



Planting the Seed

How to Start a
Minnesota
School Forest





ELI SAGOR

DEAN MAKEY SCHOOL FOREST

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OVERVIEW

This booklet is meant to serve as a guide to setting up a School Forest. Once you become an official Minnesota DNR School Forest you will receive a copy of the School Forest Handbook and full access to the School Forest Web site. These resources will provide support and guidance for many areas, including:

- School Forest Committee
- Land Management
- Site Enhancements
- Student Activities
- Funding
- Resources for Teaching Outdoors
- Safety and Legal Concerns

Once your site is accepted into the School Forest Program, you will be eligible for a host of program benefits, including land management advice from a local DNR forester. For a list of program benefits, see page 7.



CARA RIECKENBERG



MN DNR



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WHAT IS A SCHOOL FOREST?

A School Forest is an outdoor classroom where teachers and students explore the natural world as a means to teach core subjects such as math, science, reading, writing, geography, physical education, the arts, and others. The site can be used year-round by schools and community organizations. School forests in Minnesota range in size from one to 300 acres of land. The land is typically managed by the school under the direction of the School Forest Committee. A School Forest must be accessible to students (by foot or bus) and must have trees. Many school forests have wetlands, prairies, ponds, and meadows, in addition to a wooded area. Teachers, staff, students, parents, DNR foresters, and community members work together to develop a site to meet the school's educational needs. School forests are special pieces of land that are used for a variety of educational activities.

Dr. C. V. Hobson, a former geography professor from Bemidji State University, is credited with creating the School Forest concept in Minnesota. He actively campaigned for the passage of the School Forest Law (Minnesota Statutes, Section 89.41), which authorizes public education institutions to establish and maintain school forests. The law was passed in 1949 and the program continues to give schools the opportunity to extend the classroom out of the building and into the outdoors. Teachers, staff, and volunteers are vital to the success of the School Forest Program. It is the creativity, dedication, and passion of these individuals that keeps sites, and the overall program, moving forward.

Since its inception, the program has changed periodically in an attempt to meet the needs of schools across the state.

www.mndnr.gov/schoolforest

The School Forest Program involves a blend of rural and urban schools, both public and private. Some schools have land that can be accessed simply by walking out of the school building and some must bus students to access their property. The program includes preschool, elementary, middle, high school, and university level institutions. All schools in the program, however, work toward the same goal ... connecting students to the natural world while building each student's self-esteem, sense of community, skill level, and knowledge base. For a listing of school forests in Minnesota, see the School Forest Web site.



Girl scouts take a break from trail work in Solway School Forest.

Minnesota School Forest Program Manager

The Minnesota School Forest Program Manager position exists to support school forests throughout the state. The Minnesota School Forest Program Manager is available to help you get started. As questions arise that cannot be answered by this introduction document or the Web site, please contact the Minnesota School Forest Program Manager.

Minnesota School Forest Program Manager

Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
Division of Forestry
500 Lafayette Road, St. Paul, MN 55155-4044
651-259-5272 or 1-888-646-6367
schoolforestdnr@state.mn.us
www.mndnr.gov/schoolforest

School Forest Web Site

www.mndnr.gov/schoolforest

In an effort to provide the most accurate, current, and easily accessible information on the School Forest Program, many of the program support materials have been put on the School Forest Web site. The School Forest Web site contains general information about the program that anyone can access. A password-protected section of the Web site that is only for program participants contains in-depth program information, lesson plans, grant information, and more. This section is available to sites once they have been accepted into the program. Use the Web site as the first place to look for program information. If you need further information on any aspect of the program, please contact the Minnesota School Forest Program Manager.

Minnesota Department of Natural Resources

Recreation | Destinations | Nature | Education / safety | Licenses / permits / regs.

Home > Education & safety > Natural resources education >

School Forests in Minnesota

Welcome to the School Forest Program Web site!

A School Forest is an outdoor classroom. Students learn about math, art, science, and geography while gaining an appreciation and awareness of natural resources. School Forests build a student's self-esteem, sense of community, skill level, and knowledge base. School Forests provide students with an opportunity to develop life-long critical thinking skills as they encounter real-life situations in their forest. Student enjoy time spent outside and are engaged by the lessons.

