

February 19, 2026

Dear Waunakee Board of Education,

I am requesting permission to offer a June 2027 Science & Service student trip for high school students. Between 2013-2019, Betsy Hemminger started the program and led several trips to Latin American countries. In 2023, I led my first WHS S&S trip to the Galapagos Islands in Ecuador. We had another immensely successful trip to Sweden & Denmark in June of 2025. During Science & Service trips, students gain experience working with real scientists in the field, as well as contributing to local communities by conducting volunteer service projects during the trip. Students will spend one year doing research, prep work, and fundraising. Students completing their 9th-11th grade next school year are eligible for the trip. These trips have helped raise up Waunakee students to become “global citizens” and give them a vision to impact the world.



Focus of 2027 trip

In Sweden & Denmark, we focused on “Sustainability, Ecology, Clean energy, and Engineering the future” where the students saw cutting edge research and technology that leads the world in sustainability and renewable energy. **This time, I envision students experiencing and surveying the importance of the Amazon rainforest ecosystem.** The Amazon rainforest is critical for global survival, acting as a massive carbon sink that mitigates climate change and influences water cycles across the world. It houses 10% of the world's known biodiversity and supports millions of people, including over 400 indigenous tribes.

For this reason, I propose a trip to **Peru** for excellent access to the Amazon boundary zones, one of the most biodiverse areas, and indigenous peoples' history. Students will participate in ongoing research and survey this recovery zone of the rainforest with the local Crees Foundation. Students will not only experience the unmatched biodiversity, they will work with local conservation efforts to understand the economic, cultural, and governmental factors that influence the health of this ecosystem which the world relies on.

Details:

- **Location:** Peru (Lima, Cusco, Manu National park, Machu Picchu, etc.)
- **Purpose:** Explore biodiversity, ecology research, culture and socioeconomics of the Amazon
- **Through:** Crees Foundation (local research foundation)
- **Dates:** June 17-27, 2027
- **Who:** Approximately 20-25 students, plus teacher chaperones (30 total travellers). Priority given to Juniors and students who have not traveled on a S&S trip before.
- **Cost:** Approximately \$3800 per student (\$2610 + Int'l airfare, coach bus to/from O'Hare,). The five teacher chaperones travel free. All students will participate in **Fundraising**. Local corporate scholarship partnerships are currently being pursued for financially-qualifying students.

Timeline



Video [Overview of trip/experiences](#) and [Crees Foundation website](#) [Detailed Daily Itinerary](#)

Day 1: Flight from Chicago O’Hare to Lima, Peru

Day 2: Flight to Cusco, transfer to Misminay. Andean cultural immersion, local homestay

Day 3: Misminay to Machu Picchu. Cultural/historical day. Stay in Cusco hotel

Day 4: Cusco cloud forest, journey to Manu Biosphere reserve. Sapansachayoq Lodge

Day 5: Cloud forest, Manu Learning Center

Day 6: Manu Learning Center conservation and research projects

Day 7: “ “

Day 8: “ “

Day 9: Shintuya Community Hot Springs, Romero Rainforest Lodge, reflection.

Day 10: Transfer to Cusco, Peruvian dancers

Day 11: Transfer to Lima, flight back to Chicago O’Hare

Thank you for considering my proposal, and please let me know if there is any other information you need from me at this time.

Sincerely,

Margaret (Meg) Shaffar
WHS Biology/Chemistry Teacher
Science & Service Trip Director
Aviation Club Advisor