

2013 Project Abstract

For the Period Ending December 30, 2014

PROJECT TITLE: Minnesota Conservation Apprentice Academy

PROJECT MANAGER: Jenny Gieseke

AFFILIATION: BWSR

MAILING ADDRESS: 520 Lafayette Road

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FUNDING SOURCE: Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

LEGAL CITATION: M.L. 2013, Chp. 52, Sec. 2, Subd. 07a.

APPROPRIATION AMOUNT: \$ 186,000

Overall Project Outcome and Results

Familiarizing future conservation leaders with Minnesota's various land-use practices, water and soil resources, plant and animal habitats, and landowner concerns is needed to maintain the capacity of local organizations to deliver conservation on the ground. Many of the conservation districts' most experienced conservation professionals and practitioners are nearing retirement age but due to budget constraints will not be replaced until they have left employment. Consequently, Minnesota is missing a great opportunity to transfer professional knowledge and experience to the next generation.

While university graduates with conservation-related degrees are knowledgeable in technology, theory, and research methods, their practical, on-the-ground skills need development. Communicating with landowners and adjusting designs for field nuances are vital to the success of conservation projects and best learned alongside seasoned professionals. In turn, apprentices bring knowledge of emerging technologies to improve the quality and productivity of conservation efforts.

This program funded the placement of 37 conservation apprentices in 35 SWCDs in 2014. During this time, the apprentices stabilized erosion on 7 million square feet of slopes, planted 28,001 plants, trees, shrubs and seedlings, maintained 3.5 million square feet of restored areas, collected 2,465 water samples, spent 2,110 Hours collecting data and mapping using GPS and GIS, and impacted 1,265 people through environmental education and outreach.

This program has benefits to both students and conservation districts. 100% of apprentices indicated they felt more prepared to work in the conservation industry as a result of the program and would recommend it to others.

96% of the Districts were satisfied with the work their apprentices completed, and 100% indicate they would participate in the program again. Managers also indicated that the work conducted by the apprentices increased the amount of conservation practices delivered by their districts during the program period

This was the third grant awarded to the Apprentice Academy through LCCMR. Grant one addressed the cohorts working during the summers of 2011 and 2012. The state government shutdown of 2011 produced a small balance in the 2010 grant that was used to fund additional positions in 2012 and 2013; this in turn allowed a small balance the second grant (M.L. 2011) to fund additional positions in the this, the M.L. 2013, Chp. 52, Sec. 2, Subd. 07a plan, and carried funding into the early portion of 2014.

Project Results Use and Dissemination

***This section NOT intended to count toward recommended 300 word length for Abstract**

Directions:

1. *How has information from your project been used and/or disseminated?*

Information from the project has been disseminated through reports to LCCMR, press releases by BWSR, local press releases by SWCDs, and through the Conservation Corps newsletter, website and annual report. Information was used to recruit apprentices and increase awareness of the project.

2. *What communications and outreach activities have been done in relation to your project? For example: have tools or techniques developed through your project been adopted by a group; presentations relating to the project been made; has work pertaining to the project been published?*

Communication and outreach activities include the aforementioned reports, press releases, and electronic newsletters. Additionally, BWSR and Conservation Corps staff conducted outreach to SWCDs to find optimal matches between districts and apprentices. Through the course of their work, the apprentices conducted significant outreach to land owners and residents in topics ranging from easement protection, to water quality education, to plant biodiversity.



Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund (ENRTF)

M.L. 2013 Work Plan

Date of Status Update Report: December 16, 2014

Date of Next Status Update Report: Final

Date of Work Plan Approval: June 11, 2013

Project Completion Date: December 30, 2014

Is this an amendment request? No

PROJECT TITLE: Minnesota Conservation Apprenticeship Academy

Project Manager: Jenny Gieseke

Affiliation: MN Board of Water and Soil Resources

Mailing Address: 520 Lafayette Road

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Web Address: www.bwsr.state.mn.us

Location: Approximately 35 counties to be determined early in 2014 as Soil and Water Conservation Districts make decisions whether or not to apply to the program.

Total ENRTF Project Budget:

ENRTF Appropriation: \$186,000

Amount Spent: \$186,000

Balance: \$0

Legal Citation: M.L. 2013, Chp. 52, Sec. 2, Subd. 07a.

Appropriation Language:

07a – Minnesota Conservation Apprentice Academy

To continue a program to train and mentor future conservation professionals by providing apprenticeship service opportunities with soil and water conservation districts.

I. PROJECT TITLE: Minnesota Conservation Apprenticeship Academy

II. PROJECT STATEMENT: The Conservation Apprentice Academy transfers knowledge from experienced professionals to the next generation of conservation managers. Real-world experience gained with Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) during their busy construction season is experience that textbooks cannot convey. The first year of this program during the summer of 2011 demonstrated the knowledge transfer goes both ways.