The School Forest Program provides a variety of program benefits and support to ensure that school forests are successful, including land management and environmental education (EE) assistance.

The School Forest Web site includes a **Coordinators' Section**. This password-protected section of the Web site is for program participants **only**. Here you will find student activities, in-depth program information, grant opportunities, and more. The **Coordinators' Section** is a program benefit reserved for official School Forest sites only.

Open the door to natural resources for your students today!

School Forest Conference 2008

2008 School Forest Conference Proceedings Coming Soon.

Forestry Programs

- [Arbor Month](#)
- [Project Learning Tree](#)
- [School Forest](#)

Becoming a school forest

- [How to start](#)
- [Benefits](#)
- [Research](#)
- [Applications](#)
- [Mission statement](#)
- [Resolutions](#)

Coordinators section

- [Main page](#)

Environmental education resources

- [How to teach outside](#)
- [Program partners](#)
- [Research](#)

Program information

- [School forest program criteria](#)
- [Safety and legal](#)
- [Acquiring land](#)
- [Current school forests](#)
- [Minnesota school forest statute](#)

Minnesota School Forest Statute

The Minnesota Statute that provides for the establishment and maintenance of school forests is listed below. It can be accessed at www.leg.state.mn.us

89.41 EDUCATIONAL UNITS MAY ESTABLISH AND MAINTAIN FORESTS.

Any school district in the state, however organized, the University of Minnesota, or any branch thereof, any state university, community college, or other public educational institution or agency of the state, all herein referred to as agencies, may establish and maintain forests as herein provided, subject to the approval of the commissioner of natural resources. Any such agency may use for the purpose of such a forest any land belonging to it, or may acquire land therefor by gift or with contributed funds. For the purposes of such forest any tax-forfeited lands may be sold by the county board to any such agency or may be conveyed by the commissioner of revenue to any such agency in like manner as provided for the sale or conveyance of such lands to governmental subdivisions under section 282.01 and amendments thereof.

History: 1949 c 431 s 1; 1957 c 576 s 1,2; 1969 c 1129 art 10 s 2; 1973 c 349 s 2; 1973

c 582 s 3; 1975 c 321 s 2

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ST. DAVID'S EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT CENTER

Community members at St. David's School Forest Fall Festival.

SCHOOL FOREST BENEFITS

A functioning School Forest can positively affect all your student body, faculty, staff, parent-teacher organization, and community. (For specific program benefits, see page 7.) Consider the following benefits of a school forest site.

For students, school forests can:

- Make lessons relevant because school forests provide meaningful, real-world situations that allow students to apply learned skills and allow them to be a part of the natural world, rather than a separate entity.
- Reach students through hands-on learning, especially important for those who struggle in traditional classrooms.
- Allow older students to mentor younger students and encourage higher self-esteem.



Columbus School Forest students plant trees.

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Provide opportunities for long-term environmental investigations.

- Encourage physical activity and improve student health.
- Allow students with disabilities frequent, safe contact with the natural world.
- Foster a sense of ownership, promote a conservation ethic, increase school pride, and decrease student vandalism.
- Capture young peoples' innate interest in the natural world.

For the school and staff, school forests can:

- Allow teachers to try new teaching methods in an outdoor setting.
- Help address academic standards by giving opportunities to include environmental education into the regular curriculum.
- Give staff a chance to see the profound effects of the natural world on children.
- Allow teachers and other staff to interact with students on a different level.
- Help “green” your school by teaching grounds-keeping staff sustainable and efficient ways of maintaining school property.
- Provide resources and support for teachers and staff on natural resource education topics and techniques.

For parents, families, and communities, school forests can:

- Strengthen parent-teacher relationships when working toward a common goal.
- Provide increased recreation and exploration opportunities with an eye on learning, such as hiking and bird-watching.
- Create a more environmentally literate population who will make sound long-term community decisions.
- Create a sense of ownership among parents, families, students, and community members.
- Engender cooperation between stakeholders.
- Expose students to possible local career choices through increased community connections.
- Involve community members as guest presenters and volunteers, and allow them to serve as positive adult role models.
- Increase community safety. Studies show that crime decreases as a community spends more time outside in a positive environment.



