

**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 supports state parks in providing interpretation of the natural and cultural features of state parks in order to enhance visitors' awareness, understanding, and appreciation of those features and encourages the wise and sustainable use of the environment.

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 or has a postsecondary degree in a natural resource or conservation related field; 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 of, or reduce the working hours of any employee for the purpose of using a corps member with available funds.

**History:** 2009 c 172 art 3 s 8