

## **2011 Project Abstract**

For the Period Ending June 30, 2014

**PROJECT TITLE:** Minnesota Conservation Apprentice Academy

**PROJECT MANAGER:** Jenny Gieseke

**AFFILIATION:** BWSR

**MAILING ADDRESS:** 520 Lafayette Road

**CITY/STATE/ZIP:** St. Paul/MN/55155

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**FUNDING SOURCE:** Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

**LEGAL CITATION:** M.L. 2011, First Special Session, Chp. 2, Art.3, Sec. 2, Subd. 09a

**APPROPRIATION AMOUNT: \$ 200,000**

### **Overall Project Outcome and Results**

Familiarizing future conservation leaders with Minnesota's various land-use practices, water and soil resources, plant and animal habitats, and landowner concerns is needed to maintain the capacity of local organizations to deliver conservation on the ground. Many of the conservation districts' most experienced conservation professionals and practitioners are nearing retirement age but due to budget constraints will not be replaced until they have left employment. Consequently, Minnesota is missing a great opportunity to transfer professional knowledge and experience to the next generation.

While university graduates with conservation-related degrees are knowledgeable in technology, theory, and research methods, their practical, on-the-ground skills need development. Communicating with landowners and adjusting designs for field nuances are vital to the success of conservation projects and best learned alongside seasoned professionals. In turn, apprentices bring knowledge of emerging technologies to improve the quality and productivity of conservation efforts.

This program funded the placement of 35 conservation apprentices in 33 Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD) in 2013, and 37 conservation apprentices in 35 SWCDs in 2014. During this time, the apprentices stabilized erosion on 7.1 million square feet of slopes, planted 69,252 plants, trees, shrubs and seedlings, maintained 3.6 million square feet of restored areas, collected 5,514 water samples, spent 4,272 collecting data and mapping using GPS and GIS, and impacted 2,142 people through environmental education and outreach.

This program has benefits to both students and conservation districts. 96% of apprentices indicated they felt more prepared to work in the conservation industry as a result of the program and would recommend it to others.

96% of the Districts were satisfied with the work their apprentices completed, and 98% indicate they would participate in the program again. Managers also indicated that the work conducted by the apprentices increased the amount of conservation practices delivered by their districts during the program period

This was the second grant awarded to the Apprentice Academy through LCCMR. Grant one addressed the cohorts working during the summers of 2011 and 2012. The state government shutdown of 2011 produced a small balance in the 2010 grant that was used to fund additional positions in 2012 and 2013; this in turn allowed a small balance in this, the 2011 grant to fund additional positions in the M.L. 2013, Chp. 52, Sec. 2, Subd. 07a plan, and carried funding into the early portion of 2014.

### **Project Results Use and Dissemination**

**\*This section NOT intended to count toward recommended 300 word length for Abstract**

*Directions:*

1. *How has information from your project been used and/or disseminated?*

Information from the project has been disseminated through reports to LCCMR, press releases by BWSR and the Governor's Office, local press releases by SWCDs, and through the Conservation Corps newsletter, website and annual report. Information was used to recruit apprentices and increase awareness of the project.

2. *What communications and outreach activities have been done in relation to your project? For example: have tools or techniques developed through your project been adopted by a group; presentations relating to the project been made; has work pertaining to the project been published?*

Communication and outreach activities include the aforementioned reports, press releases, and electronic newsletters. Additionally, BWSR and Conservation Corps staff conducted outreach to SWCDs to find optimal matches between districts and apprentices. Through the course of their work, the apprentices conducted significant outreach to land owners and residents in topics ranging from easement protection, to water quality education, to plant biodiversity.



**Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund (ENRTF)  
M.L. 2011 Work Plan Main Document – Final Report**

**Date of Status Update:** 12/16/14

**Date of Next Status Update:** **Final Report**

**Date of Work Plan Approval:** 12/07/2011

**Project Completion Date:** 6/30/2015

**Is this an amendment request?** NO

**Project Title: Minnesota Conservation Apprentice Academy**

**Project Manager:** Jenny Gieseke

**Affiliation:** MN Board of Water and Soil Resources

**Address:** 520 Lafayette Road

**City:** St. Paul **State:** MN **Zipcode:** 55155

**Telephone Number:** (507) 381-3131

**Email Address:** jenny.gieseke@state.mn.us

**Web Address:** http://www.bwsr.state.mn.us

**Location:**

**Counties Impacted:** Statewide

**Ecological Section Impacted:** Statewide

<b>Total ENRTF Project Budget:</b>	<b>ENRTF Appropriation \$:</b>	200,000
	<b>Amount Spent \$:</b>	200,000
	<b>Balance \$:</b>	0.00

**Legal Citation:** M.L. 2011, First Special Session, Chp. 2, Art.3, Sec. 2, Subd. 09a

**Appropriation Language:**

\$100,000 the first year and \$100,000 the second year are from the trust fund to the Board of Water and Soil Resources in cooperation with Conservation Corps Minnesota to train and mentor future conservation professionals by providing apprenticeship service opportunities to soil and water conservation districts. This appropriation is available until June 30, 2014, by which time the project must be completed and the final products delivered.

**Legal Citation:** Minnesota Laws 2012, Chapter 272, Section 88.

ENVIRONMENTAL AND NATURAL RESOURCES TRUST FUND APPROPRIATION EXTENSION (c)  
The availability of the appropriation is extended to June 30, 2015, for Laws 2011, First Special Session chapter 2, article 3, section 2, subdivision 9, paragraph (a), Minnesota Conservation Apprentice Academy.

## **I. PROJECT TITLE: Minnesota Conservation Apprenticeship Academy**

**II. PROJECT SUMMARY:** Familiarizing future conservation leaders with Minnesota's various land-use practices, water and soil resources, plant and animal habitats, and landowner concerns is needed to maintain the capacity of local organizations to deliver conservation on the ground. Many of the conservation districts' most experienced conservation professionals and practitioners are nearing retirement age but due to budget constraints will not be replaced until they have left employment. Consequently, Minnesota is missing a great opportunity to transfer professional knowledge and experience to the next generation.

While university graduates with conservation-related degrees are knowledgeable in technology, theory, and research methods, their practical, on-the-ground skills need development. Communicating with landowners and adjusting designs for field nuances are vital to the success of conservation projects and best learned alongside seasoned professionals. In turn, apprentices will bring knowledge of emerging technologies to improve the quality and productivity of conservation efforts.