Camping adventure for Bayview School Forest students.

ROB MAROHN

SCHOOL FOREST PROGRAM BENEFITS AND CRITERIA

The Minnesota School Forest Program is governed by Minnesota Statute 89.41. To view the statute, visit www.leg.state.mn.us. The purpose of the School Forest Criteria is to identify the responsibilities of the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and the School District or public education agency (school). The criteria will help strengthen the program by ensuring that lands are used in a manner consistent with program goals and sites and educational activities are supported appropriately.

Program Benefits and DNR Responsibilities

The Minnesota School Forest Program provides a valuable natural resource education experience. The DNR values the knowledge students gain from experiencing outdoor education activities. To support and promote school participation in outdoor and natural resource activities, the Division of Forestry Minnesota School Forest Program will provide the following benefits to school forest sites:

- **Support Mailings** – Mailings will be sent to site coordinators two to three times each school year containing information to support and expand activities in school forests.
- **Foresters** - DNR regional and area foresters are available to help schools identify, plan, and implement school forest activities.
- **Staff** – The DNR’s Minnesota School Forest Program Manager and staff will support sites in a variety of ways, such as: grant writing, curriculum development, educational materials distribution, connections to DNR programs, support on legal issues, site visits, etc.

- **Education Materials** - The School Forest Program is run in conjunction with Project Learning Tree and all other forestry education programs, providing sites special access to forestry education resources and development of specific school forest materials.
- **Web Site** - The School Forest Web site provides program materials to support School Forest sites. www.mndnr.gov/schoolforest
- **Stewardship Plans** – A DNR forester will work with each site to write a school forest Stewardship Plan, free of charge. A copy of the current School Forest Stewardship Plan will be kept at the DNR School Forest office.
- **DNR Support** - Members of other DNR divisions (wildlife, ecological resources, etc.) provide support for special projects.
- **Forestry Education Updates** - Site coordinators receive monthly e-mails with information on grants, time-sensitive development opportunities, trainings, and news from the School Forest Program.



Teacher training at St. Therese School Forest.

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- **“How to Teach in Your School Forest” Workshop** - The DNR will provide a free, site-specific workshop on working with students outdoors, classroom management on the trail, activities to conduct in a School Forest, connections to the indoor classroom, and appropriate topics to address in a School Forest.
- **Grant Opportunities** – The School Forest Program staff will work to find grant funding or partner support to offset costs for school activities.
- **Conference** – Every other year the School Forest Program hosts a School Forest conference or workshop to bring together site coordinators, teachers, administrators, and volunteers from sites statewide to learn about new program happenings, explore educational opportunities, and discuss current issues and needs. The conferences are free and substitute teacher stipends are typically provided
- **Committee and Site Coordinator** – A School Forest Committee consisting of site teachers, administrators, parents, volunteers, community members, or students will operate to guide the development and use of the site. A site coordinator/chair will be designated to be the site’s main contact and guide the work of the School Forest Committee and site activities. The site coordinator is responsible for communication with the Minnesota School Forest Program Manager.
- **Funding** – Sufficient funding to support school forest site activities will be provided. Funding for transportation, site maintenance, and teaching supplies will be considered. If necessary, a plan for revenue generated from the site will be created.
- **Stewardship Plan** – A School Forest Stewardship Plan will be developed and updated to ensure sustainable forest management and continuation of education activities. If harvesting occurs, the school will follow Minnesota Forest Resources Council timber harvesting guidelines (www.frc.statemn.us).