Conservation Corps Minnesota and Iowa (CCMI) works under a grant from BWSR to recruit interested Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD) and university students and then matches them up by geography and interest. A cohort of 30 apprentices was funded by the ENRTF for the summers of 2011 and cohorts of 35 in 2012 and 2013. This work plan would provide increased support so 38 apprentice positions can be offered in the 2014 field season. The 2011 grant addressed the set up and initial stipends so this appropriation can fund approximately three additional positions in 2014.

Future conservation leaders need to be familiar with Minnesota’s widely varying land-use practices, water and soil resources, plant and animal habitats, and landowner concerns if we hope to maintain the capacity of local organizations to deliver conservation on the ground. While college graduates with conservation-related degrees are knowledgeable in technology, theory, and research methods, their on-the-ground skills need development. Communicating with landowners and adjusting designs for field nuances are vital to the success of conservation projects and best learned from seasoned professionals. In turn, apprentices will bring knowledge of emerging technologies and other innovations to improve the quality and productivity of current conservation efforts.

III. PROJECT STATUS UPDATES:

Project Status as of June 1, 2014:

The Conservation Apprentice Academy started-up again in May of 2014 with 37 apprentices ready to work in 35 counties. BWSR and CCMI staff worked together throughout the winter and spring to recruit SWCDs and apprentices, develop individualized work and training plans for apprentices, and organize an orientation for the new apprentices. While originally it was anticipated that enough funds would remain from the previous project year (M.L. 2011, First Special Session, Chp. 2, Art.3, Sec. 2, Subd. 09a) to enroll 38 apprentices in 2014, it was possible to enroll only 37. This was due to apprentices continuing into September 2013 in order to complete their obligations with the Corps and with the SWCDs. In turn, less funding was available for an additional apprentice in 2014.

Final Report Status:

The Conservation Apprentice Academy completed a successful season, with 37 apprentices serving in 35 counties. Apprentices demonstrated significant gains in hands-on application of conservation practices and the soft skills needed to work with landowners. In addition, apprentices contributed thousands of hours of conservation service to SWCDs during the peak season for conservation practice implementation. A portion of the 2014 season was also funded through M.L. 2011, First Special Session, Chp. 2, Art.3, Sec. 2, Subd. 09a, and the results are also summarized the final report for that project.

IV. PROJECT ACTIVITIES AND OUTCOMES:

ACTIVITY 1: Employ apprentices

Description: This activity relates to the tasks needed to recruit, select, train, and employ academy participants for the summer of 2014. The overwhelming majority of the expense in this activity is related to the wages paid to the apprentices via CCMI.

Summary Budget Information for Activity 1:

ENRTF Budget: \$ 186,000

Amount Spent: \$ 186,000

Balance: \$ 0

Activity Completion Date:

Outcome	Completion Date	Budget
1. employ, train, and manage 38 apprentices during 2014	October 15, 2014	182,000
2. close out year and evaluate all four program cohorts 2011-14	December 30, 2014	4,000

Activity Status as of June 1, 2014:

1. Employ, train, and manage 38 apprentices in the beginning of 2014
<p>Completed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 37 apprentices were hired by 05/15/2014. • 32 apprentices received general orientation on 5/19-5/23. • Orientation was held for the 32 apprentices at St. John’s Landing Group Camp in St. Croix State Park, Hinckley, MN. The orientation introduced the apprentices to the program, their role, various partners involved, and provided a networking opportunity. • Apprentices began with a half day at the SWCD office to meet their mentor, familiarize themselves with the SWCD, and review their specific work/training plan. • 5 apprentices received a condensed, late-hire orientation on 05/27/2014 and 05/30/2014 at the Conservation Corps headquarters in St. Paul, and on 06/02/2014 at the Fillmore County SWCD office in Preston, MN. These apprentices, in coordination with their placement sites, will continue their service term beyond the scheduled, primary end-date, in order to complete the term requirements. • The Corps managed apprentices, provided ongoing training and development opportunities, and conducted visits to each SWCD throughout the summer. • Apprentices completed their service terms in August, 2014.
2. Close out year and evaluate all four program cohorts 2011-14
<p>Completed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The 2014 program year has been closed out. • The four program cohorts from 2011-2014 were evaluated. This included compiling all evaluation data acquired from apprentices during their respective years and following up with apprentices to determine how many were employed or in college in the fields of natural resources, environmental studies, and the sciences.

Project Status as of June 1, 2014:

Request for Proposals: Developed and released on 10/23/2012. Distributed to all Minnesota SWCDs and TSAs. RFP applications were due 11/30/2012. Conservation Corps attended MASWCD Convention to promote Conservation Corps Academy and answer questions regarding the RFP prior to the 2013 program. (Completed with funds from M.L. 2011, First Special Session, Chp. 2, Art.3, Sec. 2, Subd. 09a.)

RFP applications were updated and released for the 2014 program on 10/15/2013. Distributed to all Minnesota SWCD's and TSA's. RFP applications were due on 12/15/2013. Conservation Corps staff attended 2013 MASWCD Convention to promote Conservation Apprenticeship Academy and answer questions regarding the RFP process.