This program will approach environmental-related departments at several universities beginning in the fall of 2012 to recruit current students for apprenticeship positions during the summers of 2013 and 2014. The Conservation Corps of Minnesota and Iowa (CCMI) will be the employer of record; however Soil and Water Conservation Districts will provide a workplace, mentor, and daily supervision. CCMI will recruit candidates, pay a monthly stipend, and provide for AmeriCorps service credit and educational rewards.

## **III. PROJECT STATUS UPDATES: 5/5/2013 Work Program Amendment Request Amendment Request 5/5/2013**

The state government shutdown of 2011 did not allow for paying stipends to the apprentices during the shutdown. As stipends are the largest item in the budget, this resulted in significant savings to the project budget. We are seeking an amendment to enable additional apprentices to be employed. All of the remaining balance will be applied to apprentice stipends and allow for 35 to be employed in 2013 and to address the initial payment of the summer of 2014.

### **Amendment Approved: May 15, 2013**

#### **Project Status as of October 30, 2013:**

The Conservation Apprentice Academy continued to be successful in 2013. A contract between BWSR and CCMI was developed and signed. Employment agreements were developed, SWCD mentors and apprentices were recruited for 2013, and beginning in May, 35 apprentices were trained and placed as apprentices in 33 counties.

#### **Project Status as of June 1, 2014:**

The Conservation Apprentice Academy started-up again in May of 2014 with 37 apprentices ready to work in 35 counties. BWSR and CCMI staff worked together throughout the winter and spring to recruit SWCDs and apprentices, develop individualized work and training plans for apprentices, and organize and orientation for the new apprentices.

#### **Final Report as of December 30, 2014:**

The 37 apprentices began working in their assigned counties in May. A portion of the 2014 season was also funded through M.L. 2013, Chp. 52, Sec. 2, Subd. 07a, and the results from the 2014 season are also summarized in the final report for that project.

The Conservation Apprentice Academy completed a successful 2014 with 37 apprentices serving in 35 counties. Apprentices demonstrated significant gains in hands-on application of conservation practices and the soft skills needed to work with landowners. In addition, apprentices contributed thousands of

hours of conservation service to SWCDs during the peak season for conservation practice implementation.

#### IV. PROJECT ACTIVITIES AND OUTCOMES:

**ACTIVITY 1:** Develop academy structure, recruit participating SWCDs, and develop employment agreements

**Description:** The intent is to create a solid foundation for running an apprentice program for multiple years. Result one is administratively focused as the details of the employment arrangements are critical for all parties—CCMI, SWCDs, and the prospective apprentice.

CCMI will contact SWCDs about interest in the program and solicit some notion of the quality of the experience they can provide the apprentices. The same needs are there for finding the students at institutions. We need to re-connect contacts at schools, evaluating the programs in which the candidates are enrolled so they have the background necessary to take advantage of the placement, and create selection criteria. The screening and selecting of individuals for the program will be carried out by CCMI as well.

CCMI staff will administer the AmeriCorps enrollment requirements for those selected. For example, an initial training session is necessary prior to placement to orient the participants similar to other CCMI corps members.

#### Summary Budget Information for Activity 1:

**ENRTF Budget:** \$ 12,000  
**Amount Spent:** \$ 12,000  
**Balance:** \$ 0.00

#### Activity Completion Date:

Deliverable/Outcome	Completion Date	Budget
1. executed contract between BWSR and CCMI	August 1, 2012	\$ 0
2. employment agreement format and program documentation describing schedule and duties; employment agreements and structure	October 15, 2012	2,000
3. list of interested SWCDs (incl. primary mentor) and individual agreements	January 30, 2013	5,000
4. year two interested SWCDs list and individual agreements	January 30, 2014	5,000

#### Project Status as of October 30, 2013:

Deliverable/Outcome
<b>1. Executed contract between BWSR and CCM</b> Completed <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A signed agreement is in place between BWSR and CCM.</li> </ul>
<b>2. Employment agreement format and program documentation describing schedule and duties; employment agreements and management</b> Completed <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Annual timeline has been established.</li> <li>Employment agreement format for apprentices is ready.</li> <li>RFP and application to be completed by SWCDs is complete.</li> <li>Site agreements that identify the responsibilities of the individual SWCD and CCM are in place,</li> </ul>

<p>with respect to managing the apprentice.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work plan templates have been completed by SWCDs to specify projects and training for the apprentice.</li> </ul>
<b>3. List of interested SWCDs (incl. primary mentor)</b>
<p>Completed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SWCDs have been selected for this year.</li> </ul>
<b>4. Year two interested SWCDs list and individual agreements</b>
<p>Completed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SWCDs have been selected for this year.</li> </ul>

**Activity 1 Details (October 2013 Update)**  
**RFP for site selection**

**Request for Proposals:** Developed and released on 10/23/2012. Distributed to all Minnesota SWCD's and TSA's. RFP applications were due 11/30/2012. Conservation Corps attended MASWCD Convention to promote Conservation Corps Academy and answer questions regarding the RFP.

RFP applications were updated and released for the 2014 program on 10/15/2013. Distributed to all Minnesota SWCD's and TSA's. RFP applications are due on 12/15/2013. Conservation Corps will attend 2013 MASWCD Convention to promote Conservation Apprenticeship Academy and answer questions regarding the RFP process.

**RFP selection process:** Received 36 placement applications from 34 SWCDs for the 2013 field season.

**Selection criteria:** Placements distributed throughout MN (map attached) based on quality of experience, skill-training potential and equitable geographic distribution.

**Sites selected:** 35 placements selected in the following 33 counties: Anoka (2), Carlton, Carver, Chisago, Cook, Cottonwood, Crow Wing, Dakota (2), Douglas, East Otter Tail, Fillmore, Freeborn, Hubbard, Lake, Lake of the Woods, Marshall, Martin, Mille Lacs, Pennington, Pope, Ramsey, Redwood, Renville, Scott, Sherburne, South St. Louis, Steele, Stevens, Todd, Wadena, Washington, Wright, Yellow Medicine

**Project Status as of June 1, 2014:**

**Request for Proposals:** Developed and released for the 2013 program on 10/23/2012. Distributed to all Minnesota SWCD's and TSA's. RFP applications were due 11/30/2012. Conservation Corps attended MASWCD Convention to promote Conservation Corps Academy and answer questions regarding the RFP prior to the 2013 program.

RFP applications were updated and released for the 2014 program on 10/15/2013. Distributed to all Minnesota SWCD's and TSA's. RFP applications were due on 12/15/2013. Conservation Corps staff attended 2013 MASWCD Convention to promote Conservation Apprenticeship Academy and answer questions regarding the RFP process.