School Responsibilities

The Minnesota School Forest Program seeks schools that are interested in a long-term commitment to natural resource and outdoor education. Participation from multiple teachers, administrators, parents, and community members is vital to the success of a site program. To help ensure a lasting, beneficial School Forest site effort, the following school criteria exist:

- **Educational Activities** – A site will complete a minimum of five (5) educational activities every year. These activities can be conducted by the school, after school programs, or community partners (e.g., scouts, youth groups).
- **Annual Report** – The site coordinator will submit an annual report to the Minnesota School Forest Program Manager no later than June 30 each year.
- **Outdoor Classroom** – Any sites consisting of tax-forfeited land will maintain the agreement to use the land only as an outdoor classroom.
- **Land Ownership** – Any site not owned by the school must have a written agreement between the school and landowner indicating the conditions of use and designating the site as a School Forest.



Accountability

The previously mentioned criteria exist to ensure that appropriate activities happen on school forest lands. If the criteria are not followed, the Minnesota School Forest Program Manager and local DNR foresters will work with site leaders to identify and agree upon a plan and timeline to bring the site into compliance with the criteria. If a site is unable or unwilling to follow the criteria, the site will lose program benefits and certification in the School Forest Program. If a noncompliant School Forest is on tax-forfeited land, the appropriate county authority will be notified of the site's removal from the program. Reconveyance of land will be handled between the site/school and the county.

Site leaders can address comments or concerns about the program to the Minnesota School Forest Program Manager. If the DNR does not comply with the previously mentioned criteria, site leaders can appeal to the State Forester or the DNR Commissioner.



Students study birds at Five Hawks School Forest.

CARA RIECKENBERG

STEP 1: PLANT THE SEED

To know where to begin, you must first consider the unique characteristics of your school site, school staff, and school board. This analysis will help you determine your plan of action! If you are an individual acting alone, your first order of business should be to locate like-minded individuals. Having more people committed to the program increases the likelihood of success in a large undertaking!

Consider the following things before you begin:

- Does the school currently have a natural area that can be used as the setting for a School Forest? If the answer is “no,” there are still ways to create a School Forest. Contact the School Forest Program Manager and read “Step 3: Acquire School Forest Land” on page 16.
- Can you find other individuals who are committed to forming a School Forest in your community? Don’t limit yourself to others like your. Contact educators, administrators, parents, community members, and local business and resource professionals. A group of individuals dedicated to the creation and preservation of the School Forest is an integral ingredient to its success!
- Are you willing to make a long-term commitment to your School Forest? Long-term projects tend to need at least one individual to serve as the driving force to keep the other participants motivated and connected. Are you that individual? If not, can you find someone who is willing to make the commitment to serve in that capacity?
- Are school administrators open to the idea? When you approach them, be prepared to provide them with a list of well thought-out benefits to establishing a School Forest!
- Try not to feel overwhelmed. Keep your goals in mind and tackle the items one at a time. For some School Forest sites the start up process takes a few months, for others a few years. Every site progresses at its own pace.
- Have you contacted the Minnesota School Forest Program Manager? This will provide you with a strong ally in your endeavor. The Minnesota School Forest Program Manager is available to answer questions, offer advice, and assist you with issues as they arise.



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Bridge at Grand Marais School Forest.

www.mndnr.gov/schoolforest

Minnesota School Forest Program Manager

Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
Division of Forestry

500 Lafayette Road, St. Paul, MN 55155-4044
651-259-5272 or 1-888-646-6367

schoolforestdnr@state.mn.us

www.mndnr.gov/schoolforest

STEP 2: FORM A SCHOOL FOREST COMMITTEE

School Forest Committee

One of the key components to a successful School Forest is the development and maintenance of a strong School Forest Committee. It is important to find individuals who have a stake in the success of this endeavor and are willing to put forth the time and energy necessary to see it through. They must be willing to accept and support the committee's mission, and be willing to disregard their personal agendas. The School Forest Committee guides site development, oversees activities in the School Forest, ensures appropriate funding is available, makes decisions or recommendations regarding the School Forest, and helps do the work of running a School Forest.

During the process of searching for prospective committee members, you may find individuals who have a lot to offer, but do not have the necessary time to commit to serving on the committee. Ask them if they would be willing to assist in small projects as they come up. These individuals may still play an important role in the creation and preservation of the School Forest.

