

Building Capacity in Natural Resources Across RSDP



UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA | EXTENSION

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Presenting Issue

The University of Minnesota has identified five cross-disciplinary “Grand Challenges of a diverse and changing world” that the U of M is well-placed to impact.

On a regional scale, the need exists to empower communities of Greater Minnesota to develop local solutions to these Grand Challenges, specifically that of Clean Water and Sustainable Ecosystems.



RSDP projects mapped onto graphic of the Clean Water Grand Challenge and its contributing factors.

Extension’s Programmatic Response

The University of Minnesota Extension Regional Sustainable Development Partnerships (RSDP) supports community-driven sustainability projects in Greater Minnesota with seed funding and connection to University resources.

In 2015, RSDP identified the need for greater capacity within the Natural Resources focus area, and in 2016 hosted Rose Clarke, a Conservation Corps member, to support the regional citizen work groups and to frame work through the uniting vision of the Clean Water and Sustainable Ecosystem Grand Challenge.

The Corps member, through the cross-pollination of ideas and resources, knits connections across regions, shares learning, and with a multi-region perspective is able to leverage and build on local progress.

Target Audience

The Corps member supports the regional citizen-led boards and Natural Resources work groups, and project partners from the communities they serve. Each regional board defines local Natural Resources priorities to guide its work.

Why Extension?

UMN Extension RSDP’s innovative initiatives are community defined and valued, citizen-led, University-engaged and collaborative.

“Survey responses from the Governor’s Water Summit strongly identified Extension as a trusted source of information.” – Theresa Spaeth, Executive Director, Conservation Corps of Minnesota and Iowa

Behavior or Action Outcomes

As a result of this partnership with the Conservation Corps, RSDP has seen strengthening of the Natural Resources work group network and more intentional approaches to priority-setting and project recruitment. Improved communication allows experimentation and learning to happen at a rapid pace across regions as similar topics are addressed from varied points of view.

“(Rose’s) deeper thinking and ideas about how we graphically document and continue to engage our networks of community and university partners will pay off for years to come.” – Erin Meier, Southeast RSDP Executive Director

To bridge the distance between regions, work group members, staff, and partners are invited to view a series of 12 webinars organized by the Corps member. Each webinar features a University resource and a community partner.

Opening slide from a recent episode of the RSDP Connections Webinar series.

Find past episodes and more information at z.umn.edu/rsdpwebinar

Attendee comments from post-webinar survey:

“It was good to hear from (the presenter)... Working (across the wide scope of) the University, we are not always aware of the work many of our colleagues are doing.”

“(The webinars feature a) well-organized format and clear presentations.”

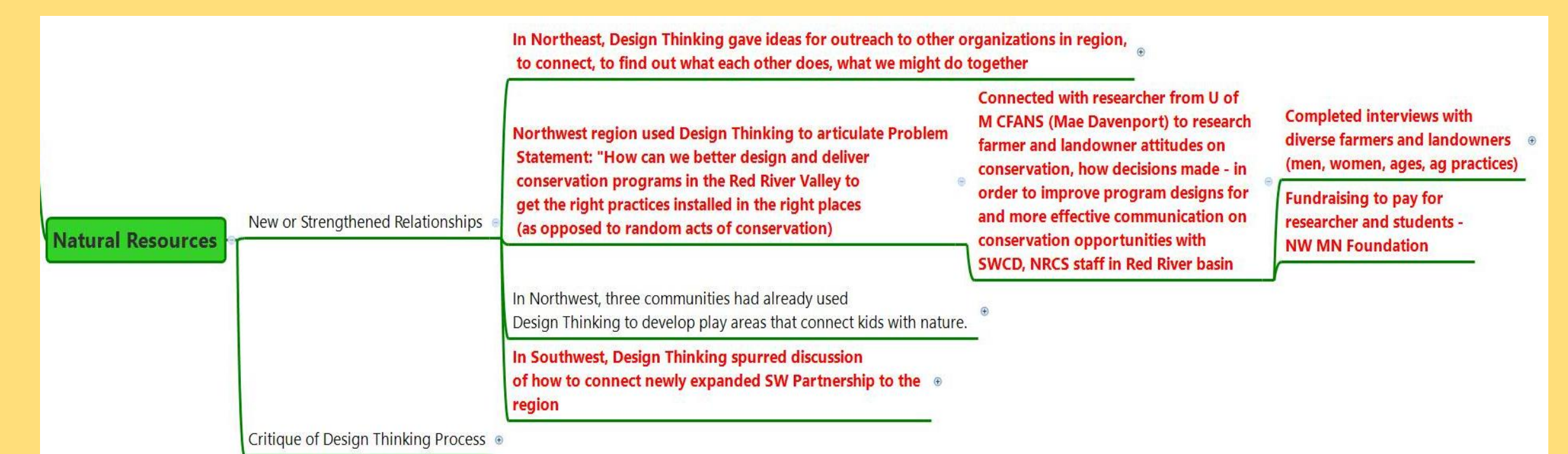


Citizens, RSDP staff, and Conservation Corps member practicing a tactical mapping strategy for identifying natural resource project connections and effects.

Broader Impacts

Improved efficiency and clearer direction of the work groups will hopefully lead to a strategic increase in the number and effect of RSDP-supported community projects which address the Clean Water and Sustainable Ecosystems Grand Challenge.

In addition to the impacts within RSDP and in the communities they work with, this method of capacity-building serves as an innovative training approach, bringing young professionals like Rose into University, Extension, and Conservation networks. It is an invaluable opportunity for the Corps member to develop soft skills important for their future career.



Ripple Effect mapping of the RSDP Natural Resource focus area, facilitated by Scott Chazdon.