**RFP selection process:** Received 37 placement applications from 36 SWCDs for the 2014 field season.

**Selection criteria:** Placements distributed throughout MN (map attached) based on quality of experience, skill-training potential and equitable geographic distribution.

**Sites selected:** 37 placements selected in the following 35 counties: Anoka, Becker, Benton, Carlton, Carver, Chisago, Cook, Cottonwood, Crow Wing, Dakota, East Otter Tail, Fillmore (2), Freeborn, Hubbard, Isanti, Koochiching, Lake, Lake of the Woods, Lyon, Marshall, Martin, Mille Lacs, Pennington, Pope, Ramsey, Renville, Scott (2), Sherburne, South St. Louis, Stevens, Traverse, Wadena, Washington, Wright, Yellow Medicine.

**Final Report Summary: December, 2014**

The 37 apprentices began their work in their assigned counties.

**ACTIVITY 2:** Recruit, select, and train academy participants; and repeat for year two

**Description:** BWSR and CCMI will approach University of Minnesota, MnSCU, and other university environmental programs for assistance in recruiting candidates. CCMI will work to match potential participants with willing SWCDs and Technical Service Areas (TSA – a joint powers entity of SWCDs). Both the SWCD and the apprentices will be provided training to clarify expectations and requirements for successful participation in the program. CCMI will serve as the employer of record and handle all payroll and personnel related issues (e.g. AmeriCorps credits) until conclusion of summer employment.

**Summary Budget Information for Activity 2:**

**ENRTF Budget: \$ 188,000**  
**Amount Spent: \$ 188,000**  
**Balance: \$ 0,000**

**Activity Completion Date:**

<b>Deliverable/Outcome</b>	<b>Completion Date</b>	<b>Budget</b>
1. recruiting time and materials for use at educational institutions for both years	April, 30, 2014	\$ 6,000
2. match candidates with interested SWCDs	April 30, 2013	3,000
3. employ and manage 35 apprentices in 2013	October 15, 2013	140,000
4. close out year one and evaluate	December 31, 2013	2,000
5. match candidates with interested SWCDs	April 30, 2014	3,000
6. employ and manage 35 apprentices in beginning of 2014	June 30, 2014	34,000

**Project Status as of May 30, 2014:**

<b>Deliverable/Outcome (Activity 2)</b>
<b>1. Recruiting time and materials for use at educational institutions</b> Completed for the 2013 program year. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More will be done in the fall of 2013 for the 2014 program year.</li> <li>• Recruitment information was printed for 2013.</li> <li>• Natural resources and environmental programs were contacted for 2013.</li> <li>• Application was available online for applicants for 2013.</li> </ul> Completed for the 2014 program year. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recruitment information was printed for 2014.</li> <li>• Natural resources and environmental programs were contacted for 2014.</li> <li>• Application was available online for applicants for 2014.</li> </ul>
<b>2. Match candidates with interested SWCDs</b> Completed for the 2013 program year. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conservation Corps received 206 apprentice applications by 05/31/2013.</li> <li>• Candidates were interviewed and assessed using a standard rubric to match skills and interest</li> </ul>

with the specific duties outlined by the SWCD.

- SWCD staff were provided with information on the top candidates for their apprentice and allowed to select the one they felt provided the best match.
- Candidates were notified and provided contact information of the mentor at the SWCD so that introductions and general information could be relayed prior to the start date.

### 3. Employ 35 apprentices

Completed

- 35 apprentices were hired by 05/20/2013.
- 30 apprentices received general orientation 5/20-5/24.
- 3 apprentices received a condensed, late-hire orientation on 06/04/2013 at the Conservation Corps headquarters in St. Paul.
- 1 apprentice received a condensed, late-hire orientation on 06/24/2013, and one received a condensed, late-hire orientation on 07/01/2013 at Conservation Corps headquarters in St. Paul. These apprentices, in coordination with their placement sites, will continue their service term beyond the scheduled, primary end-date, in order to complete the term requirements.
- Apprentices began with a half day at the SWCD office to meet their mentor, familiarize themselves with the SWCD, and review their specific work/training plan.
- Orientation was held for the 30 apprentices for the remainder of the week at Camp Ojiketa in Chisago City, MN. The orientation introduced the apprentices to the program, their role, various partners involved, and provided a networking opportunity.
- 8 Apprentices successfully completed their service term on 08/16/2013, and had to return to school. 27 Apprentices successfully completed their service term on 08/23/2013.
- In 2013, apprentices completed lots of hands-on work in the SWCDs. Work included: 65,329 square feet of erosion control; 1,196 acres of invasive plant management; 41,251 trees and shrubs planted; 164 acres of native seeding; 2,150 hours of GIS/GPS work; 3,049 water quality samples collected; and 887 people received conservation education.

### 4. Close out year three and evaluate

Completed

- Year three concluded at the end of August.
- Evaluations, including pre/post assessments, have been developed and implementation took place at orientations.
- Pre/post assessments, performance and program evaluations, and feedback from SWCDs was included in year three close out discussions.

### 5. Match candidates with interested SWCDs in 2014

Completed for the 2014 program year.

- Conservation Corps received 178 apprentice applications by 05/15/2014.
- Candidates were interviewed and assessed using a standard rubric to match skills and interest with the specific duties outlined by the SWCD.
- SWCD staff were provided with information on the top candidates for their apprentice and allowed to select the one they felt provided the best match.
- Candidates were notified and provided contact information of the mentor at the SWCD so that introductions and general information could be relayed prior to the start date.

### 6. Employ and manage 35 apprentices in the beginning of 2014

Completed

- 37 apprentices were hired by 05/15/2014.
- 32 apprentices received general orientation on 5/19-5/23 2014.
- 5 apprentices received a condensed, late-hire orientation on 05/27/2014 and 05/30/2014 at the Conservation Corps headquarters in St. Paul, and on 06/02/2014 at the Fillmore County SWCD office in Preston, MN. These apprentices, in coordination with their placement sites, will continue



their service term beyond the scheduled, primary end-date, in order to complete the term requirements.

- Apprentices began with a half day at the SWCD office to meet their mentor, familiarize themselves with the SWCD, and review their specific work/training plan.
- Orientation was held for the 32 apprentices for the remainder of the week at St. John's Landing Group Camp in St. Croix State Park, Hinckley, MN. The orientation introduced the apprentices to the program, their role, various partners involved, and provided a networking opportunity.
- Apprentices will continue their service terms into August. The remainder of their service term is funded by M.L. 2013, Chp. 52, Sec. 2, Subd. 07a.

