

School Forest Programs and Administration

NRES 742

Course Syllabus
Summer 2007 (June 18 – August 31)

Instructor: Jeremy Solin
Room 110 CNR, UW-Stevens Point
jsolin@uwsp.edu, 715-346-4907

Course Website: www.uwsp.edu/cnr/leaf/Courses/742/index.htm

School forests are exceptional outdoor education sites that are available to:

- Integrate environmental education into schools' curriculum
- Provide experiential learning
- Meet state education standards
- Demonstrate sustainable natural resources management
- Strengthen school-community relations
- Provide income for education activities

Focused effort must be taken to fully utilize school forests. This course is offered to provide information, resources, processes, and guidelines to effectively develop school forests. The course is divided into two components. The on-line component is meant to provide background information on school forests and to guide participants through important considerations for school forest programs. Much of the information collected during the on-line component will be used to develop the school forest education plan during the face-to-face component of the course. The face-to-face component will focus on development of an education plan and resources that are available to school forests.

Course Goal: To increase teachers and administrators ability to effectively utilize their school forests for environmental education and sustainable natural resources management.

Course Objectives: Participants will:

- 1) Examine the legislation and history of the school forest program
- 2) Explore the steps necessary to register a school forest and the responsibilities that come with registration
- 3) Review background information on environmental education
- 4) Explore how other selected school forests have developed and are running their programs
- 5) Analyze important initial steps to develop their school forest program
- 6) Gather information about the resources that exist at the school forest
- 7) Create an outline of a school forest master plan considering environmental education, natural resources management, and facilities
- 8) Develop an outline of their school forest education plan
- 9) Know where to get resources they need to develop their school forest program

On-Line Component

The outline below provides instruction for exploration of key information, concepts, and processes in school forest development. All of the information is accessed from the LEAF school forest website (www.uwsp.edu/cnr/leaf/sf). The content is broken up into progressive sections over a four (4) week period. Each section contains content to review and assignments to assess mastery of the content. A rubric is provided for each of the assignments. Each section and its associated assignments should be completed prior to moving to the next section. It is recommended that the week's assignments be submitted upon completion so that continuous feedback can be provided. However, you may submit all assignments at the end of the course. Assignments can be submitted electronically (jsolin@uwsp.edu) or hardcopy (Jeremy Solin, Room 110, CNR, UW-Stevens Point, Stevens Point, WI 54481). Submit each week's assignments together.

SECTION 1

Legislation (15 minutes)

The school forest program has its foundation in the community forest legislation that was first created in 1927. There are some basic legal requirements based in the legislation. This section will make you familiar with the state community forest law (state statute 28.20) and its obligations. Read the state community forest legislation at www.uwsp.edu/cnr/leaf/sf/Policy.htm.

History (15 minutes)

The school forest program has a long and storied history. Understanding this history will provide you with some perspective on the goals and value of school forests. Read the detailed history of the school forest program at www.uwsp.edu/cnr/leaf/SF/History.htm.

Registration process and responsibilities (30 minutes)

Having a registered school forest provides benefits and also requires responsibility. In this section, you will learn about registration of a school forest and the benefits and responsibilities that it bestows. Read the document on school and community forest administration at www.uwsp.edu/cnr/leaf/Adobe/SF/Admin.pdf.

Environmental education (15 minutes)

Environmental education is the core mission of the school forest program. It is important to fully understand the goals and approaches of environmental education. This section will provide you with that background information. Read the background information on environmental education available at www.uwsp.edu/cnr/leaf/SF/Ed.htm.

Assignments:

- 1) Write a press release that you can distribute to your local newspaper about the statewide school forest program and your school forest. The press release should include information on the legislation and history of the school forest program, the benefits of having a registered school forest, the educational value of outdoor environmental education, and specifics about your school forest. The press release should be about 1 page.

- 2) Does your school district meet the education and management guidelines listed in the school forest administration document for school forests? If so, provide the dates your management plan and education plan were developed. If not, provide a timeline of the steps you will need to undertake to meet these education and management guidelines.

SECTION 2

School forest case studies (30 minutes)

Information about and internet links to a variety of different school forests can be found on the school forest website. In this section, you will explore different school forests to find examples of programs and facilities that can provide ideas for your school forest.

