



A 46-Year History

- 1969 The first Earth Day. A school teacher in Cloquet, Minn., Jack Pichotta, organizes an entire week of school focused on the environment and conceives the idea that a site should be created where schools can take their students for coursework that engages them “in” the natural environment they study in their classroom.
- 1970 The State of MN creates a \$275,000 grant to create the Environmental Learning Center (ELC) and fund operations for three years.
- 1971 The ELC opens in Isabella, Minn., on the site of a previous Job Corps Camp. Twenty-eight schools attend. (More than half of those schools still attend.)
- 1974 The Naturalist Training Program begins. College students from around the country enroll for one or two semesters.
- 1975 The ELC incorporates as a 501(c)3 non-profit. More than 80 schools visit the center.
- 1976 The ELC opens a youth camp program focused upon ecology and the environment.
- 1980 The North Central Association of Colleges and Schools accredits the ELC as a school – the first program of its kind to be accredited.
- 1984 The Naturalist Training Program expands into a post baccalaureate graduate student program.
- 1986 With partial funding in hand, construction of the Wolf Ridge campus begins in Finland, Minn. More than 140 schools attend the ELC.
- 1987 The ELC conducts the first Elderhostel (now "Road Scholar") Grandparent Grandchild program in the country, a "Grand Adventure in Intergenerational Learning".
- 1988 The Wolf Ridge Campus is completed with the help of a \$1.7 million loan.

- 1988 Wolf Ridge ELC opens in its permanent location atop a ridgeline overlooking Lake Superior in Finland. The capacity of the facility is 130 people, less than the Isabella site, resulting in 23 schools being turned away.
- 1991 Wolf Ridge Trustees began "Wolf Ridge 2000", a \$7 million fund raising effort to, increase capacity equal to what was available at the Isabella site.
- 1996 The Naturalist Training Program partners with the University of Minnesota Duluth to create a post-baccalaureate Certificate of Environmental Education program for master's degree level students.
- 2000 The Wolf Ridge 2000 campaign comes to a successful close. Wolf Ridge returns to the size of the original site in Isabella at 380 beds.
- 2002 Wolf Ridge partners with community members near Duluth to sponsor the state's first environmental education-focused charter school, the North Shore Community School. The school's current enrollment is 325.
- 2004 The Naturalist Training Program offers the first opportunity for undergraduates who have completed all their coursework to do their student teaching practicum at Wolf Ridge. The program began in partnership with Gustavus Adolphus College and currently includes partnerships with Winona State University and University of Minnesota Duluth.
- 2006 Wolf Ridge begins an Ecology Credit Summer Camp, where students attend for four weeks and gain a year of high school science credit. The Camp continues with the Minneapolis Public Schools offering the program to underserved youth of north Minneapolis.
- 2012 Wolf Ridge breaks ground for an organic vegetable farm and garden on campus. Students help grow and harvest food for the center's cafeteria.
- 2015 Wolf Ridge secures a decades long lease from a generous donor of 65 acres of land on Lake Superior, where future students and adults will develop an inspired sense of connection and understanding for Lake Superior and freshwater.