RFP selection process: Received 37 placement applications from 36 SWCDs for the 2014 field season. (Completed with funds from M.L. 2011, First Special Session, Chp. 2, Art.3, Sec. 2, Subd. 09a.)

Selection criteria: Placements distributed throughout MN (map attached) based on quality of experience, skill-training potential and equitable geographic distribution.

Sites selected: 37 placements were selected in the following 35 counties: Anoka, Becker, Benton, Carlton, Carver, Chisago, Cook, Cottonwood, Crow Wing, Dakota, East Otter Tail, Fillmore (2), Freeborn, Hubbard, Isanti, Koochiching, Lake, Lake of the Woods, Lyon, Marshall, Martin, Mille Lacs, Pennington, Pope, Ramsey, Renville, Scott (2), Sherburne, South St. Louis, Stevens, Traverse, Wadena, Washington, Wright, Yellow Medicine.

Apprentice recruitment

Position posted to college online job boards that serve 80 state and private colleges and universities in Minnesota. Position posted to Minnesota Council of Nonprofits, The Corps Network and the AmeriCorps website.

Placed newspaper ads in strategic areas in Minnesota where Soil and Water Conservation District placement sites are located. Also provided recruitment materials to many SWCDs so that they could recruit from the local community. (Completed with funds from M.L. 2011, First Special Session, Chp. 2, Art.3, Sec. 2, Subd. 09a.)

Attended career fairs to promote the Conservation Apprenticeship Academy: University of Minnesota's Job & Internship Fair (attendance of over 3,000 students from the Twin Cities, Crookston, Morris and Duluth branches), the University of Minnesota's Environmental Resource Fair, Minnesota's Private Colleges Job Fair, North Hennepin Technical College Job Fair, North Hennepin Community College Job Fair, Gustavus Adolphus Job Fair, Concordia University Job Fair, and University of Minnesota Duluth Environmental Job Fair.

Sent announcement to Corps alumni and partners and have posted information about apprentice positions to multiple social media outlets, including Facebook and Twitter.

A press release template was developed and sent out to SWCDs to post in their local papers.

Candidate selection

Online application: Available for apprentice applicants on February 3rd via Conservation Corps website. Preferred application deadline was March 21st with rolling applications accepted through April. (Completed with funds from M.L. 2011, First Special Session, Chp. 2, Art.3, Sec. 2, Subd. 09a.)

Selection process: Conservation Corps screened and interviewed applicants and selected apprentices based on region preference, area of interest, skills and qualifications with feedback on final candidates from the SWCD. (Completed with funds from M.L. 2011, First Special Session, Chp. 2, Art.3, Sec. 2, Subd. 09a.)

Training

Work/Training plan: Using the projects and responsibilities outlined in the SWCD's original proposal, Conservation Corps and SWCD staff developed a schedule of project and training activities for the apprentice to complete throughout the term. Apprentices reviewed their specific work/training plan with their mentor during their first day. Conservation Corps staff facilitated discussion with the apprentices in regards to the work/training plan to increase knowledge of SWCD functions, share best practices, and learn how the various activities are connected as part of a larger effort. The work/training plan will be used as a resource by the apprentice and supervisor to track progress. Conservation Corps staff will review progress at a site visit during the mid-point of the apprentice's term. The work/training plan will also serve as a reflection tool for the apprentice to recognize accomplishments and enable them to translate those achievements to their resumes.

SWCD supervisor orientation: Supervisor training conference calls took place in early May and provided an overview of supervisor responsibilities, expectations, Conservation Corps policies and procedures. Conservation Corps site supervisor handbook was sent to each mentor prior to the calls and referenced by Corps staff.

Apprentice general orientation: May 19 – 22 at St. John's Group Camp in St. Croix State Park, Hinckley, MN. Training included Conservation Corps policies and procedures, national service guidelines, safety, risk management, First Aid/CPR, teamwork and communication. The orientation schedule is attached to this progress summary. For those apprentices with late start dates, similar secondary orientations were held on 05/27/2014 and 05/30/2014 at the Conservation Corps headquarters in St. Paul. An additional orientation is planned for 06/02/2014 for the final late-starting apprentice at the Fillmore County SWCD office in Preston, MN.

On-site training: Provided by SWCD. This training was outlined in the approved work/training plan specific to the unique position description of each placement. On-site orientation occurred the first full week at the SWCD, and ongoing on-the-job training occurred throughout the apprentices' terms.

Final Report Summary as of December 16, 2014:

A portion of the 2014 season was also funded through M.L. 2011, First Special Session, Chp. 2, Art.3, Sec. 2, Subd. 09a, and the results are also summarized the final report for that project.