Review all of the information on the following pages:

www.uwsp.edu/cnr/leaf/sf/Facility.htm

www.uwsp.edu/cnr/leaf/sf/Visit.htm

Getting Started with the School Forest Program (2 hours)

This section of the course will cover the basics of starting a school forest program: communicating your goals, getting land (if you don't have any yet), working with the school board, and forming a school forest committee. These are important steps to providing a solid foundation for your school forest program. Even if your school forest has established programs, it will be worthwhile to revisit these components to ensure that your program is ensuring a secure future. Read through the *How to Grow a School Forest* handbook chapter entitled "Getting Started" (pages 17 – 34) at www.uwsp.edu/cnr/leaf/SF/HandBook.htm or from the CD-ROM provided.

Assignments:

- 3) Describe examples of other school forest programs and facilities that are most applicable to your school forest situation and goals (e.g., the X school district's environmental counselor program would be a great way for our environmental science students to teach elementary students ...). Your response should be at least two paragraphs and include at least three (3) examples.
- 4) Outline a school forest communication plan for the next two years – include audience, type of media used, and the dates to release information. Your response should include at least four communication efforts utilizing at least two (2) different types of media and should not exceed one page.
- 5) Provide a list of existing and/or proposed school forest committee members with their affiliation (school and grade level or organization and position) so that your committee has diverse representation from teachers, administrators, community members, and natural resource professionals.

SECTION 3

Gather Information (3 hours)

This section will focus on gathering information about the school forest. It will include collecting the natural and facility features of the forest, the land use history, and educational resources available. This information will be used to develop the education plan for your school forest. A fair amount of time “in the field” will be required to collect this information. Feel free to include students, school forest committee members, and resource professionals in your field work. Read through the *How to Grow a School Forest* handbook chapter entitled “Gather Information” (pages 35 - 58) at www.uwsp.edu/cnr/leaf/SF/HandBook.htm or from the CD-ROM provided.

Assignments:

- 6) Provide a list of specific resources (e.g., the 1990 Oconto County Soil Survey) from which you collected information based on the recommendations in the “Search for Roots” section on pages 35 – 44 (maps, vegetation records, title search, climate data, site history, etc.). The list of resources should contain at least 10 sources.
- 7) Visit the school forest to inventory the site based on the recommendations in the “Inventory the Resource” section on pages 45 – 51. Provide a base map or other summary of your inventory indicating unique natural and cultural features of the school forest – **OR** – provide a series of photographs with captions that document the resources at the school forest. The summary or base map should be approximately one page. If photographs are used, no more than 20 should be included.
- 8) Gather and provide a curriculum outline/school year scope and sequence for your grade level or subject area, which outlines the major concepts covered during the school year (e.g., September – habitats, graphing, mapping, early WI history; October – food webs, multiplication of fractions, ...)

SECTION 4

Master planning (1 hour)

There are three general areas to consider while developing a school forest program: environmental education, natural resources management, and facilities. This section will get you thinking about the goals for each of these areas.

Read through the *How to Grow a School Forest* handbook chapter entitled “Begin the Master Planning Process” (pages 59 - 73). www.uwsp.edu/cnr/leaf/SF/HandBook.htm

Assignments:

- 9) In one page or less, outline your general goals for education programs at the school forest (e.g., what grade levels will visit the school forest, length of programs – day, overnight, etc., who will deliver the programs – teachers, volunteers, coordinator). (*More details on education will be developed in the education plan*)

- 10) In one page or less, outline your goals for natural resources management at the school forest. Describe how management will help you meet educational goals. Include contact information for at least two (2) key natural resources professionals in your area.
- 11) In approximately one page, outline your goals for facilities on the school forest. Describe how the facilities will help you meet educational goals.

Face-to-Face Component

10:00 am – 3:00 pm

You will need to attend one of those meetings to meet the requirements of the course. It is beneficial to complete the on-line component prior to the face-face meetings; however, the on-line component can also be completed following the face-face meeting. The meeting will be held July 31st in Stevens Point, WI.

The face-to-face component of the School Forest Programs and Administration Course will provide an overview of and time to work on the school forest education plan. Existing resources available to assist school districts in developing their programs will also be reviewed. This component will be approximately five (5) hours of contact time.

Introductions and workshop overview

Instructor and participants will introduce themselves and an overview of the workshop will be provided.

Review of On-line Component

The on-line component of the course will be reviewed. The instructor will focus on deficiencies indicated by the assignments. Participants will be able to ask questions and discuss areas of specific interest.

School Forest Education Plan Overview

An overview of the education plan will be provided. Following the general overview, each section of the plan will be discussed, the sample education plan reviewed, and time will be given for participants to work on that section.

Needs Assessment

The example needs assessment will be discussed with ideas on how to conduct.

School Forest Resources

A variety of resources will be reviewed including professional development programs, background literature, and funding sources.

Assignment:

- 12) Complete the outline of the school forest education plan. Each section should contain ideas to which more detail will be added.