

# Final Abstract

Final Report Approved on December 5, 2024

## M.L. 2020 Project Abstract

For the Period Ending June 30, 2024

**Project Title:** Minnesota Hunter Walking Trails, Public Land Recreational Access

**Project Manager:** scott johnson

**Affiliation:** Ruffed Grouse Society

**Mailing Address:** 1700 Pine Drive

**City/State/Zip:** Spooner, WI 54801

**Phone:** (412) 860-3481

**E-mail:** scottj@ruffedgrousesociety.org

**Website:** <https://ruffedgrousesociety.org/>

**Funding Source:**

**Fiscal Year:**

**Legal Citation:** M.L. 2021, First Special Session, Chp. 6, Art. 5, Sec. 2, Subd. 09f

**Appropriation Amount:** \$300,000

**Amount Spent:** \$221,345

**Amount Remaining:** \$78,655

### Sound bite of Project Outcomes and Results

The Ruffed Grouse Society/American Woodcock Society (RGS) successfully worked with fifteen public forest land administrators to assess needs of the existing approximately 1000 miles of hunter walking trails; secured contract and supply needs; and finalized and implemented trailhead (171 sites) and trail (75.3 miles) enhancements on 146 trails.

### Overall Project Outcome and Results

Throughout forested regions of Minnesota, there are approximately 250 systems with about 1,000 miles of hunter walking trails occurring on various public forest lands with varied and often inconsistently managed levels of development, improvement or maintenance. The stated broad purpose of this grant, therefore, was to ensure that forest related recreational trail opportunities in Minnesota include functional non-motorized hunter walking trails which will promote ongoing participation of current and future hunters, birders and hikers that seek this type of trail experience.

With this grant effort, the Ruffed Grouse Society (RGS) coordinated with 15 public forest land management agencies to identify important hunter walking trail maintenance needs and subsequently completed work on 146 trails through a

combination of improving parking lots at 24 sites, removing non-functional gates and installing 65 new gates (as well as installation of associated berms and boulders to restrict traffic), upgrading 171 map and informational signs set at trailheads, restoring 66 miles of trail, constructing 9.3 miles of new trail to connect dead-ends and create loops, and creating or enhancing 83 new trail map layouts. These efforts and improvements were covered in media (Duluth Tribune, Star Tribune, Outdoor News, Grand Forks Herald, We The Forest, US Forest Service social media and RGS social media, RGS chapter events presentations and field tours).

Feedback from media efforts, communications with partner land management agencies, RGS membership and other forest recreation contacts were positive and indicated the value of these well managed hunter walking trails and their infrastructure. The extensive hunter walking trail network in Minnesota, appreciation for their existence, but with varied and often poor regularized maintenance and funding all indicate a great value of this effort and also indicate an important need to continue these efforts.

### **Project Results Use and Dissemination**

As noted above, RGS and our partner agencies and contractors completed significant communication related to this hunter walking trail effort. This included both formal engagement of content with media products and informal efforts through social media, and presentations and discussions at conservation member events. These efforts were formally highlighted in a 9/7/24 article by Grand Forks Herald, an 8/24 video by We The Forest, 10/3/24 article with Outdoor News, 9/10/20 article by Star Tribune, 9/10/22 article with Duluth Tribune (these weblinks are attached in tab 7).



## Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

M.L. 2020 Approved Final Report

### General Information

**Date:** December 11, 2024

**ID Number:** 2020-042

**Staff Lead:** Mike Campana

**Project Title:** Minnesota Hunter Walking Trails, Public Land Recreational Access

**Project Budget:** \$300,000

### Project Manager Information

**Name:** scott johnson

**Organization:** Ruffed Grouse Society

**Office Telephone:** (412) 860-3481

**Email:** scottj@ruffedgrousesociety.org

**Web Address:** <https://ruffedgrousesociety.org/>

### Project Reporting

**Final Report Approved:** December 5, 2024

**Reporting Status:** Project Completed

**Date of Last Action:** December 5, 2024

**Project Completion:** June 30, 2024

### Legal Information

**Legal Citation:** M.L. 2021, First Special Session, Chp. 6, Art. 5, Sec. 2, Subd. 09f

**Appropriation Language:** \$300,000 the second year is from the trust fund to the commissioner of natural resources for an agreement with the Ruffed Grouse Society to improve Minnesota's hunter walking trail system by restoring or upgrading trailheads and trails, developing new walking trails, and compiling enhanced maps for use by managers and the public.