## **Activity 2 Details (October 2013 Update)**

### **Apprentice recruitment**

Position posted to college online job boards that serve 80 state and private colleges and universities in Minnesota. Position posted to Minnesota Council of Nonprofits, Student Conservation Association and the AmeriCorps web-site.

Placed newspaper ads in strategic areas in Minnesota where Soil and Water Conservation District placement sites are located.

Attended three career fairs to promote the Conservation Apprenticeship Academy: University of Minnesota's Job & Internship Fair (attendance of over 3,000 students from the Twin Cities, Crookston, Morris and Duluth branches), the University of Minnesota's Environmental Resource Fair and the University of Wisconsin Stevens Point Career Fair.

Sent announcement to over 2,500 Corps alumni and partners and have posted information about apprentice positions to multiple social media outlets, including Facebook and Twitter.

A press release template was developed and sent out to SWCDs to post in their local papers.

### **Candidate selection**

**Online application:** Available for apprentice applicants on February 8<sup>th</sup> via Conservation Corps website. Preferred application deadline was March 30<sup>th</sup> with rolling applications accepted through April.

**Selection process:** Conservation Corps screened and interviewed applicants and selects apprentices based on region preference, area of interest, skills and qualifications with feedback on final candidates from the SWCD.

### **Training**

**Work/Training plan:** Using the projects and responsibilities outlined in the SWCD's original proposal, Conservation Corps and SWCD staff developed a schedule of project and training activities for the apprentice to complete throughout the term. Apprentices reviewed their specific work/training plan with their mentor during their first day. Conservation Corps staff facilitated discussion with the apprentices in regards to the work/training plan to increase knowledge of SWCD functions, share best practices, and learn how the various activities are connected as part of a larger effort. The work/training plan was used as a resource by the apprentice and supervisor to track progress. Conservation Corps staff reviewed progress at a site visit during the mid-point of the apprentice's term. The work/training plan also served as a reflection tool for the apprentice to recognize accomplishments and enabled them to translate those achievements to their resumes.

**SWCD supervisor orientation:** Supervisor training conference calls took place in early May and provided an overview of supervisor responsibilities, expectations, Conservation Corps policies and

procedures. Conservation Corps site supervisor handbook was sent to each mentor prior to the calls and referenced by Corps staff.

**Apprentice general orientation:** May 20<sup>th</sup>-23<sup>rd</sup> at Camp Ojiketa in Chisago City, MN. Training included Conservation Corps policies and procedures, national service guidelines, safety, risk management, First Aid/CPR, teamwork and communication. The orientation schedule is attached to this progress summary. For those apprentices with late start dates, similar secondary orientations were held on 06/04/2013 and 06/24/2013 at the Conservation Corps headquarters in St. Paul. The final, late start, apprentice attended a similar secondary orientation on 07/01/2013 at the Conservation Corps headquarters in St. Paul.

**On-site training:** Provided by SWCD. This training was outlined in the approved work/training plan specific to the unique position description of each placement. On-site orientation occurred the first full week at the SWCD, and ongoing on-the-job training occurred throughout the apprentices' terms.

## **2013 Apprentice Experience**

**Andrew Usher, Dakota SWCD:** *"The Apprentice Academy has provided me with an experience unlike anything I was expecting from an internship. I have gained technical and analytical skills that have clarified classroom concepts, and prepared me for a future in the soil & water conservation field."*

**Melissa Gearman, Pope SWCD:** *"This program is a wonderful opportunity that should not be passed by if you are interested in the natural resources or conservation fields. You will be surprised at how much you can learn in such a short amount of time. The connections you make will be invaluable."*

**Derek Ager, Carver SWCD:** *"The Conservation Apprentice Academy turned out to be a wonderful experience that expanded my network, knowledge, and communication skills. This experience meant a lot to me, and gave me a great opportunity for personal growth."*

## **Project Status as of June 1, 2014:**

### **Apprentice recruitment**

Position posted to college online job boards that serve 80 state and private colleges and universities in Minnesota. Position posted to Minnesota Council of Nonprofits, The Corps Network and the AmeriCorps web-site.

Placed newspaper ads in strategic areas in Minnesota where Soil and Water Conservation District placement sites are located. Also provided recruitment materials to many SWCDs so that they could recruit from the local community.

Attended career fairs to promote the Conservation Apprenticeship Academy: University of Minnesota's Job & Internship Fair (attendance of over 3,000 students from the Twin Cities, Crookston, Morris and Duluth branches), the University of Minnesota's Environmental Resource Fair, Minnesota's Private Colleges Job Fair, North Hennepin Technical College Job Fair, North Hennepin Community College Job Fair, Gustavus Adolphus Job Fair, Concordia University Job Fair, and University of Minnesota Duluth Environmental Job Fair.

Sent announcement to Corps alumni and partners and have posted information about apprentice positions to multiple social media outlets, including Facebook and Twitter.

A press release template was developed and sent out to SWCDs to post in their local papers.

## Candidate selection

**Online application:** Available for apprentice applicants on February 3<sup>rd</sup> via Conservation Corps website. Preferred application deadline was March 21<sup>st</sup> with rolling applications accepted through April.

**Selection process:** Conservation Corps screened and interviewed applicants and selected apprentices based on region preference, area of interest, skills and qualifications with feedback on final candidates from the SWCD.