Human Resource functions: Conservation Corps enrolled and managed corpsmembers (apprentices) in accordance with program guidelines. The Corps provided consultation, support, and on-site project review as needed to ensure that service was progressing in accordance with the work/training plan and program guidelines. Conservation Corps provided personnel and payroll administration for corpsmembers and provided professional liability and worker's compensation insurance for all corpsmembers.

On-going training: Conservation Corps staff coordinated ongoing training for apprentices. Site specific training was identified by SWCD staff on a 'training plan' that was created prior to the summer. Also, Corps staff conducted monthly phone conferences with apprentices. The conference calls provided structured opportunities for learning, feedback, and reflection with apprentices placed at other districts.

Site visits: Conservation Corps staff conducted site visits to each SWCD. The site visits ensured that adequate progress was being made on the work and training plans and helped ensure safety policies and procedures were

being followed. In addition to reviewing accomplishments and ensuring adherence to policies, Corps staff were able to view first-hand the work accomplished by apprentices. For example, an apprentice in Lake County provided a tour of a rain garden they installed and talked through the planning, implementation, and follow-up required for a successful result.

Apprentice Experience

2014 Dakota SWCD apprentice, Kayla Horan “This opportunity is truly life changing. The hands on experience and networking opportunities are priceless. I have learned countless new things about water monitoring and soil and water conservation methods. I am grateful to be a part of the Conservation Corps and a supportive SWCD. After completing the program I was offered a position with the Dakota County SWCD. I will be using the skills gained through my apprenticeship to continue assisting landowners with conservation practices and conducting water monitoring tasks. I am so grateful that I was able to be a part of the Conservation Corps and would recommend others to participate in the future!”



2013 South St. Louis SWCD apprentice, Alice Yonke “The Conservation Apprenticeship Academy is a great step in learning about conservation management. The balance between field work, research and data collection were valuable to my professional development. I was hired as a staff member after my participation with the Conservation Apprenticeship Academy at South St. Louis SWCD.”



SWCD Feedback

Pam Tomevi, District Manager, Koochiching SWCD, on 2014 apprentice, Sam Soderman

“The Conservation Apprenticeship Academy is a worthwhile and important program that provides targeted training opportunities for young men and women while enhancing the effectiveness of SWCD conservation delivery. Sam Soderman, the apprentice placed at the Koochiching site, has recently been offered full-time employment with the Koochiching SWCD. Well done Conservation Corps Minnesota!”

Darren Newville, District Manager, East Ottertail SWCD, on 2012 apprentice, Wade Salo

“Having Wade in our office was a very positive experience. We hired Wade as a staff member, after his participation with the Conservation Apprenticeship Academy. The program offers a great opportunity for both the apprentice and the host site.”

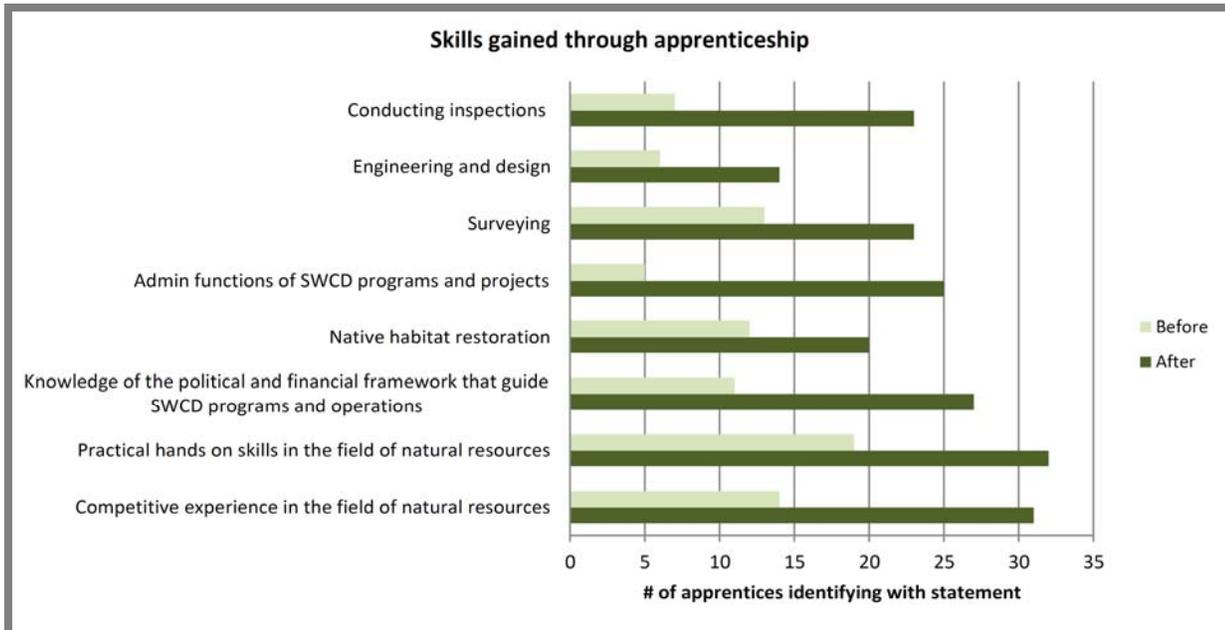
Program Outcomes

Selected project accomplishments (2014)