Use the excitement of interested individuals to help "spread the word" and to encourage others to participate! The journey may appear to be a long one at the beginning, but remember that this is a positive undertaking and the rewards will be seen in student achievement and enthusiasm!

The chair of the committee (also called the School Forest Site Coordinator) tends to most often be a teacher who has a passion for teaching outdoors. Whoever is chosen for this important position must have leadership and organizational skills, be willing to work toward the committee's goals for multiple years, and have the skill set

necessary to serve as a leader working with people from different backgrounds and with different perspectives. For more information on site coordinator responsibilities see page 14.

Committee Members

Your committee will acquire strength from the knowledge and associations of its members; however, too few or too many members will limit the effectiveness of the committee's work. An average School Forest Committee has six to 10 members. The heart of an organization is its governing body. A good blend of committee members with different backgrounds and interests can provide a diverse array of perspectives and possible solutions that help the committee face issues as they arise.



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Committee members meeting onsite at Silver Bay School Forest.

A wide variety of individuals should be considered for participation in the School Forest Committee. The list of potential members includes:

- School administrators
- School board members and other local elected officials
- Educators from the schools who will use the site
- Parents
- Local business owners
- Natural resource professionals
- Local civic and service organization members
- Members of your school's parent teacher association (PTA, PTO)
- Local naturalists or individuals with natural sciences backgrounds, such as Master Gardeners, Audubon Society members, Woodland Advisors, or Master Naturalists
- Scout, 4-H, or other youth group leaders
- Local DNR foresters
- School maintenance staff.

What if it is difficult to fill the School Forest Committee positions?

The idea of finding the right committee members might seem a bit daunting, but keep in mind that there are great committee members in your community. Identify the type of people you are looking for and then start your search. Seek out the advice of your school administrators and encourage them to offer suggestions of individuals whose involvement would be a benefit to the school in general. Contact the chairs of your local civic organizations, as they may be able to direct you to individuals who would be interested in working with the School Forest. Attend local

governmental meetings and ask for a moment to address the group and make them aware of the need for active involvement by community members. When approaching individuals, make them aware that this is a directed invitation and not a general "cattle call." Let individuals know that their specific participation is being sought due to certain skills, connections, or interests they possess.

What if everyone wants to be on the School Forest Committee?

A School Forest Committee of six to 10 people is ideal. Try to limit the size of your committee to a manageable, effective group. Prioritize the needs of the committee and list the qualifications you seek for each position. Examine the list of prospective members and find those individuals that best fit the requirements of the positions. Not all interested individuals need to serve on the committee. Think of ways to harness their enthusiasm and connect these people to tasks they will enjoy and at which they will be able to succeed. You can create subcommittees or task forces to accept the overflow of talented participants you have at your disposal.



Sign at Linwood School Forest.

DIANE MAHONEN

School forest committees need to make some decisions about operating procedures before diving into the work of the committee. Consider the following logistical decisions when forming the committee and establishing how the committee will operate:

- Decide if the committee will use an informal or formal committee structure using positions such as President, Vice-President, Treasurer, Recording Secretary, Historian, Fundraising Chair, Curriculum Coordinator, etc.
- Determine how many members will be appropriate to meet the needs of the School Forest. Most school forest committees consist of six to 10 members.
- Decide when, where, and how often the committee will meet. Many school forest committees meet monthly.
- Determine how and by whom minutes will be kept, which should include records on the committee's work that is accomplished as well as its meetings.
- In consultation with members and the school's administrators, oversee the planning of short- and long-term goals to include in the School Forest's Master Plan. At the very least, a one-year and a three-year plan should be developed. Include items such as facility enhancements, development of curriculum specific to the site, financial needs, fundraising goals, and site usage.
- Write a mission statement for the School Forest. See the School Forest Web site. www.mndnr.gov/schoolforest
- Select a School Forest Committee Chairperson. This person will also represent the School Forest to the DNR as the site coordinator.
- Oversee the formation of subcommittees and task forces as necessary.