## Training

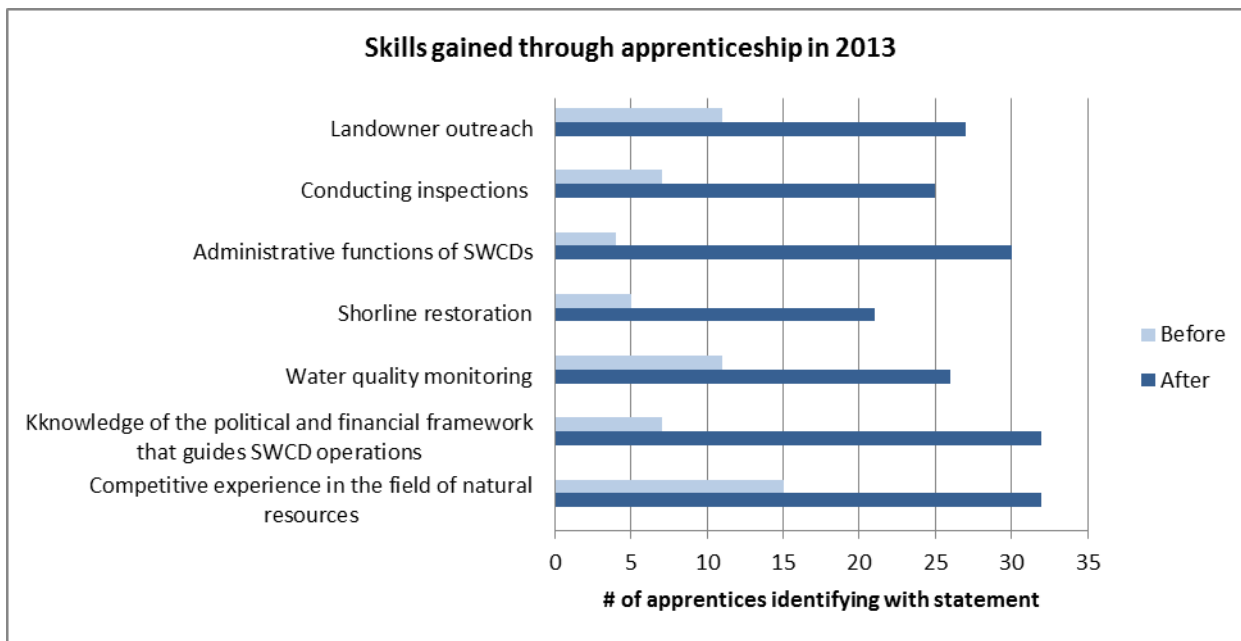
**Work/Training plan:** Using the projects and responsibilities outlined in the SWCD's original proposal, Conservation Corps and SWCD staff developed a schedule of project and training activities for the apprentice to complete throughout the term. Apprentices reviewed their specific work/training plan with their mentor during their first day. Conservation Corps staff facilitated discussion with the apprentices in regards to the work/training plan to increase knowledge of SWCD functions, share best practices, and learn how the various activities are connected as part of a larger effort. The work/training plan will be used as a resource by the apprentice and supervisor to track progress. Conservation Corps staff will review progress at a site visit during the mid-point of the apprentice's term. The work/training plan will also serve as a reflection tool for the apprentice to recognize accomplishments and enable them to translate those achievements to their resumes.

**SWCD supervisor orientation:** Supervisor training conference calls took place in early May and provided an overview of supervisor responsibilities, expectations, Conservation Corps policies and procedures. Conservation Corps site supervisor handbook was sent to each mentor prior to the calls and referenced by Corps staff.

**Apprentice general orientation:** May 19 – 22 at St. John's Group Camp in St. Croix State Park, Hinckley, MN. Training included Conservation Corps policies and procedures, national service guidelines, safety, risk management, First Aid/CPR, teamwork and communication. The orientation schedule is attached to this progress summary. For those apprentices with late start dates, similar secondary orientations were held on 05/27/2014 and 05/30/2014 at the Conservation Corps headquarters in St. Paul. An additional orientation is planned for 06/02/2014 for the final late-starting apprentice at the Fillmore County SWCD office in Preston, MN.

**On-site training:** Provided by SWCD. This training was outlined in the approved work/training plan specific to the unique position description of each placement. On-site orientation occurred the first full week at the SWCD, and ongoing on-the-job training occurred throughout the apprentices' terms.

**Apprentice Outcomes:** In addition to completing significant hands-on work in the SWCDs, apprentices gain many valuable skills that prepare them to excel in college and their career. The chart below shows the difference in pre- and post-apprenticeship skills.



### Final Report Summary December, 2014:

This was the second grant awarded to the Apprentice Academy through LCCMR. Grant one addressed the cohorts working during the summers of 2011 and 2012. The state government shutdown of 2011 produced a small balance in the 2010 grant that was used to fund additional positions in 2012 and 2013; this in turn allowed a small balance in this, the 2011 grant to fund additional positions in the M.L. 2013, Chp. 52, Sec. 2, Subd. 07a plan, and carried funding into the early portion of 2014. Results from the entire 2014 season are also summarized in the M.L. 2013, Chp. 52, Sec. 2, Subd. 07a. final report.

**Human Resource functions:** Conservation Corps enrolled and managed corpsmembers (apprentices) in accordance with program guidelines. The Corps provided consultation, support, and on-site project review as needed to ensure that service was progressing in accordance with the work/training plan and program guidelines. Conservation Corps provided personnel and payroll administration for corpsmembers and provided professional liability and worker's compensation insurance for all corpsmembers.

**On-going training:** Conservation Corps staff coordinated ongoing training for apprentices. Site specific training was identified by SWCD staff on a 'training plan' that was created prior to the summer. Also, Corps staff conducted monthly phone conferences with apprentices. The conference calls provided structured opportunities for learning, feedback, and reflection with apprentices placed at other districts.

**Site visits:** Conservation Corps staff conducted site visits to each SWCD. The site visits ensured that adequate progress was being made on the work and training plans and helped ensure safety policies and procedures were being followed. In addition to reviewing accomplishments and ensuring adherence to policies, Corps staff were able to view first-hand the work accomplished by apprentices. For example, an apprentice in Lake County provided a tour of a rain garden they installed and talked through the planning, implementation, and follow-up required for a successful result.

## Apprentice Experience

### 2014 Dakota SWCD apprentice, Kayla Horan



“This opportunity is truly life changing. The hands on experience and networking opportunities are priceless. I have learned countless new things about water monitoring and soil and water conservation methods. I am grateful to be a part of the Conservation Corps and a supportive SWCD. After completing the program I was offered a position with the Dakota County SWCD. I will be using the skills gained through my apprenticeship to continue assisting landowners with conservation practices and conducting water monitoring tasks. I am so grateful that I was able to be a part of the Conservation Corps and would recommend others to participate in the future!”

### 2013 South St. Louis SWCD apprentice, Alice Yonke



“The Conservation Apprenticeship Academy is a great step in learning about conservation management. The balance between field work, research and data collection were valuable to my professional development. I was hired as a staff member after my participation with the Conservation Apprenticeship Academy at South St. Louis SWCD.”

## SWCD Feedback

### Pam Tomevi, District Manager, Koochiching SWCD, on 2014 apprentice, Sam Soderman

“The Conservation Apprenticeship Academy is a worthwhile and important program that provides targeted training opportunities for young men and women while enhancing the effectiveness of SWCD conservation delivery. Sam Soderman, the apprentice placed at the Koochiching site, has recently been offered full-time employment with the Koochiching SWCD. Well done Conservation Corps Minnesota!”