Conservation Practice	Amount	Units
Rain garden installation and maintenance	141,463	sq. ft.
Education provided on conservation practices	1,264	people
Erosion control	162	acres
Invasive plant management	811	acres
GIS/GPS data mapping	2,101	hours
Water quality sampling	2,465	samples
Tree and shrub planting	28,001	plants



Selected Apprentice outcomes (2014)

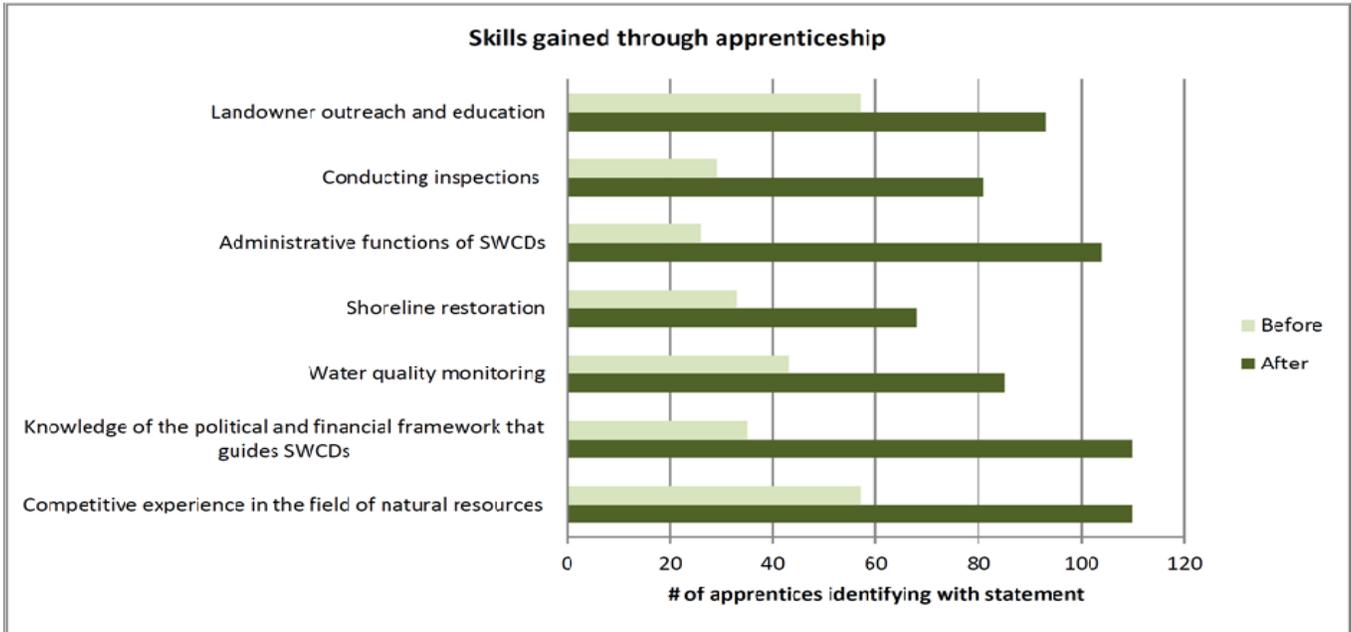


Selected project accomplishments (2011-2014)

Conservation Practice	Amount	Units
Rain garden installation and maintenance	334,308	sq. ft.
Erosion control/slope stabilization	171	acres
Seeding	916	acres
Invasive plant management	3,149	acres
GIS/GPS data mapping	6,888	hours
Water quality sampling	10,733	samples
Tree and shrub planting	102,591	plants

