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**GRANT SUPPORTS OUTDOOR EDUCATION IN NINE-COUNTY DRIFTLESS AREA**  
**Students to receive experiential environmental education in**  
**Mississippi Valley Conservancy’s “outdoor classrooms” near their communities**

August 20, 2019

LA CROSSE, WI – Mississippi Valley Conservancy announced today that it has received a \$5,000 grant from Xcel Energy Foundation for its new Driftless Area Explorers experiential environmental education program. For more than eight years, the Conservancy has offered outdoor education in the nature preserves it protects.

“We rely on support from important community and corporate partners such as Xcel Energy,” said Carol Labuzzetta, the Conservancy’s outreach and education program manager. “This funding will help us to offer more engaging and memorable content that supports what local educators have asked us to provide. It also helps us to reach many more children in our nine-county service territory.”

With the help of this grant, the Conservancy will deliver environment-focused curriculum in a new two-part teaching format at the Conservancy’s nature preserves that are close to the communities it serves. The use of these “outdoor classrooms” is intended to help create a sense of connection with the land for the students.

“Our ultimate goal is to instill a sense of pride and stewardship in the next generation of people who will share responsibility in caring for the natural lands near their communities,” said Labuzzetta.

“The success of our company is directly related to the health and education of our communities,” said Ben Fowke, chairman, president and CEO of Xcel Energy. “Through our Foundation grants we can positively impact the quality of life in the towns and cities we serve.”

Educators in the Conservancy’s nine-county service area who are interested in connecting their classes with Driftless Area Explorers are encouraged to contact Carol Labuzzetta at 608-784-3606 ext. 7 or by email at [labuzzetta@mississippivalleyconservancy.org](mailto:labuzzetta@mississippivalleyconservancy.org)

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## ABOUT MISSISSIPPI VALLEY CONSERVANCY

Founded in 1997, Mississippi Valley Conservancy is a nationally accredited nonprofit regional land trust that has permanently protected more than 20,000 acres of scenic lands in southwestern Wisconsin by working with private landowners, businesses and local communities on voluntary conservation projects. The focus of the Conservancy is to conserve the bluffs, forests, prairies, wetlands, streams and farms that enrich our communities, for the health and well-being of current and future generations. For more information, visit [www.mississippivalleyconservancy.org](http://www.mississippivalleyconservancy.org).

## ABOUT EXCEL ENERGY

Xcel Energy (NYSE: XEL) provides the energy that powers millions of homes and businesses across eight Western and Midwestern states. Headquartered in Minneapolis, the company is an industry leader in responsibly reducing carbon emissions and producing and delivering clean energy solutions from a variety of renewable sources at competitive prices. Through its foundation, Xcel Energy supports activities in four important focus areas: STEM education, workforce development, environmental stewardship, and access to arts and culture.