

A. Project Title and Applicant Name:

"An Educational Plan for Foxwood"; Sitka School District; Foxwood School Forest

B. Statement of Need

1. *Target Audience:* Five district staff members will draft the school forest education plan. The plan will be reviewed by 9 Foxwood School Forest Committee members and 45 Sitka teaching staff. The plan will be presented to the school board (9 individuals) for adoption.

2. *Need:* The Sitka School District needs to increase the students' learning and environmental literacy by increasing utilization of the Foxwood School Forest. Increased utilization of the school forest can only be accomplished through establishing the connection between the district's curriculum and the school forest. Therefore the district needs a school forest education plan that:

- provides connections to the classroom curriculum and state education standards,
- provides connections to the available natural and built teaching resources, and
- provides direction for staff development initiatives.

The plan will provide a framework upon which instruction through experiential outdoor environmental education at the school forest can be successfully implemented across the K-12 curriculum. Perhaps, more importantly, it will document the value of the school forest as an educational resource and provide teachers with the basis for determining what and how they should teach at the school forest.

Production of the plan will help staff identify and evaluate mechanisms to minimize the barriers identified in the needs assessment, and outline short and long term implementation checkpoints. It will provide the "road map" for assisting the district in its efforts to fully utilize the Foxwood School Forest and provide all Sitka students with meaningful outdoor environmental education opportunities.

3. *Goal Addressed:* The ultimate goal of school forest utilization is to enhance students' environmental knowledge, awareness, ethic, citizen action skills and citizen action experiences, i.e., environmental literacy. This project supports EE 2010 Goal III by enhancing environmental education in the district.

4. *Evidence of Need:* The Foxwood School Forest is an incredible educational resource that is not being utilized to its full potential. Currently, only 3 of 50 teachers take students to the school forest and they each use it only one day per year. Results from the *School Forest Needs Assessment* conducted by the district in September 2007 suggest Sitka teachers feel inadequately prepared (both in content knowledge (64%) and in outdoor teaching strategies (73%)) to facilitate trips to the school forest. Other identified barriers include transportation issues (33%) and lack of field equipment (52%). However, nearly all teachers (91%) are interested in utilizing the school forest.

5. *Previous Efforts:* Since 2002, the two 4th grade teachers have used the school forest in the history curriculum. In 2004, they incorporated "The Changing of the Land" curriculum. Plans are underway to add "Wisconsin Forest Tales" to the district's reading list. The agriculture education teacher uses the school forest for the wildlife class (a tracking unit). In November 2006, the district established a School Forest Committee. The committee's charge was to conduct a school forest needs assessment. They are also responsible for this grant proposal.

C. Goal: Enhance Sitka School District students' environmental literacy via experiential outdoor education occurring at the school forest site.

Objective: By October, 2009 the Sitka School Board will have adopted a school forest education plan that meets the WEEB's criteria and that will guide teachers as they implement EE for Sitka students.

Step One: The School Forest Committee will establish A School Forest Education Plan Task Force and select task force members to draft a school forest education plan. (July, 2008)

- the Task Force will consist of five individuals---four teachers and a curriculum coordinator
- support/consultation services to the Task Force will be provided by the Wisconsin School Forest Education Specialist and a natural resources manger.

Step Two: By September 2009, the School Forest Education Plan Task Force will draft a school forest education plan that conforms to the WEEB's school forest education plan template.

The Task Force will meet at least 5 times between August 2008 and March 2009. Members will also be given between meeting assignments. Meeting dates and task completion schedule shall include:

preview/review existing documents (e.g. school forest needs assessment, district curricula, WI model academic standards, district strategic plan, etc.)						July 19 2008
conduct a school forest site visit to appraise natural and built facilities in an effort to identify site/education connections [Note: School Forest Education Specialist and a resource manager to accompany Task Force]						July 19 2008
draft each section of the plan (e.g., rationale, site description, educational connections, and sustaining the school forest program) incorporating/referencing existing resource materials where appropriate. Task Force will undertake data collection method(s) (e.g., surveys, public hearings, interview of resource person/community member, etc) if supporting material for a particular section of the document does not exist						July to March 2008/09
First drafting session July 20-21, 2008 →	Data collection for missing materials Aug-Nov 2008 →	Second drafting session Dec 3, 2008 →	Second data collection session Jan 2009 →	Final drafting session Feb 6, 2009 →	Final read through and edits By March 2, 2009	

Step Three: The Task Force will validate the education plan. The project director, in coordination with the other task force members, will plan (March 11, 2009) and conduct (April 10, 2009) an in-service/feedback workshop for Sitka teaching staff. The in-service portion (2 hours) will provide an overview of EE (e.g. EE goals, mission of WEEB, WI Model Academic Standards) and the draft education plan. The feedback portion (2 hours) will have staff work in small groups (by grade/content area). A Task Force member will be assigned to each group. Groups will review the plan and provide written feedback to the Task Force. The project director will update the draft plan to reflect staff and school forest committee member feedback (April-June, 2009). School Forest Committee members (August 2009) and school board members (September 2009) will consider and adopt the school forest education plan. The education plan will be distributed to all district staff, school board members, school forest committee members, and the schools' libraries.

D. Dissemination

Upon the awarding of the grant, an article for the district newsletter that explains the project and acknowledges the WEEB will be written. The draft and final plans will be posted on the district's website.

E. Project Evaluation

The completion of the school forest education plan utilizing input from K-12 staff will indicate success of the project. The plan will be submitted to the WEEB for official approval. Enhanced student literacy, via increased utilization of the school forest, which will be determined through surveys conducted as part of the implementation phase, will be the ultimate indicator of success.

F. Staff Qualifications

Project director: Sue McWilliams, currently Curriculum Coordinator (5 years) and Vice-Chair of the School Forest Committee (4 months). Previously a 7th grade social studies teacher (7 years). B.A. in Education and an M.S. in Environmental Education. Will serve as administration's representative on SFEP TF.

The 4 teachers chosen for the SFEP TF will represent the various grade levels, subject areas and schools, within the district. They will be highly knowledgeable about the district's curriculum and state education standards as well as very interested in outdoor environmental education.

G. Continuation

The school forest education plan will be the foundation for the use of our school forest. Implementing the plan will lead to increased utilization, and thus enhanced learning opportunities. The district will update the education plan at 3-5 year intervals or whenever major changes are required (e.g., changes in district curriculum, changes to state standards, management activities on the school forest). The curriculum coordinator's job description will be altered to include responsibility for plan updates.