

Table of Contents

What Is a School Forest?.....	Page 2
School Forest Benefits	Page 5
School Forest Program Benefits and Criteria	Page 7
Step 1: Plant the Seed	Page 10
Step 2: Form a School Forest Committee	Page 11
School Forest Site Coordinator	Page15
Step 3: Acquire School Forest Land	Page 16
Step 4: Become a School Forest	Page 18
Submit a Proposal to the School Board	Page 18
Submit an Application to the School Forest Program	Page 19
School Forest Application Form.....	Page 20



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



MN DNR

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.