### Darren Newville, District Manager, East Ottertail SWCD, on 2012 apprentice, Wade Salo

“Having Wade in our office was a very positive experience. We hired Wade as a staff member, after his participation with the Conservation Apprenticeship Academy. The program offers a great opportunity for both the apprentice and the host site.”

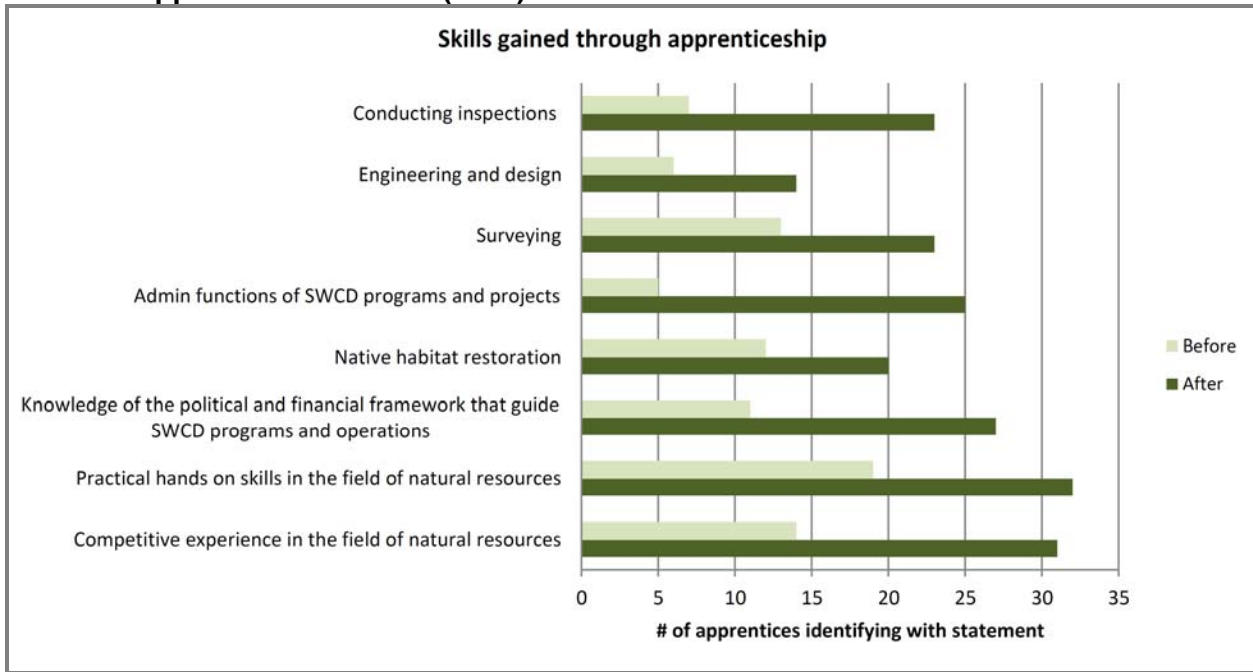
## Program Outcomes

### Selected project accomplishments (2014)

Conservation Practice	Amount	Units
Rain garden installation and maintenance	141,463	sq. ft.
Education provided on conservation practices	1,264	people
Erosion control	162	acres
Invasive plant management	811	acres
GIS/GPS data mapping	2,101	hours
Water quality sampling	4,465	samples
Tree and shrub planting	28,001	plants



### Selected Apprentice outcomes (2014)

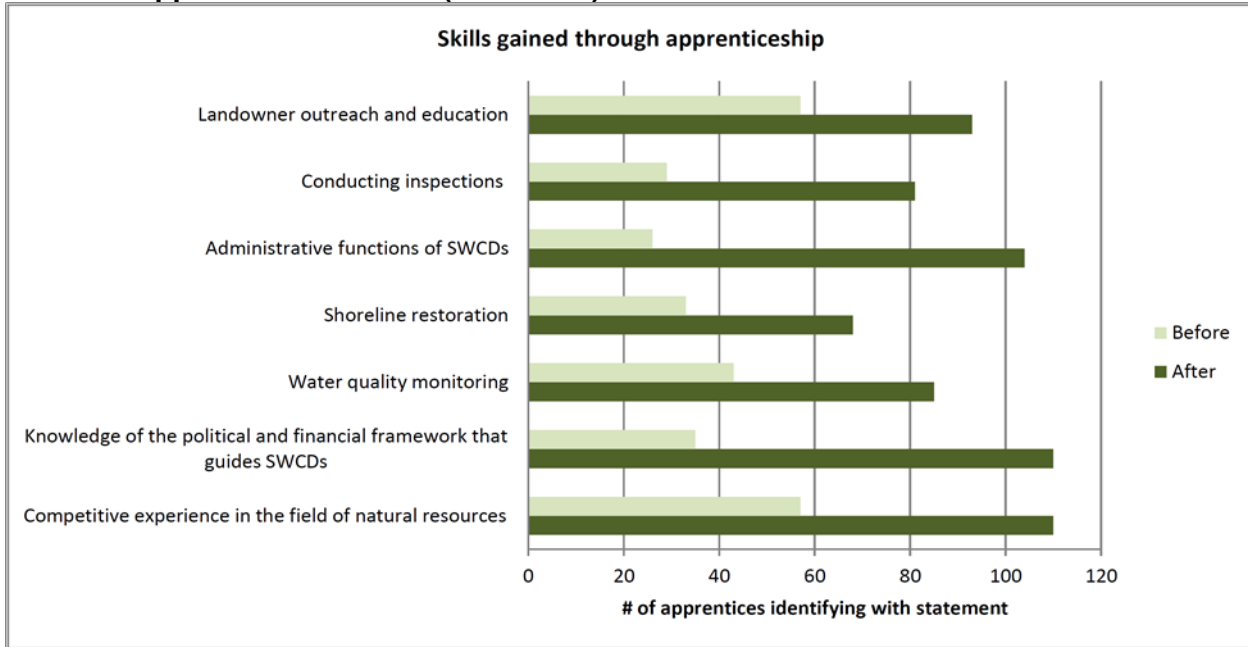


**Selected project accomplishments (2011-2014)**

Conservation Practice	Amount	Units
Rain garden installation and maintenance	334,308	sq. ft.
Erosion control/slope stabilization	171	acres
Seeding	916	acres
Invasive plant management	3,149	acres
GIS/GPS data mapping	6,888	hours
Water quality sampling	10,733	samples
Tree and shrub planting	102,591	plants

