

A bill for an act
relating to natural resources; establishing the Minnesota Naturalist Corps;
appropriating money for Minnesota Naturalist Corps, additional state park
naturalists, and information centers and kiosks in state parks; proposing coding
for new law in Minnesota Statutes, chapter 84.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MINNESOTA:

Section 1. **[84.992] MINNESOTA NATURALIST CORPS.**

Subdivision 1. **Establishment.** The Minnesota Naturalist Corps is established under
the direct control and supervision of the commissioner of natural resources.

Subd. 2. **Program.** The commissioner of natural resources shall develop a program
for the Minnesota Naturalist Corps that provides:

(1) opportunities for environmental education for members of the Minnesota
Naturalist Corps that also enhance the department's ability to provide naturalist services to
state park visitors, including but not limited to:

(i) sharing information one-on-one with park visitors;

(ii) enhancing public awareness, understanding, appreciation, and wise and
sustainable use of the environment;

(iii) providing interpretation for visitors of the natural and cultural features of state
parks;

(iv) conducting educational programs, such as nature hikes and walks; slide shows;
campfire programs; and auto, bike, and canoe caravans;

(v) planning and leading educational programs;

(vi) developing educational displays and other materials;

(vii) participating in the department's resource management activities; and

(viii) assisting park naturalists;

(2) ways in which exclusive bargaining representatives are to be involved in the planning and implementation of positions and job duties of persons employed by the corps;

(3) methods for coordinating the programs of the Minnesota Naturalist Corps with other publicly authorized programs;

(4) standards of conduct and other operating guidelines for Minnesota Naturalist Corps members; and

(5) preference for projects that provide long-term benefits to the public, productive work and public service experience to Minnesota Naturalist Corps members, and a significant return on taxpayer investment.

Subd. 3. **Training and mentoring.** The commissioner must develop and implement a training program that adequately prepares Minnesota Naturalist Corps members for the tasks assigned. Each corps member shall be assigned a state park naturalist as a mentor.

Subd. 4. **Uniform patch.** Uniforms worn by members of the Minnesota Naturalist Corps must have a patch that includes the name of the Minnesota Naturalist Corps and information that the program is funded by the clean water, land, and legacy amendment to the Minnesota Constitution adopted by the voters in November 2008.

Subd. 5. **Eligibility.** A person is eligible to enroll in the Minnesota Naturalist Corps if the person:

(1) is a permanent resident of the state;

(2) is a participant in an approved college internship program; and

(3) has completed at least one year of postsecondary education.

Subd. 6. **Corps member status.** Minnesota Naturalist Corps members are not eligible for unemployment benefits if their services are excluded under section 268.035, subdivision 20, and are not eligible for other benefits except workers' compensation. The corps members are not employees of the state within the meaning of section 43A.02, subdivision 21.

Subd. 7. **Employee displacement.** The commissioner must certify that the assignment of Minnesota Naturalist Corps members will not result in the displacement of currently employed workers or workers on seasonal layoff or layoff from a substantially equivalent position, including partial displacement such as reduction in hours of nonovertime work, wages, or other employment benefits. The department may not terminate, lay off, reduce the seasonal hours, or reduce the working hours of any employee for the purpose of using a corps member with available funds.

Sec. 2. APPROPRIATION; MINNESOTA NATURALIST CORPS.

\$270,000 in fiscal year 2010 and \$270,000 in fiscal year 2011 are appropriated from the parks and trails fund to the commissioner of natural resources to place 30 corps members each year under the Minnesota Naturalist Corps established under Minnesota Statutes, section 84.992.

Sec. 3. **APPROPRIATION; STATE PARK NATURALISTS.**

\$640,000 in fiscal year 2010 and \$640,000 in fiscal year 2011 are appropriated from the parks and trails fund to the commissioner of natural resources to hire eight additional full-time equivalent naturalists for state parks to provide environmental education and outreach to visitors and schools.

Sec. 4. **APPROPRIATION; STATE PARK INFORMATION CENTERS AND KIOSKS.**

\$760,000 in fiscal year 2010 is appropriated from the parks and trails fund to the commissioner of natural resources to construct information centers and kiosks in state parks. Of this appropriation, \$400,000 is for a pilot project to construct four information centers, one in each of the four regions of the state, that include self-registration equipment and touch screen displays; \$200,000 is to construct four electronic information kiosks, one in each of the four regions of the state, that include touch screen displays; and \$160,000 is to construct eight information kiosks near campgrounds and day use areas, two in each region of the state, used to display maps, policies, and other information. The commissioner of natural resources shall display a sign that identifies each project funded under this section as a project funded with money from the clean water, land, and legacy amendment to the Minnesota Constitution passed by the voters of Minnesota on November 4, 2008.