

Natural Resources In The Classroom

Minnesota Foresters Return To School!

The Challenge

Today's school children are increasingly becoming **out-of-touch with the natural world** around them. In today's world of video games, mega-malls, and computers our children often lack an understanding of nature and natural processes. How **can we help educators teach children about conservation and natural resources** in urban as well as rural settings?

The Solution

The Minnesota Society of American Foresters initiated the Natural Resources in the Classroom Program with a goal of assisting teachers with natural resources education in the classroom.

This **statewide** program **links educators and natural resource professionals** allowing interested professionals the opportunity to share their interest, education and experience in natural resources with school children that may be far removed from the natural world.

Professionals at the local, state, and federal government level, those representing non-profit organizations, universities and even private individuals have all **volunteered** their time by giving natural resource presentations to school children. In addition, program volunteers have donated numerous forestry and conservation educational materials to Minnesota classrooms.

Resulting Benefits

Last year alone, natural resource **professionals reached over 1700 students** through classroom visits and outdoor presentations. Over the course of the school year twenty-six classroom visits were made to schools around the state.

Volunteers for the program come from the USDA Forest Service, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, St. Louis County Land Department, the University of Minnesota Crookston, the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy, and a number of private consultants and individuals.



Children have fun learning about natural resources!<

That is roughly one classroom presentation every 1.5 weeks during the school year.

The donated educational materials extend the value of the presentation by giving teachers additional tools and resources for the classroom.

Natural resource professionals benefit from this program by interacting with teachers and children within their community. Many of the natural resource professionals **volunteer** their time to this program.

Sharing Success

Each year, as a part of their **Arbor Day** materials, each school environmental education contact person is provided information about the Natural Resources in the Classroom program to share with other teachers. The program grows through this **personal contact as well as word-of-mouth testimonials** and the establishment of personal connections between teachers and natural resource professionals.

The program has received national recognition from the Society of American Foresters as a model conservation education program. This national recognition is expanding the program outside of Minnesota.



USDA Forest Service
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