**Appropriation End Date:** June 30, 2024

## Narrative

**Project Summary:** Sustain, enhance public land forest recreation and management access supported by a system of hunter walking trails through the improvement of trail infrastructure needs (gate, signs, parking lots, maps, etc.)

**Describe the opportunity or problem your proposal seeks to address. Include any relevant background information.**

Approximately 1,000 miles of hunter walking trails (HWTs) exist on ~250 sites within Minnesota's public forest lands. They were designed to provide a non-motorized recreational opportunity for that segment of the public that desires a quieter, foot-travel experience. Currently this statewide system of HWTs is located on State Wildlife Management Area (40%), State Forest (30%), County Forest (20%), and National Forest lands (10%). A majority of these trails were developed through efforts funded by MNDNR Wildlife and NGO/conservation organizations like the Ruffed Grouse Society (RGS). This HWT system was primarily developed in the 1970's-90's as a means to allow hunters to access public land and to improve forest habitats through dispersed timber sales. HWTs are typically funded by annual operating funds of the controlling land administrator, they do not have a dedicated funding source like other trail users (e.g. grant-in-aid ATV trail fund). This lack of a long-term, dedicated funded source over time has led to a generally degraded system that is overdue for upgrades and improvements.

**What is your proposed solution to the problem or opportunity discussed above? Introduce us to the work you are seeking funding to do. You will be asked to expand on this proposed solution in Activities & Milestones.**

Overall enhancement, upgrade to the states' 1,000+ hunter walking trail system through: 1) restore, upgrade existing hunter walking trail infrastructure at ~120 trailheads, ~50 miles of trail, 2) develop, construct ~12 miles of new hunter walking trails and related trailhead needs, and 3) update, improve hunter walking trail information necessary for management and public recreational users (~100 trails).

**What are the specific project outcomes as they relate to the public purpose of protection, conservation, preservation, and enhancement of the state's natural resources?**

The broad purpose of this request is to ensure that recreational trail opportunities in Minnesota include non-motorized hunter walking trails. These trails will promote the ongoing participation of current hunters, birders and hikers that seek this type of trail experience and also encourage the introduction of new users to upland hunting traditions while also facilitating forest habitat enhancements through access for forest management (e.g. timber harvest) on these trails.

## Project Location

**What is the best scale for describing where your work will take place?**

Region(s): NE

**What is the best scale to describe the area impacted by your work?**

Region(s): NE

**When will the work impact occur?**

During the Project and In the Future

## Activities and Milestones

**Activity 1: Restore, upgrade existing hunter walking trail infrastructure at ~120 trailheads and ~50 miles of trail.**

**Activity Budget:** \$210,000

**Activity Description:**

Based on needs and priorities identified in an upcoming 2020 Assessment of Hunter Walking Trails in Minnesota, Project Manager will coordinate bid, contract, and supply efforts necessary for trailhead (i.e. parking lots, gates, signs, etc.) and trail (i.e. reshape, widen, culverts, etc.) infrastructure needs based on controlling land administrator’s environmental, construction and contracting requirements; document and certify successful accomplishments.

**Activity Milestones:**

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Restore, upgrade ~60 HWT trailheads	December 31, 2022
Restore, upgrade ~25 miles of existing trails	December 31, 2022
Restore, upgrade ~60 HWT trailheads	December 31, 2023
Restore, upgrade ~25 miles of existing trails	December 31, 2023

**Activity 2: Develop, construct ~12 miles of new hunter walking trails and related trailheads.**

**Activity Budget:** \$50,000

**Activity Description:**

Based on needs and priorities identified in and upcoming 2020 Assessment of Hunter Walking Trails in Minnesota, Project Manager will coordinate bid, contract, and supply efforts necessary for development of new hunter walking trails and related trailheads based on controlling land administrator’s environmental, construction and contracting requirements; document and certify successful accomplishments.

**Activity Milestones:**

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Construct ~6 miles of new hunter walking trails segments, loops, systems.	December 31, 2022
Construct ~6 miles of new hunter walking trail segments, loops, or systems.	December 31, 2023

**Activity 3: Update, improve hunter walking trail information necessary for management and public recreation users (~100 trails).**

**Activity Budget:** \$40,000

**Activity Description:**

Work with public land administrators to update HWT information, data, and related maps as to their specific requirements; link to MNDNR’s hunter walking trail webpage.