There are many tasks to be completed over the life of a School Forest. It is not expected that they should all be accomplished in the first year. The following list includes areas of interest that either the School Forest Committee or a subcommittee should address:

- Writing a Mission Statement (see School Forest Web site www.mndnr.gov/schoolforest)
- Community use, including forest access and security
- Trail development and maintenance
- Site enhancements (signs, bathrooms, benches, buildings, etc.)
- Annual evaluation of the School Forest's educational usability
- Site maintenance
- Teacher workshops and curriculum development
- School forest history (historical use of site and the listing of original flora and fauna)
- Fundraising
- Creating a treasury (to support the treasurer or financial officer)
- Natural resources inventory
- Identifying and implementing ways to encourage educators to utilize the School Forest
- Ensuring the School Forest meets the needs of the school(s) using it
- Public relations.

Individual members of the School Forest Committee should:

- Perform their assigned tasks in a timely manner to facilitate the orderly running of the School Forest
- Participate in committee evaluation and future planning
- Attend all regularly scheduled committee meetings
- Devote sufficient time to consistently fulfill the duties of their position
- Be actively involved with school forest happenings
- Seek out and mentor others to be future school forest committee members.

School Forest Site Coordinator

The School Forest Site Coordinator is the person who keeps things running. This person should have great leadership and organizational skills. Most often this role is filled by a teacher or someone who works closely with students in the School Forest. Below is a list of potential School Forest Site Coordinator duties. However, each School Forest site is unique, and there may be additional duties you perform for your School Forest.

The School Forest Site Coordinator position can be fun, or demanding – if you allow it to be. Try not to feel overwhelmed! The Minnesota School Forest Program Manager is available to answer questions, offer advice, and assist you with issues as they arise. Be sure to contact the Minnesota School Forest Program Manager to establish yourself as the site coordinator, and to provide the office with the correct contact information so important news, information, and materials can be sent your way.

The School Forest Coordinator should:

- Plan and oversee all meetings of the School Forest Committee
- Maintain a current awareness of committee work between meetings
- Report to the committee members on decisions of the school board or principal that affects their work
- Submit an annual report to the Minnesota School Forest Program Manager every June
- Ensure the School Forest is compliant with School Forest Program Criteria (page 7)
- Communicate with the School Board at least once a year
- Facilitate members' active participation and decision-making
- Recommend potential committee members and future leaders to the rest of the committee
- Oversee public relations and interactions with the media
- Guide committee direction based on the mission of the School Forest.

The School Forest Site Coordinator is responsible for keeping the School Forest running. Use the information provided in the handbook to help manage and sustain your School Forest site and committee.

While there are many things for the School Forest Coordinator to do, following are four areas that should get specific attention:

1. Program Criteria

It is necessary for all criteria to be met for your School Forest to maintain its certification with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. If you will have trouble meeting the program requirements, please contact the Minnesota School Forest Program Manager to discuss your situation.

2. Annual Report

You are responsible for completing the School Forest Annual Report and sending it to the Minnesota School Forest Program Manager in June of every year.

3. School Forest Committee

The key to a successful School Forest is building a strong foundation with many participants and partners. Work with the School Forest Committee to manage and use your site. The School Forest Handbook provides more suggestions on working with the School Forest Committee. You will receive a copy of the School Forest Handbook when you become an official Minnesota DNR School Forest.

4. Mission Statement

Each School Forest should have a mission statement that reflects the purpose and direction of the School Forest Committee and can be referred to often as a marker to help the committee stay on course. See the School Forest Web site for information on developing a mission statement.



Measuring trees at Pike Lake School Forest.

MN DNR



STEP 3: ACQUIRE SCHOOL FOREST LAND

The outdoor classroom itself is the most important part of the School Forest! Be sure to contact the Minnesota School Forest Program Manager about your School Forest land. Whether the land is already district owned or new land needs to be acquired, there are some tips that will help you finalize the process.

If a school or district already owns the land, you can proceed with school board approval and submit an application. But be sure to contact the School Forest Program Manager first.

What if School or District Owned Land is Not an Option?