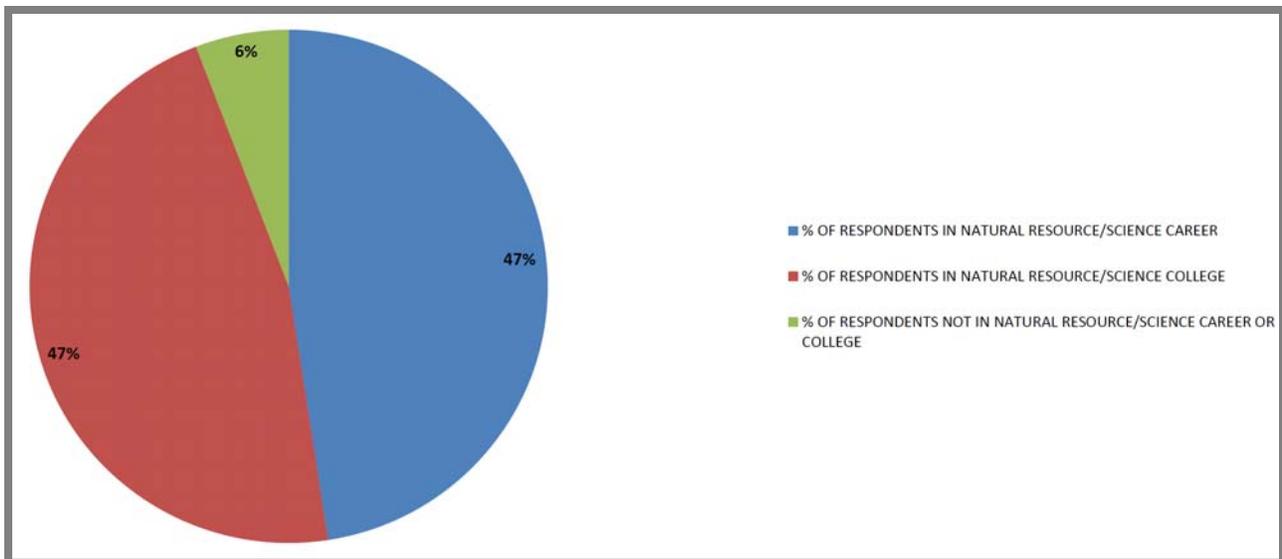


Selected Apprentice outcomes (2011-2014)



Apprentice college and career track

94% of alumni are either employed or in college for a natural resource/science career. (103 respondents)



V. DISSEMINATION:

Description: CCMI will be the primary disseminator and provide a link on their website describing the program (www.conservationcorps.org). The program recruiting through environmental and engineering departments at several universities has been successful in garnering significant student interest from around the state. BWSR and the MN Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts (MASWCD) will also offer descriptions of the program and link to the CCMI site. MASWCD has been spreading this idea nationally through the National

Association of Conservation Districts. BWSR has done likewise through the National Association of State Conservation Agencies.

Status as of June 1, 2014:

CCMI has updated their website description of the program - <http://www.conservationcorps.org/apprentice-academy>.

Final Report Status Dec 31, 2014:

Conservation Corps provides a description of the project on their website at <http://www.conservationcorps.org/apprentice-academy>.

In addition, a number of SWCDs provided stories to local newspapers during the summer. An example from Yellow Medicine County SWCD can be found at <http://www.granitefallsnews.com/article/20140617/NEWS/140619542/-1/news>.

VI. PROJECT BUDGET SUMMARY:

The 2014 cohort was supported by the third grant from LCCMR for the Apprentice Academy. This aligns with the window of opportunity originally identified to train in the next generation of conservation stewards before significant knowledge was lost from outgoing seasoned professionals as they retire. Grant one addressed the cohorts working during the summers of 2011 and 2012. The state government shutdown of 2011 produced a small balance in the 2010 grant that was used to fund additional positions in 2012 and 2013; this in turn allowed a small balance in the 2011 grant to fund additional positions in this work plan.

A. ENRTF Budget:

Budget Category	\$ Amount	Explanation
Personnel:	\$ 3000	0.04 FTE of non-general fund BWSR staff to assist with evaluation protocols and training
Professional/Technical/Service Contracts:	\$183,000	CCMI for recruiting hosts and apprentices, developing sub-agreements, and summer employment management for apprentices
TOTAL ENRTF BUDGET:	\$186,000	

Explanation of Use of Classified Staff: Project management and field visit time - none seeking reimbursement.

Explanation of Capital Expenditures Greater Than \$3,500: NA

Number of Full-time Equivalent (FTE) funded with this ENRTF appropriation: One non-general funded BWSR employee will be used to provide consultation and analysis of annual and longitudinal measures being collected. Her time will be approximately 0.04 FTE.

Number of Full-time Equivalent (FTE) estimated to be funded through contracts with this ENRTF appropriation: This is a one-year program to fund 38 apprentice positions for approximately 520 hours per position. This equates to approximately ten FTEs.

B. Other Funds: NA

VII. PROJECT STRATEGY:

A. Project Partners: CCMI via contract, MN Association of SWCDs, individual SWCDs, University and State College systems, field staff of NRCS, BWSR, and other agencies.

B. Project Impact and Long-term Strategy: Effort provides immediate technical assistance to accelerate conservation delivery utilizing typical funding sources such as RIM, WRP, CRP, EQIP, flood recovery, cost-share, and the constitutional funds for habitat and clean water. In the long-term we expect the participants will enlighten each other—the interns gain experience, the SWCDs gain emerging technologies. Our hope is that, following the completion of LCCMR (ENRTF) participation, that the program can ultimately utilize the new Clean Water Fund as it is not a previously existing general fund program and therefore not supplanting of existing efforts.

