

Sustaining the Berlin School Forests Program

Berlin School Forests **Education Plan Committee**

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Berlin School Forests Committee Responsibilities:

- To approve all financial management issues for school forest properties.
- To seek financial funding for future site and curriculum development on school forest properties (grants, fundraising, etc.)
- To determine long range plans for all school forest properties.
- To access and implement continual site development and maintenance of school forest properties.
- To provide continual K-12 communication of on-going educational, curriculum, and site enhancements opportunities at the school forests.
- To analyze and evaluate results of K-12 environmental education assessments and modify school forest curriculum as needed to meet all state environmental education standards and benchmarks.
- To identify and access growth opportunities as well as threats to the success of the Berlin School Forests and its existing programs.
- To review school forest management plans, educational plans, and committee personnel every 5 years.

Berlin School Forests Manager Responsibilities

- To provide financial record keeping at Berlin High School of school forest income and expenditures.
- To manage the Vertical Venture Rope Challenge Courses scheduling, course maintenance, and staff training year round.
- To coordinate K-12 class scheduling at all four school forest locations.
- To budget and order all school forest equipment and supplies.
- To provide staff development in environmental education topics.
- To serve as a contact and resource for all users of the Berlin School Forests.

Communication

- Berlin School Forests Manager will develop and maintain a Berlin School Forests website at: www.berlin.k12.wi.us
- Berlin School Forests Manager will maintain the current Vertical Venture Ropes Challenge Courses website at: www.berlin.k12.wi.us
- Berlin School Forests Manager will present a yearly update on school forests management/activities to the Berlin School District Board of Education.
- Local media will be made aware of all media-worthy activities occurring at the Berlin School Forests for public announcement including ecosystem restoration projects, staff development, and community involvement projects.
- Berlin School Forest Committee will continue to offer teacher training in all areas of environmental education including wildlife, soils, waters, and air quality. Furthermore, continual school forest site development will lead to curriculum modification and expansion.

- **Berlin School Forest Manager will remain active in a statewide network of school forest administrators by providing leadership, continual participation in learning opportunities, and presenting Berlin School Forest successes at local and state conferences.**

Long Range Plans

- **Construction of an environmental education classroom center with indoor plumbing at the Pine Bluff School Forest.**
- **Implementation of K-12 grade level assessments of environmental education standards and benchmarks.**
- **Construction of educational kiosks at all four school forest locations.**
- **All K-8 Berlin students will visit a school forest location 2-3 times a year with seasonal variations per grade level including the winter season.**
- **Construction of an elevated observatory platform on top of the Pine Bluff School Forest site.**
- **Eradicate invasive buckthorn at the Seward Memorial School Forest.**

Implementation Plan

Fall 2008 – District students and staff will manually remove evasive buckthorn and treat the stumps with herbicide at the Seward Memorial School Forest. Implementation of K-12 grade level assessments of environmental education standards and benchmarks

Fall 2008 - Educational kiosks will be constructed at all four school forest locations with financial support from grants and the community.

Fall 2009 - An elevated observatory platform on top of the Pine Bluff School Forest site will be constructed with financial support from grants and the community.

Fall 2010 - Berlin Area School District will construct a K-12 environmental education classroom center with indoor plumbing at the Pine Bluff School Forest using money earned through ropes course profits and timber sales.

Fall 2011 - All K-8 Berlin students will visit a school forest location 2-3 times a year with seasonal variations per grade level including the winter season.