**Activity Milestones:**

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Ongoing field assessments, information/data gathering, map updates with respective public land administrators.	June 30, 2024



## Project Partners and Collaborators

Name	Organization	Role	Receiving Funds
Staff	MNDNR - Wildlife and Forestry	Public land administrator, review of assessment information, approval of sites, methods, etc.	No
Staff	County Land Departments	Public land administrator, review of assessment information, approval of sites, methods, etc.	No
Staff	Chippewa, Superior National Forests	Public land administrator, review of assessment information, approval of sites, methods, etc.	No

## Dissemination

**Describe your plans for dissemination, presentation, documentation, or sharing of data, results, samples, physical collections, and other products and how they will follow ENRTF Acknowledgement Requirements and Guidelines.**

As a ENRTF grant sponsor, RGS has read and will implement ENRTF acknowledgement guidelines on all communications and outreach efforts related to this grant for the life of the grant. It will also insure as much as it can that public land administrators that benefit from this grant include ENRTF logos and acknowledgements on maps, websites, social media sites, etc. after the grant is complete.

## Long-Term Implementation and Funding

**Describe how the results will be implemented and how any ongoing effort will be funded. If not already addressed as part of the project, how will findings, results, and products developed be implemented after project completion? If additional work is needed, how will this work be funded?**

Results from this effort will serve to greatly update and revitalize the current statewide HWT system that exists on Minnesota public forestlands, hopefully also serve as a catalyst that forms long-term solutions for the management and funding of this system by MNDNR Wildlife and public forest land administrators.

## Budget Summary

Category / Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Purpose	Gen. Ineligible	% Benefits	# FTE	Classified Staff?	\$ Amount	\$ Amount Spent	\$ Amount Remaining
<b>Personnel</b>										
							<b>Sub Total</b>	-	-	-
<b>Contracts and Services</b>										
Gone Wild Enterprises, LLC	Professional or Technical Service Contract	A project/grant consultant will be contracted by the grant sponsor (RGS) to implement, administer, and see to successful completion of this grant, reports to designated RGS Project Manager for this grant. This will be a sole source request.		X		0.6		\$36,000	\$34,723	\$1,277
Various private contractors	Professional or Technical Service Contract	based on priorities identified in the 2020 Assessment of Minnesota Hunter Walking Trails, service contracts for infrastructure work will be secured/contracted with private entities by the grants project manager and consistent with state contracting, environmental, and permitting rules and the standards of the controlling land administrator.				0		\$133,520	\$84,110	\$49,410
GIS support	Professional or Technical Service Contract	Update GIS management information relating to MNDNR's Hunter Walking Trails and Ruffed Grouse Management Areas webpages, also various County and U.S. Forest Service GIS/web information; update and create maps and related public use support needs. It is expected that some of this need will be covered as in-kind.				-		\$20,000	-	\$20,000
Land Administrators	Subaward	Based on priorities identified in the 2020 assessment of MN Hunter walking trails, funds will be provided to land administrators for supplies and personnel to complete work and to contract for infrastructure work consistent with contracting,				0		\$44,480	\$44,480	-



		environmental, and permitting standards of the controlling land administrator								
							<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>\$234,000</b>	<b>\$163,313</b>	<b>\$70,687</b>
<b>Equipment, Tools, and Supplies</b>										
	Tools and Supplies	Supplies: gates (50), entrance signs (50), information signs (150), gravel (500 yards), seed etc.	Some hand tools, but primarily supplies to support site work; including gates, signs, gravel and less than \$5,000 in hand/small power tools (wrenches, brush saw, chainsaw, etc.) for site work needs, and seed for soil stabilization, erosion protection and invasive species prevention on these disturbed soils.					\$50,000	\$47,018	\$2,982
							<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>\$50,000</b>	<b>\$47,018</b>	<b>\$2,982</b>
<b>Capital Expenditures</b>										
							<b>Sub Total</b>	-	-	-
<b>Acquisitions and Stewardship</b>										
							<b>Sub Total</b>	-	-	-
<b>Travel In Minnesota</b>										
	Miles/ Meals/ Lodging	xxx	Due to broad scale of this project over northern MN, there will be some level of travel (mileage) and related meal/lodging expenses incurred by the designated RGS Project Manager to assess, administer this grant.					\$6,000	\$2,060	\$3,940

