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UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
MORRIS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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MORRIS, Minnesota (September 16, 2015)—Thanks to a recent real estate gift, the University of Minnesota, Morris is establishing [EcoStation](#), a new outdoor research venue. Encompassing 140 acres outside Ashby, the area provides space for exploration and discovery. Inherent in this land is the potential for a wide array of research and creative activities—everything from ecology to creative writing—and the campus intends to take full advantage of its scope.

According to Erik and Rima Torgerson, the individuals who made this venue possible, its purpose is twofold: to act as both an environmental resource for the campus community and a research platform for the benefit of all. This vision is shared by Chancellor Jacqueline R. Johnson, who writes that the intention “is to develop a teaching, learning, and research laboratory on the property, one that will assist the University and the region in addressing the ‘grand challenges’ that confront us and that will contribute to an appreciation of and respect for the environment.”

This deliberate use of the land is wise—*wise use* to be exact. Coined by sportsmen to call for purposeful management of natural resources at the onset of the American conservation movement, the term characterizes a philosophy synonymous with sustainability. That philosophy, says Erik, is vital to the longevity of this land and the environment as a whole.

“Society needs ‘wise use’ of our entire environment, not just for the benefit of game species, but for our collective benefit. It is enlightened self-interest: a healthy environment supporting society in a sustainable manner.”

Beginning this fall, the venue’s first round of research projects will explore growing cycles, extreme weather, and other facets of the changing prairie landscape. Much of this work will be undertaken by students: a key component of the space’s educational mission. According to Erik, the urbanization of American society has kept many young people indoors; he and Rima hope the land will provide a space in which they can commune with the outdoors.

“The younger generation is more environmentally aware than ever before, however, I am amazed how few of our college-age kids have actually spent time in the outdoors,” he says. “One can’t learn it all from a book. They need to get out there and experience it for themselves; it will change their relationship with nature.”

Student work at the property already is underway, and possibilities for future use are virtually limitless. According to Erik, its potential is bounded only by the imagination of the campus community.

“Chancellor Johnson’s vision for the property’s use is exactly what we wanted, and we have great confidence in her leadership,” he says. “It came together quickly, and we are confident UMM will make it an outstanding center of environmental learning and research.”

Erik is the son of Dr. Les and Joan Torgerson, formerly from Henning, currently residing on Clitherall Lake. His grandparents were Dr. Anton and Beatrice Thompson and Alfred and Dora Torgerson, all lifelong residents of Henning. Erik and Rima have two sons, Hans and Anders.

Through personal and academic discovery, the University of Minnesota, Morris provides opportunities for students to grow intellectually, engage in community, experience environmental stewardship and celebrate diversity. A renewable and sustainable educational experience, Morris prepares graduates for careers, for advanced degrees, for lifelong learning, for work world flexibility in the future, and for global citizenship. Learn more about Morris at morris.umn.edu or call 888-866-3382.

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