- Consider the needs of your school. What type of land features (forest, water, wetland, prairie, etc.) will best suit your needs?
- Talk with a school administrator to identify any school lands available in your area.
- Is land available within a reasonable distance of your school? Does it match your needs?
- Contact the Minnesota School Forest Program Coordinator to determine your best option.

Purchased or School Owned

Land can be purchased by the school district for the purpose of establishing and maintaining a School Forest. Or, the school district owns existing land that can become a part of the program. Example: Horace May Elementary, Bemidji.

Tax-Forfeited Land

The School Forest Statute (Minn. Statute, Section 89.41) allows tax-forfeited land to be deeded to a school district or educational institution. This process involves working with county government, since county offices administer most tax-forfeited land in Minnesota. Example: Pillager School Forest, Pillager.

Land Partnership

Schools can enter into partnership with a city, corporation, or private landowner to gain access to land. The most common partnerships are with city entities to use community parks as school forests. Example: Linwood School Forest and Community Park, Linwood.

Donation

While land donation to a school is rare, it does happen. A private individual, business, or organization can donate a parcel of land to a school. Example: Jensen Woods, Alexandria.



Map of North Shore Community School Forest.

Things to Consider When Acquiring Land

Existing Easements

A land ownership issue to consider when acquiring School Forest land is an easement. An easement is the granting of rights for access to land to satisfy an interest. A School Forest may need to get an easement or give one to another interest. Easements are typically granted for purposes of right-of-way, right of entry, and right to water. For example, a public snowmobile or hiking trail might be located adjacent to a School Forest and the city or county might request an easement across School Forest land for citizens to access the trail. Or a School Forest site might have the best entry point by crossing a private individual's land, and thus an easement is necessary. Easements are handled either at the time of land acquisition or by the school district superintendent or lawyer after land acquisition. The School Forest landowner is the ultimate decision maker on an easement. If you have questions about easements, contact your local DNR forester, School Forest Program Manager, or school district legal representative.

Transportation

Transportation issues should be considered prior to acquiring a School Forest if it is not located adjacent to the school grounds. This includes safety and fiscal considerations if buses must be utilized to transport students to the School Forest site.

Accessibility to All Students

Distance to site, difficulty of terrain, and safety issues should be considered. If compliance with the American's with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a concern, contact your school's attorney and ADA specialist for clarification. There are many things that can be done to make School Forests accessible to everyone.

Traditional Use of Land

Find out if your School Forest land has traditionally been used for hunting, trapping, snowmobiling, all-terrain vehicle (ATV) use, horseback riding, or access to another area. These uses may conflict with the intended use of a School Forest, and impact the activities you will be able to safely conduct there. For additional information, consult the "Legal Issues: Restricted Use of School Forest Lands" section of the School Forest Web site. You may also wish to contact the Minnesota School Forest Program Manager and your local DNR conservation officer.



Sign in Crosswinds School Forest.

School Maintenance Staff

Some school forest sites are located adjacent to the school grounds and are able to utilize school maintenance staff to support School Forest land management. It is crucial to engage school maintenance staff early in the development of the School Forest and to keep them actively involved in school forest activities. Their support can be a big benefit if they are engaged and feel some ownership in School Forest projects. Keep communication open and respect each other's ideas and needs. Consider inviting a member of the school maintenance staff to be on your School Forest Committee to keep communication open and encourage their involvement and ownership in the site.

STEP 4: BECOME A SCHOOL FOREST

Submit a Proposal to the School Board

To become a School Forest your application must include a copy of the School Board Resolution designating the site as a School Forest. Sample resolutions can be found in this section. Writing and submitting a proposal to the School Board is an important and necessary step!

Before you may request a school board resolution, the property must be owned by the school district or partnering agency (city, county, state, federal, or private) with which the School Board is willing to enter into agreement.

If your school is private or parochial, your school may not be administered by the local School Board. If so, your governing body (parish council, etc.) shall submit a similar resolution with the application.

Be prepared when you submit your School Forest proposal to the local School Board. Don't waste the time of this busy panel. Keep the following items in mind.

