

# Ecosystem Education Mini-Grant FALL 2010 Application

**Name of COCEEC Participant Groups who will partner:**

Lone Pine State Park of Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks

**Contact Information:**

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300 Lone Pine Road  
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**Amount Requested (cannot exceed \$500):**

\$500

**Would you be able to accept partial funding?**

Yes

**Question 1: Describe the program or project for which this funding would be used and how it promotes understanding and/or conservation within the Crown of the Continent Ecosystem:**

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks proposes the continued placement of Montana Conservation Corps (MCC) Youth Crew leaders in Lone Pine State Park during the park's spring field trip season as part of the MCC Youth Crew Leader Service Immersion program.

*About the Lone Pine State Park Conservation Education Program*

The Lone Pine State Park Conservation Education Program is a free outdoor education program which serves local schools within the Flathead Valley and surrounding areas. The program was initially developed in 2004 and has since grown to serve approximately 1,500 student and 50 individual schools each year. The program offers educators 7 pre-designed field trips with the option of creating custom trips to meet their individual learning objectives. Field trip topics range from water conservation to forest ecology and are designed to accomplish the goals of the Northwest Montana Curriculum Cooperative and Montana State Education Curriculum Guidelines. Since its development, the program has been coordinated and facilitated by the Park Ranger. Despite increasing demand, Lone Pine has been limited in the number and size of classes it can accept into the program each year due to lack of staffing. In 2007, the Lone Pine State Park Visitor Center underwent remodeling and subsequently the center is open year round. This remodel has also served to facilitate an increase in total park visitation. Between 2004 and 2009 Lone Pine has enjoyed an increase in visitation by 275%. With these changes, Lone Pine is becoming progressively better known for its interpretive and educational programming thus enhancing the number of requests we receive each year by educators wishing to take part in programs.

*About the Montana Conservation Corps youth Crew Leader Service Immersion program*

Each year the Montana Conservation Corps hires approximately four AmeriCorps member to serve as Youth Crew Leaders (YCLs) based in Kalispell. Youth Crew Leaders spend mid-February through May organizing and implementing community-wide service and conservation projects, promoting active citizenship among the youth of Montana, and developing the skills and abilities to lead summer youth conservation crews. During the summer months, YCLs lead two 5-week long teen conservation crews performing community and outdoor service throughout Northwest Montana.

In 2009 MCC plans launched the Service Immersion program as an extension of the existing YCL program in an effort to further engage Montana youth in active citizenship and inspire the development of a life-long service ethic. Through the placement in youth-serving programs, YCLs provide additional support for facilitators while gaining skills for effectively teaching and supervising youth.

#### *The partnership between Lone Pine State Park and the Montana Conservation Corps*

As the Lone Pine State Park Conservation Education Program increased in popularity with local educators, the park was put in the position of having to decline field trip requests due to lack of staffing. In the spring of 2009, in an effort to bring aboard additional trained facilitators, and thereby increasing the number of classes accepted into the program, Lone Pine State Park formed a partnership with MCC in which 4 YCLs were placed in the park for duration of 6 weeks during the park's spring field trip season. The goals of this placement were 1) to provide training in interpretive program design and facilitation which YCLs could carry over into the development of their own programs to be implemented that summer, 2) to provide the YCLs with experiential learning opportunities and increased aptitude managing youth groups in an outdoor setting, 3) to provide assistance to the Lone Pine Ranger in facilitating school fieldtrips thereby enabling the park to increase the number of classes accepted by the Conservation Education program, 4) to enhance the participating children's experience by providing multiple instructors who each bring individual strengths and experiences to the program, thus giving the children a more comprehensive look at the field trip topic being introduced to them.

At the completion of the 2009 placement, we met the goals that had been outlined and found the placement to be mutually beneficial. Lone Pine State Park and MCC continued this placement into the 2010 spring field trip season and we intend to continue this placement for subsequent years.

#### **Question 2: What is the timeline for this project?**

Placement date for the 2011 season will run during a 6-week period between March and May 2011. The exact placement dates will not be determined until early spring.

**Question 3: Describe how other COCEEC participant groups and individuals would benefit from helping to fund this request:**

COCEEC participants in 2010 included Flathead National Forest, Lewis & Clark National Forest, The Nature Conservancy of Montana, The Boone & Crocket Club, Flathead Audubon, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, The National Bison Range, The Swan Ecosystem, Lex Blood, and several others.

Many COCEEC participant groups benefit from projects completed by the Montana Conservation Corps youth crews which are lead by the Youth Crew Leaders. Some of these groups are likely to utilize Youth Crews in 2011 as well. These beneficiaries include: Citizens for a Better Flathead, Flathead National Forest, Glacier National Park, Montana Fish, Wildlife, & Parks, The Nature Conservancy of Montana, and the Swan Ecosystem Center. The training that the MCC Youth Crew Leaders are provided during their placement at Lone Pine State Park gives them experience teaching, managing a group of youth in an outdoor environment, and developing/delivering curricula to a variety of youth populations. The experienced and training gained at Lone Pine ties directly or indirectly to their terms as Youth Crew Leaders. This increases their effectiveness in leading their assigned youth crew in completion of conservation projects in Northwest Montana, including potentially the sites of several COCEEC members.

**Question 4: To the degree applicable, describe how this project involves or encourages collaboration between different groups and/or individuals (agencies, schools, teachers, scientists?):**

Lone Pine State Park has an active partnership with local educators. Currently the park works with over 90 individual teachers in collaborating to bring informative, engaging, and beneficial field trip programs to their classes. Lone Pine's partnership with MCC and the Service Immersion program serves to increase the number of teachers that are accepted into the program and allows for the field trips to be more tailored to the specific needs of individual teachers by increasing the number of trained facilitators available in the park to lead programs.

**Question 5: If applicable, please describe any other sources and amounts of funding for this project:**

The projected cost accrued by MCC is approximately \$5,500 for the six week time span. This provides for MCC Youth Crew Leader stipends and insurance, daily travel to and from Lone Pine, and other administrative incidentals for a six week period. Since the initiation of the partnership, MCC has covered the entirety of this cost. Estimated costs accrued by Lone Pine State Park to maintain this partnership is \$250. This covers the design and printing of training manuals, the Lone Pine State Park Ranger to provide training and evaluation, and other incidental expenses. At this time, there are no funds secured for this partnership effort in 2011. Lone Pine has been informed that due to budget constraints, for this partnership to maintain

viability, MCC must ask for additional funding from the park to assist in meeting the expenses accrued for this six week placement. If funding is granted through the COCEEC grant application, those monies shall be appropriated to cover MCC placement costs. The Lone Pine State Park operations and interpretive budgets will continue to cover the costs accrued by the park that were mentioned above; however these budgets are not able to cover any additional costs accrued by MCC.