C. Spending History:

Funding Source	M.L. 2007 or FY08	M.L. 2008 or FY09	M.L. 2009 or FY10	M.L. 2010 or FY11	M.L. 2011 or FY12-13
LCCMR				\$368,000	
LCCMR					\$200,000

VIII. ACQUISITION/RESTORATION LIST: NA

IX. MAP(S): Attached. Participating SWCDs 2011-2014. Map of 2014 SWCDs.

X. RESEARCH ADDENDUM: NA

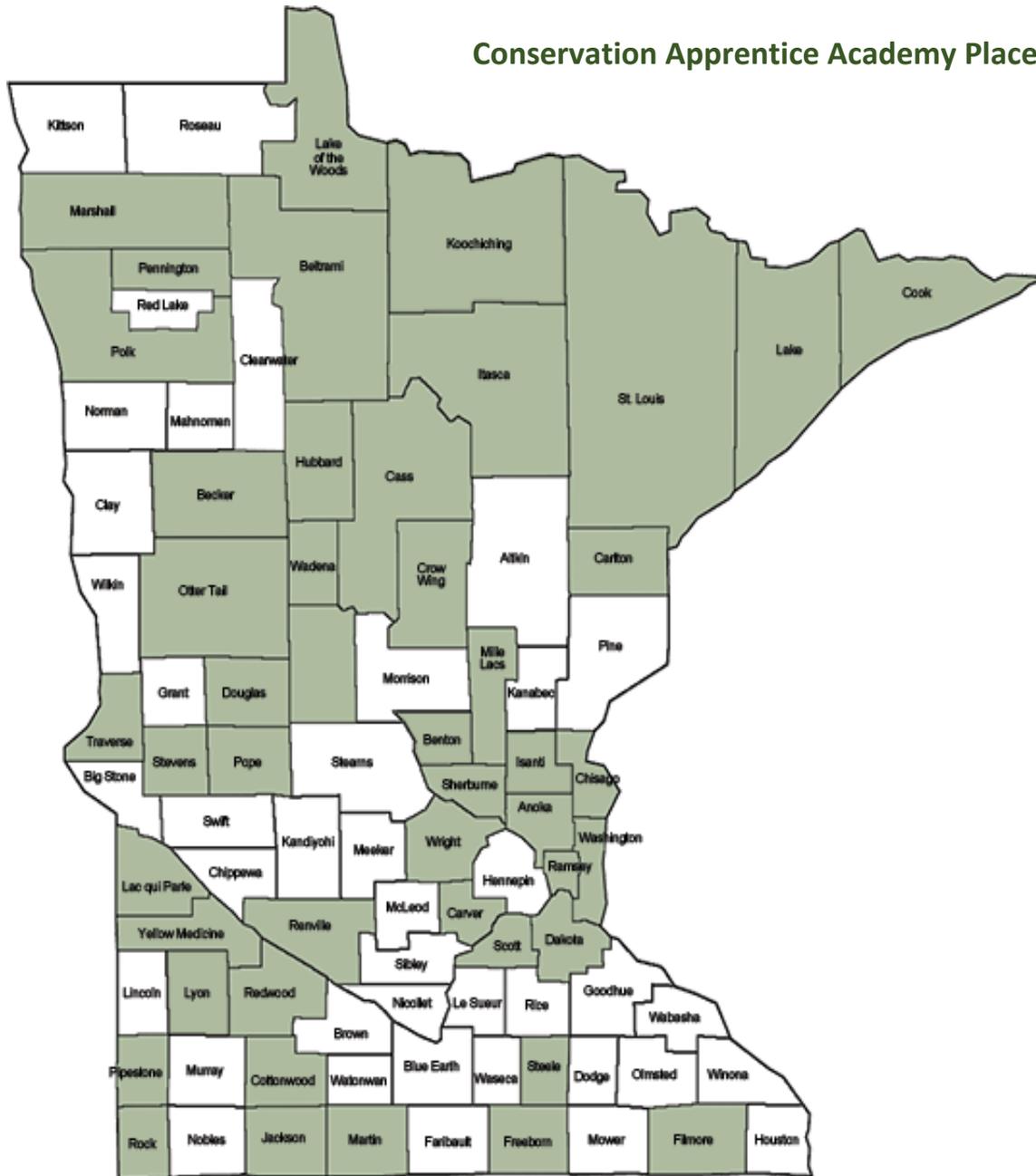
XI. REPORTING REQUIREMENTS:

Periodic work plan status update reports will be submitted not later than June 1, 2014 and December 30, 2014. (The final report and associated products require completion of the summer work season and analysis of exit interviews so final reports are not possible until the fourth quarter of the year.)

