

School Forest Conference Agenda

Feb. 4-5, 2026

Mounds View Events and Community Center,
Edgewood Ave



Practical & tactical ways to use and improve your school forest.

Feb. 4

8 -10 am	Registration desk open, coffee & am snacks
9 - 9:50 am	Conference Open Learn what's new in the School Forest Program and how the DNR can help your school achieve your outdoor teaching goals.
10 – 10:50 am	Structured networking time Share about your school forest and learn about others. Ask practical questions and get tactical answers.
11 am - noon	Getting Real About Minnesota's Climate – <i>Kenny Blumenfeld, state climatologist</i> An entertaining discussion about our climate anxieties.
Noon	Lunch
12:45 am	Get ready to go outside
1-2 pm	Tree ID/Measuring trees with inventory kits <i>with DNR foresters</i> - OUTSIDE
2:15-3:15 pm	Concurrent Sessions
	A: How to Teach Outside <i>Kelli Ellickson, Cedar Park School Forest</i> <i>Jamie Madson, Rockford Middle School Forest</i> <i>Jenny Boldt, Hanover School Forest</i> Learn from the best! Teachers will cover real-world tips and strategies they use with their students, especially for the first outing of the year.
	B: Improve your site and connect with local resources <i>Karl Mueller, Troy Holcomb, Rachel Morice, Sara Holger</i> Getting practical and tactical for YOUR site. Discuss you challenges and how to address them with DNR foresters and other natural resource professionals.
3:30 – 4 pm	Reflect, make kinnikinnick/Ćanśaśa, and hear a story. Prize drawing
	Optional FUN off-site group activity: TBA

NOTE: This is a working, tentative agenda to help you plan your day. Sessions may change at the last minute!

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Feb. 5

8 -10 am	Registration desk open, coffee & snacks
9 -9:15 am	Opening session
9:15 – 10:15	Concurrent sessions
	<p>A: Digging into the new PLT K-8 <i>Explore Your Environment</i> guide <i>Laura Duffey, Project Learning Tree/School Forest</i> We rarely get time to focus on PLT lessons at Teaching in Your School Forest workshops. Let's do it now! Book included.</p> <p>B: Gr 6-12 Phenology Investigations in Schools (PIMS) <i>Jess Paulson and Jen Schultz, University of Minnesota Extension</i> Experience lessons and get valuable materials.</p>
10:15 am	Break & snacks
10:30 – 11:30	Activity Share Showcase
11:30 – noon	<p>Visit exhibits & talk to exhibitors Use this time to chat one-on-one with exhibitors from Great River Greening, Conservation Corps of Minnesota and Iowa, Urban Ice Anglers, Bird by Bird, University of Minnesota Extension, Project Get Outdoors, and Minnesota Minerals Education Workshop</p>
Noon	Lunch
12:45 pm	Get ready to go outside
1 – 2 pm	<p>Nature's effects on our wellbeing OUTSIDE <i>Sara Holger from Project GO</i> will lead a discussion and share the new wellness exercises from the School Forest Program</p>
2 pm	Snack break
2:15 – 3:15	Concurrent sessions
	<p>A: Using your school forest to regulate behavior, improve wellness, & SEL <i>Arielle Courtney, DNR</i> and the Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights will share results from a survey of school counselors and teachers about how we use the outdoors for mental wellness and share the new health education standards from the Minn. Dept. of Education.</p> <p>B: Buckthorn removal best practices with kids <i>Jessica Drummond, Great River Greening</i> Learn practical effective ways to remove buckthorn with students, and practice using the tools your students might use.</p>
3:15 – 3:30 pm	Prize drawing, evaluations, CEUs

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