requested amount (maximum \$500):

\$300

Specify how funds will be allocated (e.g. supplies, materials, and transportation):

\$300 to bring the Zoomobile to Pilot Knob for two hours.

**I understand that if my funding request is approved, I must complete and submit the Program Project Reporting and Reimbursement form to receive payment. Any photos submitted may be used by the LMRWD in future communications.**

Signature: 

Date:

09/25/2023



LOWER MINNESOTA RIVER  
WATERSHED DISTRICT

# Educator Mini-Grant Program Application

Name of School/Organization:

Chaska High School

First Name:

Kelly

Last Name:

Dreier

Email:

dreierk@district112.org

Phone:

(952) 556-7100

Describe your current role?

AP Environmental Science Teacher

If you are a student, please provide the name and email of your supervising educator.

Address of School/Organization

Street Address:

545 Pioneer Trail

Address line 2:

City:

Chaska

State:

MN

Zip Code:

55318

Name and Address Where Activity Will Take Place (if Different from Above)

Street Address:

Address line 2:

City:

State:

Zip Code:



What age(s) are the participants?

K-5<sup>th</sup> grade

6-12<sup>th</sup> grade

18+ years

Senior

Estimated number of participants:

250 students

Describe your proposed activity or project and how it relates to water resources and wildlife habitat education. Include project goals and learning objectives for participants.

We currently conduct stream study tests of East Chaska Creek with our AP environmental Science students. We would like to add in turbidity testing by adding turbidity tubes and we would like to add a portable dissolved oxygen sensors so we are not having to bring computers down to the stream with us.

The goals of this lab is for students to understand the various test scientiest do to determine the health of a stream. We also discuss factors that influence changes in these tests and what the human impacts are.

When is this activity/project scheduled to take place?

Every year during the fall

Total requested amount (maximum \$500):

\$500

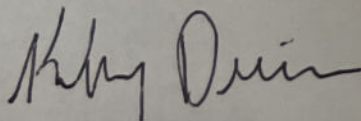
Specify how funds will be allocated (e.g. supplies, materials, and transportation):

4 turbidity tubes -  $\$54.44 \times 4 = 217.76$

1 portable dissolved oxygen probe - \$280

**I understand that if my funding request is approved, I must complete and submit the Program Project Reporting and Reimbursement form to receive payment. Any photos submitted may be used by the LMRWD in future communications.**

Signature:



Date:

10/17/2023



# Educator Mini-Grant Program Application

Name of School/Organization:

Redtail Ridge Elementary

First Name:

Caren

Last Name:

Hudak

Email:

chudak@plsas.org

Phone:

952-226-8042

Describe your current role?

Junior Naturalist Advisor - 4th Grade Teacher

If you are a student, please provide the name and email of your supervising educator.

## Address of School/Organization

Street Address:

15200 Hampshire Ave. S

Address line 2:

City:

Savage

State:

MN

Zip Code:

55378

## Name and Address Where Activity Will Take Place (if Different from Above)

Street Address:

Address line 2:

City:

State:

Zip Code:

What age(s) are the participants?

K–5<sup>th</sup> grade

6–12<sup>th</sup> grade

18+ years

Senior

Estimated number of participants:

100

Describe your proposed activity or project and how it relates to water resources and wildlife habitat education. Include project goals and learning objectives for participants.

Our school would like to purchase microscope document cameras for students to utilize on site which would be useful and fun for students in exploring the microscopic world. We have several wetland areas on our school site and we could use this equipment to help students understanding of the health our our local wetlands and natural envionment.

I will work with our IT department to find the best option for our technology and make sure that it fits our students needs.

If there is any additional funds from the purchase of microscope document cameras, I would like to purchase specific lesson materials which would help students understand our Minnesota watershed and wetlands.

When is this activity/project scheduled to take place?

We will use this equipment throughout the school year.

Total requested amount (maximum \$500):

\$500

Specify how funds will be allocated (e.g. supplies, materials, and transportation):

Microscope attachment for document camera or individual microscopic document cameras for student l pads at approximately \$40-50 dollars each.

Lesson materials such as slides, books on Minnesota Watershed.

**I understand that if my funding request is approved, I must complete and submit the Program Project Reporting and Reimbursement form to receive payment. Any photos submitted may be used by the LMRWD in future communications.**

Signature:

Date:

10/20/2023

# EDUCATOR MINI-GRANT PROGRAM



Do you have a water or natural resource-related project or program that you wish you could bring into the classroom to enhance your curriculum? How about a field trip or speaker to connect classwork to the “real world?”

The Lower Minnesota River Watershed District has 10 grants of up to \$500 each for educators to help cover costs of materials and programming.

The grant application period for the 2023-2024 school year opens on September 18 and closes October 20. Scan the QR code below to go to our website for more information.

Start planning  
now and apply  
this fall.



Scan the QR code or contact us at [info@lowermnrriverwd.org](mailto:info@lowermnrriverwd.org).



# Looking for inspiration? Here are some ideas to get you thinking.

- Waders
- Dip nets
- In-school presenter (ex. MN Zoo, Metropolitan Council)
- Field trip
- Bus transportation
- Petri dishes
- Microscope
- Magnifying lenses
- Rite in Rain notebooks
- Ph strips
- Chlorine test strips
- Chloride-ion selective electrode
- Materials for water-quality experiments
- Materials for stormwater experiments
- Interactive learning tools
- Materials for aquatic species lessons
- Textbooks
- Storybooks featuring water and natural resources