

Developing Urban Forest Stewards



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Urban Connections

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Goal of the Partnership

- Increase environmental literacy among urban audiences, building their knowledge and understanding of the value of local and state forest resources.
 - Offer hands-on teacher professional development workshops
 - Provide resources & training to enable teachers to better use their schoolyards
 - Provide curricular resources and classroom supplies
 - Provide field trip stipends and stewardship opportunities for classes
 - Mentor teachers



Partners and their roles

- US Forest Service (Funding, technological assistance)
- Michigan Technological University (Fiduciary Organization with Challenge Cost Share, EE expertize)
- Belle Isle Nature Zoo (Facility, Community liaison, EE expertize)
- Hawk Woods Nature Center (EE Expertize, facility)
- Detroit Public School District (Access, recruit teachers, publicity)
- Michigan Alliance for Environmental and Outdoor Education (Mentors, continued professional development)
- Michigan Department of Natural Resources –community forestry (curriculum resources, technological assistance)
- Teachers (trained to share forestry topics with their students)

Leveraging Funds

- 2009-10 School Year – \$10,000 from Michigan Space Grant Consortium matched with partner staff, facility rental.
- 2010-11 School Year – \$15,000 from U.S. Forest Service matched with partner staff, facility rental
- 2011-13 School Years – \$80,000 for two year project to support 40 teachers and their students (1200) in becoming urban forest stewards using their schoolyards and Belle Isle Park as a context for learning matched with equal amount of staffing and facility rental.

How It Works

- Teachers attend 8 days of hands-on EE workshops focusing on forests and engaging students in outdoor education per school year at No Charge.
- Teacher workshops held in the area so little travel costs and on Saturdays so no sub costs and better support from school administrators.
- Teachers receive continuing education credit or college credit (via Michigan Tech University) at no charge.
- Teachers receive supplies and activity guides at workshop to support implementation.



How It Works



- Local environmental educators and members of Michigan Alliance for Environmental & Outdoor Education serve as mentors for teachers.

- Teachers write lessons that are posted on MAEOE website to share with other urban teachers.

- Teachers who attend 3+ workshops receive fieldtrip stipends to take their classes to Belle Isle to participate in stewardship projects.



How It Works



- Teachers provide Forestry lessons in classrooms .

- Students participate in stewardship projects with teachers, park and Forest Service staff on Belle Isle (Fall, Winter and Spring) and learn about natural resource careers.

Invasive species Management

Invertebrate surveys

Shoreline monitoring and restoration

Interpretive trail creation

- Teachers and their classrooms create schoolyard natural areas at their schools for year round study.

Community Forest Days — students share projects with their families, school and government representatives.



Evaluation

- Teachers participate in a knowledge pretest and posttest
- Teachers provide a final reflection of participation as well as a program survey.

- Students provide a short paragraph (or picture) at the beginning of their series of fieldtrips and at the end. Some ending comments include:

"I used to be scared of things in the woods and stuff. Now I'm not scared of anything." Kenyon F.

" My relationship with the forest has changed because now I know more about plants and I can help plants now." Tahmid M.

" Before I used to be afraid of bugs and insects. Now I love to touch and be in the forest." Shanjil H.

"At first, I was scared that there were bugs and ticks in the forest. But now I realize that the forest is nothing to be afraid of." Mahnaz B.

"Before I came here I was so scared to go to the woods, but now that I came I want to stay forever and explore more of the forest and woods. Thank you."
" Sayeda T.

Who Benefits?

- Teachers
- Students and future students
- Local Park

How does the agency benefit?

Program helps meet immediate goals of cultural transformation, America's Great Outdoors, and More Kids in the Woods

Potential for increased Forest visitation and future employees from students and their families from underserved populations.

Increased awareness among urban residents of values of forests as well as challenges facing natural areas.

Best Practices

	Best Practice	Comments
	Advance strategic priorities of the agency	America's Great Outdoors, More Kids in the woods, and cultural transformation
	Leverages Funding	Federal funding is leveraged 2:1
	Demonstrates big picture thinking	The big picture concepts of the project are constrained by local politics and economic realities.
	Demonstrates entrepreneurship	Program is in the butterfly stage, engaging and at same time, assessing. Continuation of program will require increased entrepreneurship.
	Management of formal agreements and contracts	The University has experience with Forest Service agreements making the process smooth. Unconventional partners have more difficulty understanding rules for spending.
	Demonstrates effective external and internal communication	Utilizes school district media for external communication – good news often overshadowed by bad.
	Demonstrates accountability	Funds have been spent as planned and objectives have been achieved.
	Potential as a network management model	Low; primary beneficiaries are teachers and students, instead of partners. Currently not self sustaining

Lessons Learned

a) Detroiters are very resilient when facing adverse situations. There is a lot of good in Detroit; there are also many naysayers

b) "best practices" a relative to the situation, particularly economics, sometimes making do is better than doing nothing.

c) Cultural Awareness is key – important to identify and understand economic, political, and social trends that affect the organizations, and keep up with the daily changes. Work with non traditional partners requires a lot of time education about agreement processes.

d) For Urban teacher participation Removed "barriers:" no charge for program , no subs needed, close to home in a familiar environment consistent with their teaching environment. Offered "carrots:" CEU and graduate credit, resources for implementation, field trip stipends, annual membership to MAEOE, a fun & exciting professional learning opportunity

http://www.sfi.mtu.edu/Urban_teachers/

A vibrant green beetle is positioned on a piece of weathered, layered wood. The wood shows various textures, including dark, charred sections and lighter, fibrous layers. Several decorative, light green butterfly silhouettes are scattered around the beetle and the wood. The word "QUESTIONS" is written in a bold, orange-red font across the lower portion of the image.

QUESTIONS