Minnesota Conservation Apprenticeship Academy

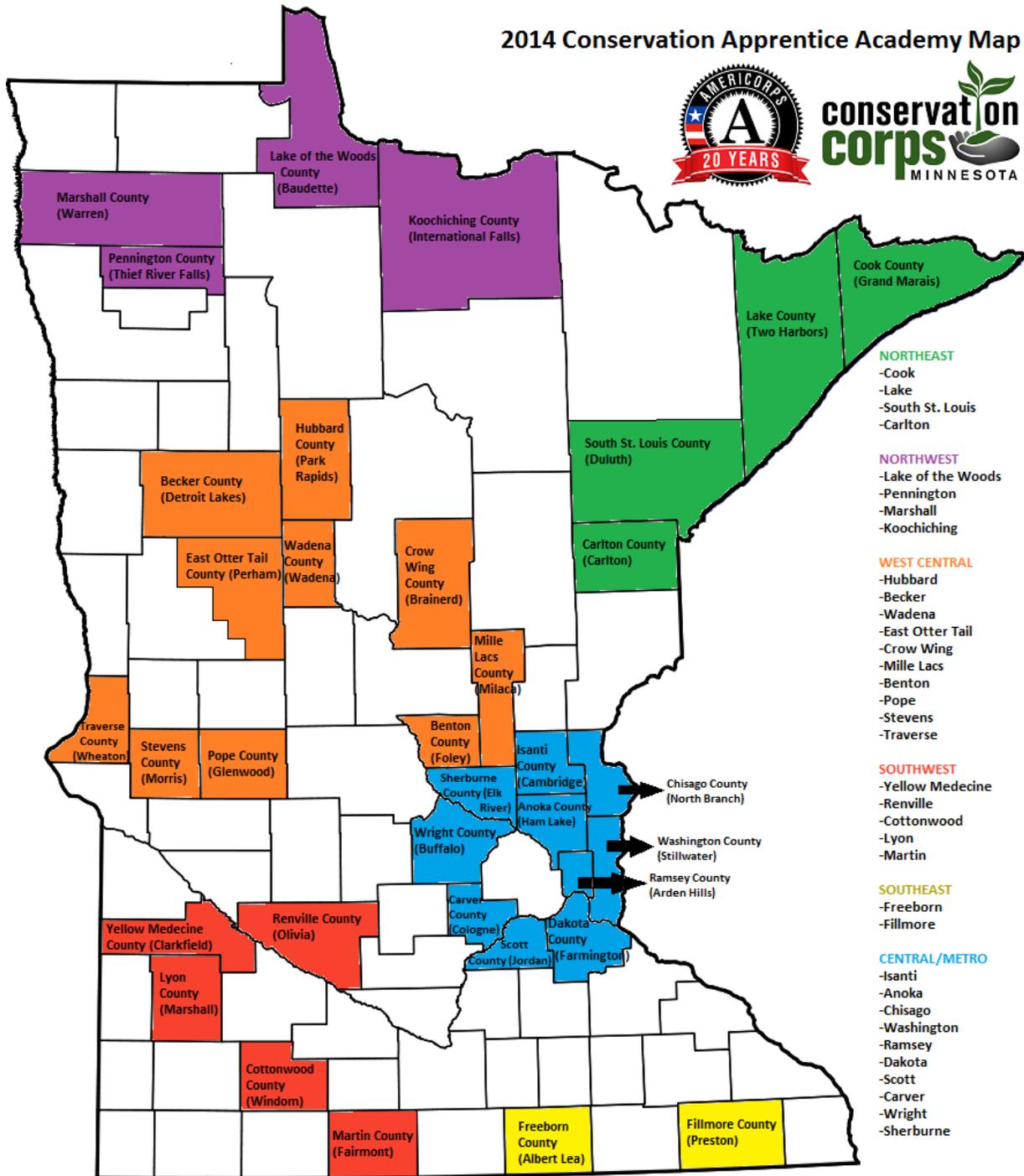
PROJECT MANAGER: GIESEKE

Conservation Apprentice Academy Placement Sites 2011-2014



Minnesota Conservation Apprenticeship Academy

PROJECT MANAGER: GIESEKE



Conservation Apprenticeship Academy

Final Attachment A: Budget Detail for M.L. 2013 Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund Projects					
Project Title: Minnesota Conservation Apprenticeship Academy					
Legal Citation: M.L. 2013, Chp. 52, Sec. 2, Subd. 07a					
Project Manager: Jenny Gieseke					
M.L. 2013 ENRTF Appropriation: \$ 186,000					
Project Length and Completion Date: December 30, 2014					
Date of Update: Decembwr 16, 2014 - Final Report					
ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES TRUST FUND BUDGET	Activity 1 Budget	Amount Spent	Balance	TOTAL BUDGET	TOTAL BALANCE
BUDGET ITEM					
Personnel (Wages and Benefits) Jenny Gieseke BWSR training coordinator and member of our organization development section @0.04 FTE (non-general fund employee). (71% salary and 29% benefits)	3,000	3,000	0	3,000	0
Professional/Technical/Service Contracts Conservation Corps of MN and IA for manager time and stipends paid to 38 apprentices. Included in contract are funds for background checks, recruiting ads, and materials.	183,000	183,000	0	183,000	0
COLUMN TOTAL	\$186,000	\$186,000	\$0	\$186,000	\$0