District Commitment/Historical Timeline

- In 1992, the Berlin Area School District completed an Environmental Education infusion plan into the existing K-12 curriculum. This EE infusion plan was later approved by the Department of Public Instruction State Audit in late 1992.
- The Berlin School Forest Environmental Education Committee was established on November 17, 1993. The committee reviewed five established school forest programs in the areas of EE committee, facilities, finances, and curriculum from 1993-1995 for adoption into the Berlin School Forests program. Committee was chaired by Patrick Arndt as part of his UW-Stevens Point EE Masters Degree project: **The Development of a Berlin School Forest K-12 Environmental Education Program.**
- Extensive Berlin School Forest (Pine Bluff Forest) site development by the ECAEP (Environmental Crusaders Acting for Earth Preservation) student club took place from 1993-1995 under the direction of Patrick Arndt.
- Curriculum development plans were discussed and documented by the School Forest Committee and an EE resource library was developed in 1995.
- On August 29, 1995 a Berlin School Forest/Project Learning Tree Workshop facilitated by Patrick Arndt was held for all Berlin K-12 staff at the Berlin School Forest (Pine Bluff). A “School Forest User Handbook” was presented to staff which addressed mission/goals, scheduling, and safety.
- District class scheduling at the Berlin School Forest (Pine Bluff Forest) began during the 1995-1996 school year.
- The Berlin School District Board of Education passed a “No Hunting” clause at any school forest and agreed to a professional forest management plan for each forest (Pine Bluff and Hunter Street Pine Plantation) during 1997. Furthermore, the Board of Education appointed Patrick Arndt as Berlin School Forest Manager with no financial restitution.
- With the discovery of native *Lupine* plants and endangered Karner Blue Butterflies at the Pine Bluff Forest 1998, the Berlin School Forest Manager work closely with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources to development a long-range habitat restoration and management plan for the endangered butterflies.
- In 2000-2003, the Berlin School District Board of Education supported and endorsed a 21st Century Grant which funded the development of the Vertical Venture Ropes Challenge Courses at the Pine Bluff School Forest. The high and low ropes challenge courses were specifically targeted to reach at-risk students as well as all students within the district.
- The Berlin School District Board of Education approved the Native Roots Educational Gardens proposed by art instructor Paula Hanson at Berlin High School in 2001. The garden plans consisted of four Wisconsin ecosystems: pond/wetland, native prairie, forest, and urban gardens. From 2001 - 2005, the pond/wetland, forest, and urban gardens were completed by Berlin students, staff, and community members. Berlin community donations and local grants provided all the financial support for garden

- development. A 2004 National Gardening grant was accepted by Berlin High School for \$1,000 to complete the Native Roots Educational Gardens.
- In 2002-2003, the Berlin School District Board of Education supported and endorsed a PEP grant which supported physical education equipment and teacher training within the district. The Vertical Venture Ropes Challenge Courses added two new high rope elements through this grant. Furthermore, the Berlin High School physical education department offered a new “Outdoor Education” course for students which utilized equipment such as cross-country skis, snowshoes, and fishing poles purchased through the grant. A large percentage of this course is taught at the Berlin School Forests.
 - In 2002-2003, the Berlin School District Board of Education supported and endorsed a Wisconsin Environmental Education Board (WEEB) grant for \$20,000 with a substantial match from the district for the “Berlin Community School Forests Hands-On Learning Project. The project included site development, K-12 forestry curriculum development, teacher training, and community involvement at the two Berlin School Forests (Pine Bluff and Hunter Street).
 - The Berlin School District Board of Education accepted the donation of 18 acres of forest land from the Seward family in 2003. The new Seward Memorial School Forest was governed by several restrictive covenants which were mutually agreed upon by both the school district and Seward family.
 - The Berlin School District Board of Education unanimously votes to make the Berlin School Forest Manager position a financially supported extra-curricular assignment in 2003.
 - In 2004, the Berlin School District adopts the Learning, Activities, and Experiences in Forestry (LEAF) conceptual guide/scope and sequence curriculum as the official Berlin School Forest curriculum framework.
 - In 2005-2006, the Berlin School District Board of Education supported and endorsed a Wisconsin Environmental Education Board (WEEB) grant for \$5,000 with a substantial match from the district for the development of “An Education Plan for the Berlin School Forest”.
 - In 2005-2006, the Berlin School District Board of Education supported and endorsed a Wisconsin Environmental Education Board (WEEB) grant for \$20,000 with a substantial match from the district for the “Berlin Branches Out” grant. This grant supported site development and curriculum enhancement for the new Seward Memorial School Forest.
 - The Berlin School Forest Education Plan was presented by Berlin School Forest Manager: Patrick Arndt and District Director of Instruction: Penny Gillespie to the Berlin School District Board of Education and officially approved/adopted in 2006.