



MASTER

NATURALIST

ACCOMPLISHMENT

REPORT

2005-2008







## INTRODUCTION

Minnesota communities, both rural and urban, are facing increasing challenges to sustain their natural resource base and the quality of life those resources provide. The need for an increased number of dedicated, well-informed volunteers and citizens is key to the success of community-based conservation efforts that will address these challenges.

The Minnesota Master Naturalist program addresses this need by developing local corps of “master naturalist volunteers” who are empowered to provide education, outreach and service dedicated to the beneficial management of natural resources within their communities. The program combines community level training and volunteer service, supporting citizens as they become more involved in natural resource management and education.

Minnesota Master Naturalist courses focus on the three biomes that make our state ecologically unique. These courses included Big Woods, Big Rivers; Prairies and Potholes; and Northwoods, Great Lakes (see map on page 7).

**Mission:** To promote awareness, understanding, and stewardship of Minnesota’s natural environment by developing a corps of well-informed



# PARTNERSHIPS and SPONSOR ORGANIZATIONS

The Minnesota Master Naturalist program is a partnership between the University of Minnesota Extension and the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, and is supported, in part, by a grant from the National Science Foundation.

*"I am looking forward to connecting with several organizations that have volunteer opportunities I am interested in."*

Sponsorships by a variety of Minnesota's environmental education programs are essential to supporting long-term involvement of Minnesota Master Naturalist participants in nature-related volunteer activities. Sponsors provide education or volunteer opportunities that are communicated through the program website, the Minnesota Master Naturalist blog, or emails to graduates. Other important sponsors and partners are the nature-based centers that host volunteer trainings and employees of these centers who provide instruction for classes offered at their center. Sponsor organizations can be found throughout the state of Minnesota, in both urban and rural areas.

The result of these partnerships has been the development of a unique and effective organization "of volunteers for nature".



# PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

1. Improve public understanding of natural resource ecology and management by developing a pool of local knowledge that can be used to enhance and expand education efforts within local communities.
2. Enhance existing natural resources education and outreach activities by providing natural resources training at the local level, thereby developing a team of dedicated and informed volunteers.
3. Develop a self-sufficient Minnesota Master Naturalist volunteer network.

*"The people who taught and made up the class were very inspiring. I had a renewed focus for my love of nature and learned plenty of places and resources where I could learn more about and experience first hand the natural world."*

An increasing number of communities and organizations across the state rely on skilled master naturalist volunteers to implement natural resource educational programs for adult and youth audiences, to implement a variety of conservation projects and to provide leadership in local natural resource conservation efforts.

*"This program rekindled my interest in Biology and since I will be retiring from my work I am looking forward to volunteering and sharing my knowledge with others."*



*"This class was a dream come true!"*

*"Our classes stimulated our imaginations rather than just cram us full of facts and figures."*

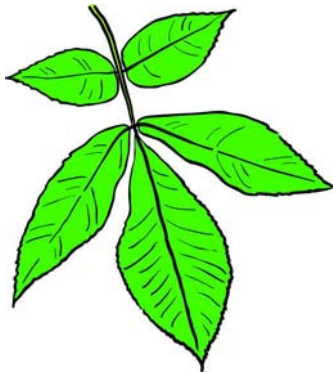




# BECOMING A MINNESOTA MASTER NATURALIST

*"I feel like a re-fertilized and watered plant. I've been growing, but now I am ready for the next surge."*

Any adult who is curious, enjoys learning about the natural world, sharing that knowledge with others, and supports conservation can be a Minnesota Master Naturalist. Master Naturalists are teachers, retired professionals, nature guides, hunters, ecotour operators, farmers — anyone who appreciates the outdoors.



To become Minnesota Master Naturalists, participants must complete:

- A 40-hour hands-on course with expert instructors.
- A minimum of 40 hours of volunteer service.