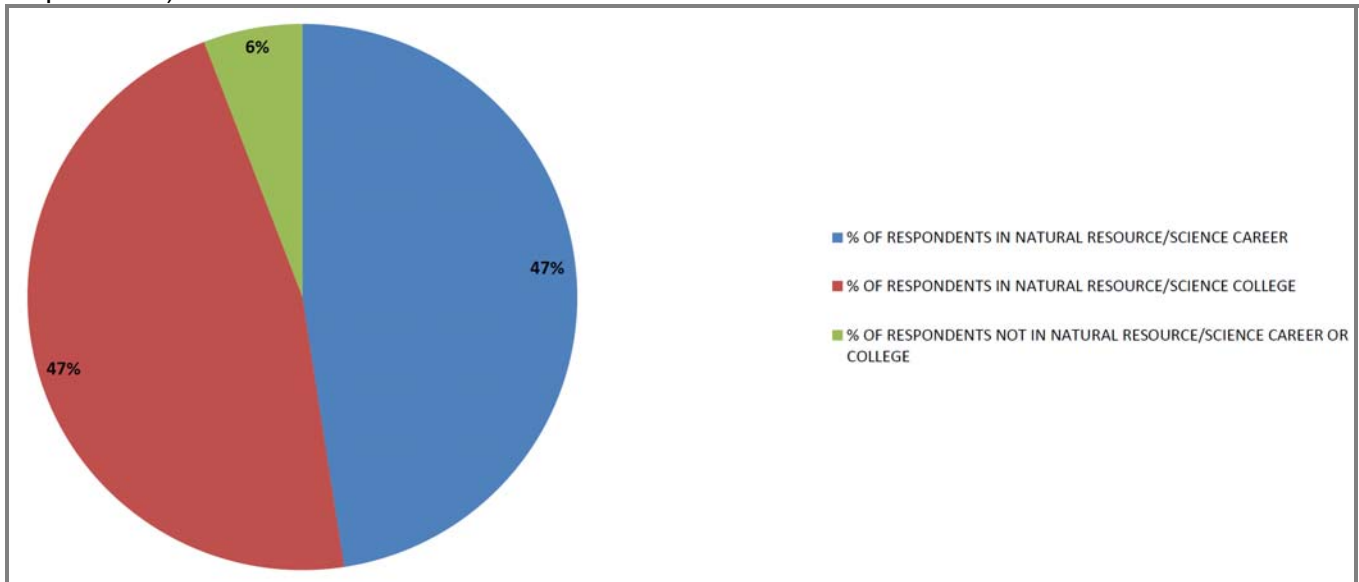


**Selected Apprentice outcomes (2011-2014)**



**Apprentice college and career track**

94% of alumni are either employed or in college for a natural resource/science career. (103 respondents)



**V. DISSEMINATION:** The CCMI will be the primary disseminator and provide a link on their website ([www.conservationcorps.org](http://www.conservationcorps.org)) describing the program. BWSR and MASWCD will also offer a brief description of the program and a link to the CCMI site. MASWCD has already been spreading this idea nationally through the National Association of Conservation Districts.

**Project Status as of October 30, 2013:**

The CCMI has established a link on their website describing the program <https://barbara-etzkorn.squarespace.com/apprentice-academy/>. BWSR has provided updates on the program in their Snapshots newsletter and promoted it through the Featured story of the month segment on their website. <http://www.bwsr.state.mn.us/news/webnews/Sept2013/article2.pdf>

**Project Status as of June 1, 2014:**

The CCMI has updated their website description of the program - <http://www.conservationcorps.org/apprentice-academy>.

**Final Report Summary as of December 30, 2014:**

Conservation Corps provides a description of the project on their website at <http://www.conservationcorps.org/apprentice-academy>.

In addition, a number of SWCDs provided stories to local newspapers during the summer. An example from Yellow Medicine County SWCD can be found at <http://www.granitefallsnews.com/article/20140617/NEWS/140619542/-1/news>.

**VI. PROJECT BUDGET SUMMARY:** This was the second grant awarded to the Apprentice Academy through LCCMR. Grant one addressed the cohorts working during the summers of 2011 and 2012. The state government shutdown of 2011 produced a small balance in the 2010 grant that was used to fund additional positions in 2012 and 2013; this in turn allowed a small balance in this, the 2011 grant to fund additional positions in the M.L. 2013, Chp. 52, Sec. 2, Subd. 07a plan, and carried funding into the early portion of 2014. Results from the entire 2014 season are also summarized in the M.L. 2013, Chp. 52, Sec. 2, Subd. 07a. final report.

**A. ENRTF Budget:**

Budget Category	\$ Amount	Explanation
Personnel:	\$ 3000	0.04 FTE of non-general fund BWSR staff fo revaluation and training assistance
Professional/Technical Contracts:	\$197,000	CCMI for recruiting hosts and apprentices, developing sub-agreements, and summer employment management for apprentices
<b>TOTAL ENRTF BUDGET:</b>	<b>\$200,000</b>	

**Explanation of Use of Classified Staff:** NA

**Explanation of Capital Expenditures Greater Than \$3,500:** NA

**Number of Full-time Equivalent (FTE) funded with this ENRTF appropriation:** One non-general funded BWSR employee will be used to provide consultation and analysis of annual and longitudinal measures being collected. Her time will be approximately 0.04 FTE.

**Number of Full-time Equivalent (FTE) estimated to be funded through contracts with this ENRTF appropriation:** The two-year program will fund 35 apprentice positions for 520 hours per position. This equates to approximately nine FTEs per year.



**B. Other Funds:**

Source of Funds	\$ Amount Proposed	\$ Amount Spent	Use of Other Funds
<b>Non-state</b>			
	\$	\$	
<b>State</b>			
	\$	\$	
<b>TOTAL OTHER FUNDS:</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>\$</b>	

**VII. PROJECT STRATEGY:**

**A. Project Partners:** CCMI via contract, MN Association of SWCDs, individuals SWCDs, University and State College systems, field staff of NRCS, BWSR, and other agencies.

**B. Project Impact and Long-term Strategy:** Effort provides immediate technical assistance to accelerate conservation delivery utilizing typical funding sources such as RIM, WRP, CRP, EQIP, flood recovery, cost-share, and the constitutional funds for habitat and clean water. In the long-term we expect the participants will enlighten each other—the interns gain experience, the SWCDs gain emerging technologies. Our hope is that, following the completion of LCCMR participation, that the program can ultimately utilize the new Clean Water Fund as it is not a program which previously existed and is therefore not supplanting of existing efforts.

