

FOREST PARK SCHOOL DISTRICT ACQUISITION OF COOKS RUN

REVISED PROPOSAL SUBMITTED BY:

VanOss Forestry Services, LLC

695 Way Dam Road
Crystal Falls, MI 49920

On Behalf of Forest Park School District

801 Forest Parkway
Crystal Falls, MI 49920

ACQUISITION PROPOSAL

Forest Park School District respectfully requests consideration for the transfer of ownership of the 122-acre Cooks Run parcel located in western Iron County to the Forest Park School District. The acquisition of this property would provide a unique educational, environmental, and community asset that will benefit current and future generations of students while preserving the property's natural resources for public enjoyment.

The district intends to incorporate the property into its existing school forest program, utilizing the land as an outdoor classroom where students can gain hands-on experience in forestry, wildlife management, natural resource conservation, and environmental sciences.

SUSTAINABLE FOREST MANAGEMENT AND PUBLIC USE

Brock VanOss of VanOss Forestry Services, LLC, has served as the School Forester for Forest Park School District for more than a decade and currently manages the district's approximately 2,200-acre school forest system.

Forest Park School District has a long-standing tradition of responsible forest stewardship, actively managing its forests for more than 70 years under comprehensive forest management plans that are updated on a regular basis. Sustainable forestry practices have ensured the continued health, productivity, and ecological integrity of these lands while providing educational opportunities for students.

Should the Cooks Run property be transferred to the district, it would be managed under the same professional standards and incorporated into the district's long-term forest management program.

The property would remain open to the public for hunting, fishing, hiking, nature observation, and other compatible recreational activities, preserving its value as a community resource while enhancing educational opportunities for local students.

CONTINGENCY PLAN

To provide assurance and protection for all parties involved, it is recommended that Iron County retain a reverter clause within the deed transfer agreement.

Such a provision would allow ownership of the property to revert back to the county if the property is no longer used for educational, conservation, or public benefit purposes. This contingency would safeguard the long-term intent of the transfer while ensuring the property continues to serve the interests of both the community and future generations.

EDUCATIONAL VISION AND PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

Upon transfer of ownership, VanOss Forestry will work directly with Forest Park faculty, students, and community partners to develop and implement a comprehensive outdoor education program at Cooks Run.

The property presents an exceptional opportunity to expand experiential learning and student leadership through activities that may include:

- Establishment of a Forest Park Forestry and Natural Resources Club
- Development of student-led forest monitoring projects
- Water quality and water temperature monitoring programs
- Fisheries and aquatic habitat studies
- Wildlife habitat assessments and improvement projects
- Tree growth and forest inventory measurements
- GPS and GIS mapping exercises
- Forest health monitoring and invasive species identification
- Outdoor recreation and conservation education

In addition, students will have opportunities to interact with natural resource professionals through field visits, presentations, and mentorship opportunities. Partnerships may include organizations such as:

- Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR)
- United States Forest Service (USFS)

- Whitewater Associates, Inc.
- GEI Consultants
- Coleman Engineering
- Wickwire PC
- Local conservation organizations and forestry professionals

These partnerships will expose students to a wide variety of career opportunities available within Iron County and throughout the Upper Peninsula, helping cultivate the next generation of natural resource professionals and environmental stewards.

SHORT-TERM GOALS AND TIMELINES

These goals will be developed in collaboration with VanOss Forestry, Forest Park Staff and Board of Education Members. Establishing student workbees at Cooks Run to provide high school students with organized, hands-on opportunities to improve the property while developing teamwork, work ethic, leadership, forestry knowledge, and environmental stewardship skills. Each workbee will focus on a specific, achievable project that provides a measurable benefit to Cooks Run and gives students a meaningful connection to the land and its management.

- Establishing connections with West Iron Schools, Trout Unlimited, NRCS, Conservation Districts, and more (1-3 months)
- Cabin restoration which will be completed by the students, staining the logs and closing up the current access holes (3-12 months)
- Identify and map out the beaver dams (3-12 months)
- Creating an Iron County High School Forestry and Environmental Club (3-6 months)
- Applying for tree planting grants (6-12 months)
- Property enhancement projects (3-36 months)
- Work on educational projects and topics for “in the woods classroom sessions” (6-12 months)

VanOss Forestry and/or the Forest Park School Board will update the County Board on an annual basis on the projects and developments moving forward.

LONG-TERM BENEFITS

The acquisition of the Cooks Run property will provide lasting educational, environmental, and community benefits by:

- Expanding Forest Park School District's outdoor classroom resources
- Preserving and sustainably managing valuable forestland

- Promoting environmental literacy and stewardship among students
- Supporting workforce development through natural resource career exploration
- Maintaining public recreational access
- Protecting wildlife habitat and water resources
- Strengthening partnerships between schools, government agencies, and private industry

The Forest Park School District has demonstrated decades of successful forest stewardship and is uniquely positioned to ensure that the Cooks Run property remains a productive educational and community asset for generations to come.

Respectfully Submitted,



VanOss Forestry

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