The 40-hour course covers a wide variety of topics, including an overview of a specific Minnesota biome and its basic ecological principals, background on its physical environment, an introduction to its cultural history, and specific examples of human impacts. Classes include both indoor and outdoor learning experiences, with a minimum of two, eight-hour field experiences. There is also an emphasis on practical experience so participants are ready to transfer their skills to nature-based volunteering right away.

Participants receive detailed course manuals and many supplemental materials for each of the classes they attend.

After completing course and volunteer requirements, volunteers receive a certificate of accomplishment, a Minnesota Master Naturalist name tag, and a biome pin.



To retain an active status, volunteers must complete a minimum of eight hours of advanced training and provide a minimum of 40 hours of approved volunteer service annually. When this is accomplished, they receive a special annual pin.



# PROGRAM ACCOMPLISHMENTS

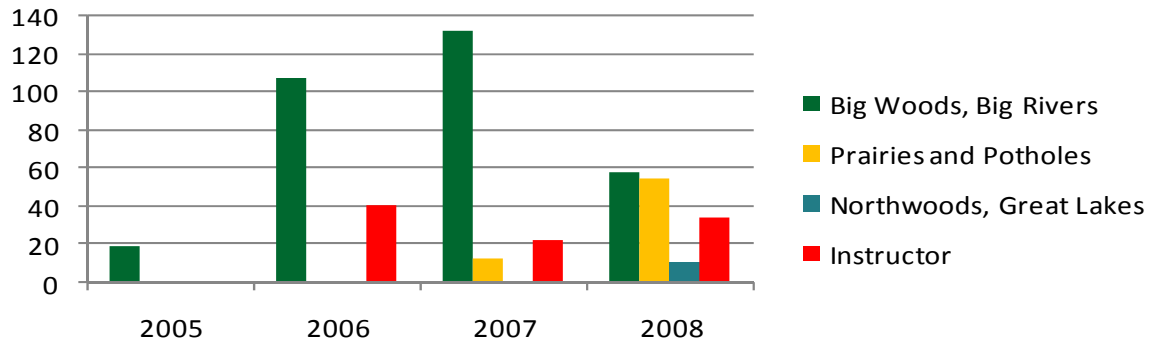


- 2005: Big Woods, Big Rivers curriculum piloted.
  - 2006: Prairies and Potholes curriculum piloted.
  - 2008: Northwoods, Great Lakes curriculum piloted.
  - 2008: First annual Minnesota Master Naturalist Conference held, with over 60 volunteers participating in advanced training and leadership development activities.
  - The Minnesota Master Naturalist website ([www.minnesotamasternaturalist.org](http://www.minnesotamasternaturalist.org)) provides resources for volunteers and general information about the program to the public.
  - Advanced training classes are offered throughout the state on a wide variety of topics, by the Minnesota Master Naturalist program and sponsor organizations.
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- Instructor training is offered at various times and locations, creating a database of trained instructors capable of teaching classes and providing locations in which to hold classes.
  - A line of Minnesota Master Naturalist clothing, promotional and recognition items promotes logo identification across the state and a sense of pride within volunteers.
  - A Minnesota Master Naturalist blog lists current news, reminders, volunteer opportunities, resources, and other valuable information for volunteers.
  - A University of Minnesota Foundation Fund allows the Minnesota Master Naturalist program to accept tax deductible donations.
  - Two Minnesota Master Naturalist volunteers have completed all three biome courses.

*"I appreciate the knowledge gained from the classes, the comradeship of the people I have met, and the continued support and educational opportunities."*

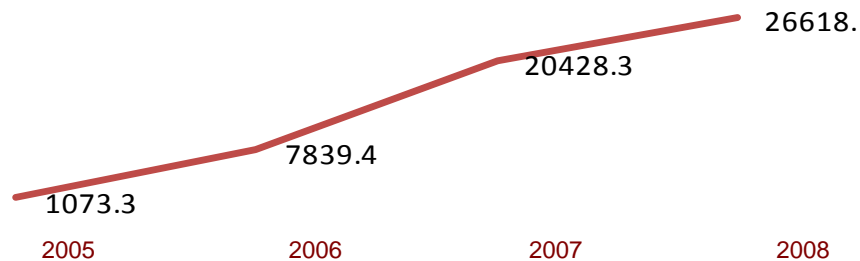
# PROGRAM IMPACTS

- Through 2008, over **500 participants** have become trained natural resource volunteers and instructors through the Minnesota Master Naturalist program.

