

## **NEWS RELEASE**

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**CONTACT:** Robert Viking  
Development and Marketing Director  
651-665-9500 x 23  
[rviking@greatrivergreening.org](mailto:rviking@greatrivergreening.org)

### **MINORITY YOUTH LEARN CAREERS AND ENVIRONMENTAL LEADERSHIP**



Significant funding from the Andersen Corporate, Beim, Gannett, Nash, REI, and Weyerhaeuser Foundations is enabling Great River Greening and the Department of Natural Resources to expand a 2007 pilot program for introducing underserved children to scientific and natural area sites (SNA sites), engaging them in a series of stewardship tasks, and exposing them to natural resource careers.

Como Park Senior High School, Community Design Center, Harding High School, and River's Edge Academy are participating in the 2009 Natural Areas Teen Network. Humboldt High School and Upward Bound are slated for spring 2009.



Both agency staff and participating youth are excited to be involved with this year's Natural Areas Teen Network Program. The majority of students come from low income communities throughout the metro area and have never been exposed to untouched wild spaces like the St. Croix Savanna Scientific & Natural Area in Bayport. A Johnson High Sophomore stated that she had never been to an SNA, but having visited and worked at the St. Croix Savanna SNA she would definitely go back.

Faculty at Harding High School are grateful that Great River Greening plans to involve the students before and after the site visits as well. "This will help ensure," one teacher stated, "that the site visits will resonate in student's daily lives in a way that makes them think differently about the value of green spaces in their own neighborhood."

In addition to class visits and SNA field work the Natural Areas Teen Network involves minority "role models." In this way, the message to the students will not only be clear, but believable—"I made it in this field, and so can you." As a teacher at Como Park Senior High School stated, "Students were very receptive in ways that I don't normally see. The fact that they were asking questions of professionals in the small groups about their jobs was a good sign you were reaching them." At the Community Design Center four of the participating students indicated at the beginning of the program they had thought of a possible environmental career. At the conclusion of the program eight students indicated they were thinking of an environmental career.

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