1. Consider the benefits and potential risks involved with the School Forest **BEFORE** you meet with the board so you can anticipate their questions and be prepared with well thought out answers.
2. Have visible support with you. Ask your school administrators and fellow faculty members to attend the meeting. Invite parents who believe the school would be a more complete educational institution with the addition of a School Forest. Invite business owners who have pledged their support.

3. A picture is worth a thousand words. Take photographs so school board members can become familiar with the site and questions can be answered more succinctly. Take maps to present information concerning future requests for site improvements.
4. Prepare to attend more than one meeting. The proposal may be tabled if all questions cannot be answered or if additional time is needed for the School Board to render its decision. Don't be discouraged if this is the case.
5. Consult the Minnesota School Forest Program Manager and local DNR Forester for support and information.
6. Prepare a draft resolution before the meeting so school board members are not scrambling to find the proper wording.



School Board Resolutions

The following, four sample resolutions can be used as a model for forming a School Forest resolution.

1. “NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT: Approximately thirty acres currently known as the Stillwater Area High School Environmental Learning Center within Parcel B (Section 1) be designated as an outdoor classroom and Minnesota School Forest.”
2. “Resolved, the Board of Education of Lake Superior School District No. 381 approves the establishment of a Silver Bay School Forest and outdoor classroom comprising 40 acres described as the SW1/4 of the NW 1/4, Section 36, Township 56 North, Range 8 West, and supports enrollment of said school forest in the DNR School Forest Program for educational purposes.”
3. “Be it resolved by the School Board of Independent School District No. 719, State of Minnesota, as follows: That the forest land within the Five Hawks Outdoor Learning Center be designated School Forest land and be named Five Hawks School Forest.”
4. “BE IT RESOLVED by the School Board of Independent School District No. 622 that 3 acres of land located at T29N R22W, Section 13 be designated as an outdoor classroom and Minnesota School Forest, effective May 15, 2002.”



Submit a School Forest Application

Application should be made to the Minnesota School Forest Program Manager using the form available on the School Forest Web site www.mndnr.gov/schoolforest. It is recommended that contact (by phone or e-mail) be made early in the process to receive better advice and instruction. Include the following items when you submit your paperwork to the Minnesota School Forest Program Manager for entrance into the School Forest Program:

- Completed application
- Copy of Property Deed
- Legal description of designated land
- Map of area
- School Board Resolution

If you have difficulty obtaining any of the items listed, contact the Minnesota School Forest Program Manager for assistance.

Minnesota School Forest Program Manager
 Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
 Division of Forestry
 500 Lafayette Road, St. Paul, MN 55155-4044
 651-259-5272 or 1-888-646-6367
schoolforestdnr@state.mn.us
www.mndnr.gov/schoolforest

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SCHOOL FOREST APPLICATION

Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
Division of Forestry



Date: _____

School Name: _____

School Forest Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

County: _____

School District: _____

Additional schools that may use the school forest: _____

Contact Person/Site Coordinator: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

E-mail: _____

The land ownership is classified as: (check one) ___ tax-forfeited ___ private ___ school
___ other, please explain:

A copy of property deed is required.

Number of Acres: _____

Legal Description: _____

Required Attachments:

- Legal description, if not listed above
- Copy of property deed
- Map of site, plat map or other
- School Board Resolution declaring site a School Forest (copy of meeting minutes)

Potential School Forest Committee Members:

These are members of the school, community, or county that might be interested in participating in planning or organizing the School Forest. Such as parents, students, teachers, administrators, local or state government staff, business members, foresters, gardeners, etc.

Name	Position/Title
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Have you been in contact with your local DNR Forester? Yes No
If yes, who have you spoken with? _____
Have you consulted any other foresters? Who? _____

What assistance from the School Forest Program would be beneficial to your site?

Once your application is received, the School Forest Program Manager will contact your site coordinator with further information on the program and what can be done to best assist your site. Submit completed application and all required attachments to:

**School Forest Program
DNR Forestry
500 Lafayette Road
St. Paul, MN 55155-4044**

**Questions?
Call the School Forest Program Manager
651-259-5272.**

