

INSTITUTE ON THE
ENVIRONMENT

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

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MINI GRANT PROJECT SUMMARY

Please complete the project summary and return the completed form to April Snyder, Associate Administrator for the Institute on the Environment at aprilsnyder@umn.edu. Paper copies will not be accepted. Please also attach any photos, publications, brochures, event agendas or other materials that were a result of the mini grant summary.

Date of Report Submission:	May 21, 2015
Project PI & Dept/School	Kimberly Carlson, Institute on the Environment, CFANS
Project Title:	Twin Cities Tropical Environments Network
Grant Amount \$:	\$3000

Project Context & Purpose

Please include the original project purpose statement and revise for any changes that occurred in the project after the start date with a short explanation of the changes.

Twin Cities Tropical Environments Network (TC Tropics) was envisioned as a group that would energize and connect Twin-Cities based scientists, activists, and businesses interested in tropical ecosystems by hosting a series of events in 2014.

Many Twin Cities-based individuals and organizations have strong ties to tropical ecosystems. However, groups tend to isolate themselves based on geographic (e.g., Africa vs. Asia), disciplinary (e.g., anthropology vs. agriculture), and organizational (e.g., UMN vs. Cargill) foci. As a result, these groups and individuals miss opportunities for fruitful knowledge exchange and collaboration. Thus, **the goal of TC-TEN is to foster peer-to-peer networking in an atmosphere where ideas and collaborations surrounding tropical environments flow freely.** TC-TEN is modeled on the Bay Area Tropical Forest Network (BATFN, www.tropicalforestnetwork.org), a group in the San Francisco Bay Area broadly interested in tropical forest conservation and ecology.

Work Completed

Please provide a summary of the work that was completed for the mini grant project.

- 1) We organized a series of meetings. These meetings were a mix of formal presentations, moderated discussions, and informal discussions. Presentation events typically began with socializing over food and drink, followed by a short (~20-30 minutes) presentation or talk. After presentations, we facilitated in-depth group discussions with the presenter. In addition, we organized monthly happy hours around the Twin Cities to support ongoing networking. We also hosted an invited speaker in conjunction with the Institute on the Environment's Frontiers in the Environment Spring 2015 series. The events hosted by TC Tropics through May 2015 are listed below:
 - February 5, 2014. Kick-Off Networking Event at IonE.
 - April 23, 2014. Presentation at IonE by Maga Gei (UMN EEB PhD student): How do tropical trees get their fix?
 - May 22, 2014. Happy hour at Aster Café.
 - June 17, 2014. Happy hour at Republic 7 Corners.
 - August 14, 2014. Happy hour at Republic 7 Corners.
 - September 11, 2014. Presentation at Macalester College by Prof. William Moseley (Macalester Geography): The 2008 Global Food Crisis and the New Green Revolution for Africa: The Case of Mali, West Africa.
 - October 7, 2014. Presentation at IonE by Prof. Jennifer Powers (UMN EEB): How can we better connect research, conservation, and education in Guanacaste, Costa Rica? A manifesto.
 - November 11, 2014. Presentation at IonE by Dr. Jahi Chappell (IATP): The need for action, ethics, and values in ecology: Examples from food systems and conservation in the tropics.
 - May 6, 2015. Presentation at IonE Frontiers on the Environment by Dr. Gary Paoli (Daemeter Consulting): Do volunteer supply chain sustainability programs really work?
- 2) To support dissemination of events and other information and to broaden the impact of TC Tropics, we created a website (www.twincitiestropics.org), email address, email list of members, and twitter account.
- 3) Carlson authored an article featured on environment.umn.edu about TC Tropics.

Partnerships & Collaborations

Please provide a summary of the project personnel, partnerships and collaborations that worked directly on the project or were started as a direct result of the mini grant project.

The project lead was Dr. Kimberly Carlson, a Global Landscapes Initiative (GLI) postdoctoral scholar at IonE. Other team members included Dr. Kate Brauman (GLI at IonE) and Christine O'Connell (Ecology and Evolutionary Biology graduate student). We did not formally track collaborations and partnerships generated from the project, since our role was facilitation. However, we did involve diverse partners outside of the University of Minnesota, including Mongabay (www.mongabay.com) staff, Macalester faculty and students, Cargill, and the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy.

Project Outcomes & Impacts

Please provide a summary of the outcomes and /or impacts of the mini grant project including future plans for the project.

Project outcomes include facilitation of interactions during TC Tropics events, as described above. Group conversations included assisting presenters with research questions, improved understanding of distant tropical environments (e.g., West Africa), and connecting PhD students with potential collaborators. Bringing Dr. Paoli to IonE for a multi-day visit was particularly fruitful, since he met with a diversity of students and faculty members, conversations that may result in potential future collaborations.

Looking forward, we are in conversations with a few committed TC Tropics members to continue the group, including website and list maintenance, into the future. Carlson and O'Connell will be moving away from Minneapolis, so passing organizational duties to new people is necessary to sustain TC Tropics.