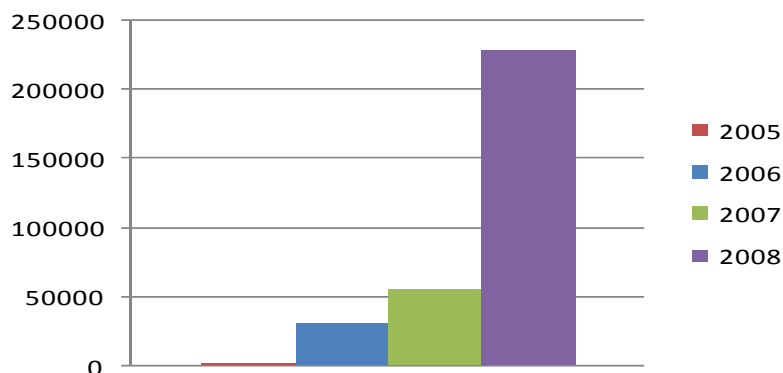


- From 2005 through 2008, over **55,942 hours** of volunteer service were donated to enhance the natural resource base within local communities.

## Volunteer Hours



- The economic impact of Minnesota Master Naturalist volunteer service from 2005 through 2008 is valued at over **\$1,088,631.00\***.
- Since 2005, approximately **315,116 acres** have been impacted by Minnesota Master Naturalist volunteers service.



\*Note: The value of volunteer time is based on the average hourly earnings of all production and nonsupervisory workers on private nonfarm payrolls (as determined by the Bureau of Labor Statistics). Independent Sector takes this figure and increases it by 12 percent to estimate for fringe benefits. (<http://www.independentsector.org>)



# VISION FOR THE FUTURE

Over the next few years, the Minnesota Master Naturalist program will support the development of local chapters throughout the state. Expectations are that the program will continue to grow, with new volunteers becoming involved in the program each year.

The Minnesota Master Naturalist program currently focuses on three main concepts:

- **EXPLORE** - your neighborhood, your local natural areas, Minnesota's state parks and public lands
- **TEACH** - family and friends, neighbors, school groups, people visiting nature centers
- **CONSERVE** - monitor local natural areas, restore ecosystems, assist with research, collect scientific data

The Minnesota Master Naturalist program will continue to address these concepts, with the following near-term programmatic expansion:

- develop local chapters empowered to create strong partnerships with local organizations and nature centers.
- publish the curriculum used in the Minnesota Master Naturalist courses
- publish Linnaeus Lists (identification guides) for each of the three biomes

Started in the fall of 2008, the growth of the Minnesota Master Naturalist Foundation Fund will continue to be a priority with the establishment of a permanent endowment fund. The goal of this permanent endowment fund is to generate enough proceeds each year to award scholarships to classes and to pay for quality speakers for conferences.



The development of the annual conference will also continue to be a priority, and will include quality sessions and speakers.



# FUTURE GOALS

The Minnesota Master Naturalist program has set attainable, measureable goals for the future.

By the end of 2009, the Minnesota Master Naturalist program will have:

- 650 volunteers trained
- \$10,000 invested in the permanent endowment fund
- 85,000 volunteer hours will have been logged by Minnesota Master Naturalist volunteers
- Three local chapters established

# For MORE INFORMATION

Visit the program website at [www.minnesotamasternaturalist.org](http://www.minnesotamasternaturalist.org) or call 888-241-4532.

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Pictures provided by Minnesota Master Naturalist Volunteers.  
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