**C. Spending History:**

Funding Source	M.L. 2005 or FY 2006-07	M.L. 2007 or FY 2008	M.L. 2008 or FY 2009	M.L. 2009 or FY 2010	M.L. 2010 or FY 2011
Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund					\$368,000

**VIII. ACQUISITION/RESTORATION LIST: NA**

**IX. MAP(S):** Attached.

**X. RESEARCH ADDENDUM: NA**

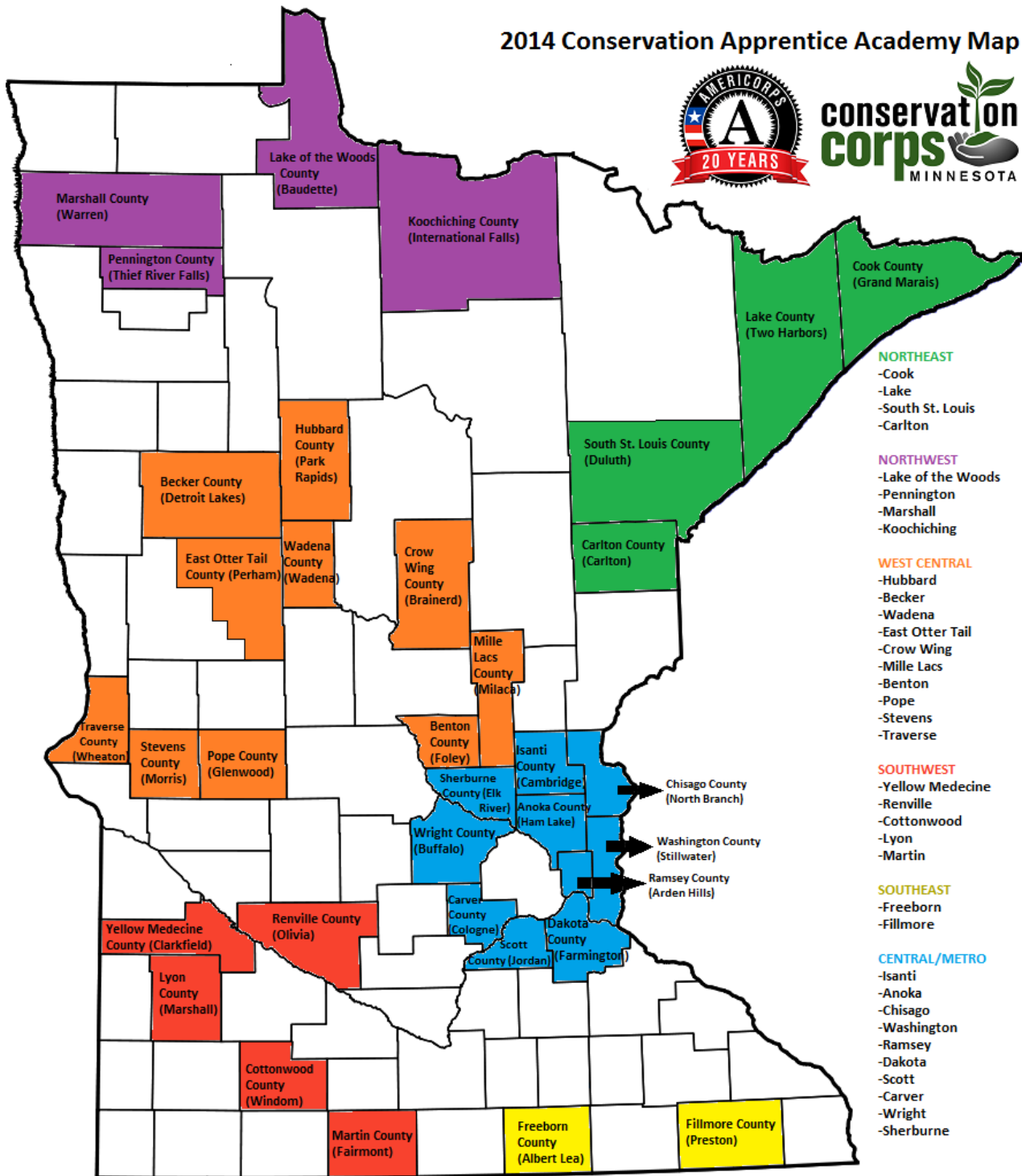
**XI. REPORTING REQUIREMENTS:**

Periodic work plan status update reports will be submitted not later than June 1, 2013, October 30, 2013 and June 1, 2014. A final report and associated products will be submitted after completion of the summer work season and analysis of exit interviews and before December 30, 2014 as requested by the LCCMR.

# Minnesota Conservation Apprenticeship Academy

Project Manager: Gieseke

2014 Conservation Apprentice Academy Map



## Conservation Apprenticeship Academy



**Final Attachment A: Budget Detail for M.L. 2011 (FY 2012-13) Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund Projects**

<b>Project Title:</b> <i>Minnesota Conservation Apprentice Academy</i>								
<b>Legal Citation:</b> <i>M.L. 2011, First Special Session, Chp. 2, Art. 3, Sec. 2, Subd. 9a</i>								
<b>Project Manager:</b> - <i>Jenny Gieseke</i>								
<b>M.L. 2011 (FY 2012-13) ENRTF Appropriation:</b> \$ 200,000								
<b>Project Length and Completion Date:</b> <i>December 30, 2014</i>								
<b>Date of Update:</b> <i>December 16, 2014</i>								
<b>ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES TRUST FUND BUDGET</b>	<u>Revised Activity 1 Budget 05/05/13</u>	<b>Amount Spent</b>	<b>Balance</b>	<u>Revised Activity 2 Budget 05/05/13</u>	<b>Amount Spent</b>	<b>Balance</b>	<b>TOTAL BUDGET</b>	<b>TOTAL BALANCE</b>
<b>BUDGET ITEM</b>	<i>program structure and hosts</i>			<i>apprentice recruit, train,</i>				
<b>Personnel (Wages and Benefits)</b> Jenny Gieseke training coordinator @0.04 FTE (non-general fund employee) for	0		0	3,000	3,000	0	3,000	
<b>Professional/Technical Contracts</b> Conservation Corps of Minnesota and Iowa for manager time (\$39,080) and stipends paid to 33 apprentices (\$129,260). Included in contract are funds for background checks, recruitment ads (\$9,200), orientation facility charges and materials (\$22,800).	12,000	12,000	0	185,000	185,000	0	197,000	
<b>COLUMN TOTAL</b>	<b>\$12,000</b>	<b>\$12,000</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$188,000</b>	<b>\$188,000</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$200,000</b>	<b>\$0</b>