							<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>\$6,000</b>	<b>\$2,060</b>	<b>\$3,940</b>
<b>Travel Outside Minnesota</b>										
							<b>Sub Total</b>	-	-	-
<b>Printing and Publication</b>										
	Printing	Printing of updated/new hunter walking trail maps; only an initial, limited number; public land administrator responsible for printing needs after initial run.	For grant site effort needs; long-term trail and adjacent habitat management needs of public land administrator; distribution to public users.					\$10,000	\$8,954	\$1,046
							<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>\$10,000</b>	<b>\$8,954</b>	<b>\$1,046</b>
<b>Other Expenses</b>										
							<b>Sub Total</b>	-	-	-
							<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>\$300,000</b>	<b>\$221,345</b>	<b>\$78,655</b>

## Classified Staff or Generally Ineligible Expenses

Category/Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Justification Ineligible Expense or Classified Staff Request
<b>Contracts and Services</b> - Gone Wild Enterprises, LLC	Professional or Technical Service Contract	A project/grant consultant will be contracted by the grant sponsor (RGS) to implement, administer, and see to successful completion of this grant, reports to designated RGS Project Manager for this grant. This will be a sole source request.	Grant sponsor (RGS) has used Gone Wild Enterprises, LLC (Gary Drotts) under a consultant contract as its MN Conservation Partners Legacy grant consultant for the last three years (6 grants for \$600,000). This consultant has 39 years of past DNR experience in forest wildlife habitat restoration/enhancement, related field/trail project expertise and knowledge of northern MN that has been a great asset to RGS grant efforts to date.

## Non ENRTF Funds

Category	Specific Source	Use	Status	\$ Amount	\$ Amount Spent	\$ Amount Remaining
<b>State</b>						
In-Kind	MNDNR Wildlife and Forestry, County Land Departments, and National Forest field staff	Public land administrator field staff time spent providing assessment, site needs, recommendations, and project completion information.	Secured	\$15,000	\$15,000	-
			<b>State Sub Total</b>	<b>\$15,000</b>	<b>\$15,000</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Non-State</b>						
In-Kind	Ruffed Grouse Society in-kind	Staff support by RGS to facilitate the grant, funding up front of a MN Hunter Walking Trail Assessment report that will be used to work on priorities for field work.	Secured	\$10,000	\$10,000	-
			<b>Non State Sub Total</b>	<b>\$10,000</b>	<b>\$10,000</b>	<b>-</b>
			<b>Funds Total</b>	<b>\$25,000</b>	<b>\$25,000</b>	<b>-</b>

## Attachments

### Required Attachments

#### *Visual Component*

File: [c2cd6623-41c.pdf](#)

#### *Alternate Text for Visual Component*

Visual a map of hunter walking trail systems with work completed under this grant- statewide. These map locations correlate to the supplemental grant admin worksheet/ activity by partner and trail tab with name and site work descriptions...

#### *Financial Capacity*

File: [237ee6bb-4d1.pdf](#)

#### *Board Resolution or Letter*

Title	File
RGS and County support letters	<a href="#">91f9cbf7-e9c.pdf</a>

### Supplemental Attachments

#### *Capital Project Questionnaire, Budget Supplements, Support Letter, Photos, Media, Other*

Title	File
Background Check Certification	<a href="#">a50e4d6e-2f6.docx</a>
RGS-LCCMR FY21 HWT grant, admin worksheets, 6-30-24 final	<a href="#">d78203c4-818.xlsx</a>
RGS-LCCMR FY21 HWT grant, photo log, 6-30-24 final	<a href="#">f643cb1c-51a.pdf</a>
HWT map and example of possible HWT data to be collected	<a href="#">dd92391f-590.pdf</a>

#### *Media Links*

Title	Link
Minnesota hunter walking trails revitalized with \$300,000 LCCMR grant ahead of ruffed grouse season	<a href="https://www.grandforksherald.com/sports/northland-outdoors/minnesota-hunter-walking-trails-revitalized-with-300-000-lccmr-grant-ahead-of-ruffed-grouse-season">https://www.grandforksherald.com/sports/northland-outdoors/minnesota-hunter-walking-trails-revitalized-with-300-000-lccmr-grant-ahead-of-ruffed-grouse-season</a>
We The Forest Video highlighting one hunter walking trail system and associated management	<a href="https://wetheforest.com/blogs/videos/the-impact-of-active-aspen-grove-management-on-ruffed-grouse-habitat-in-the-lake-states">https://wetheforest.com/blogs/videos/the-impact-of-active-aspen-grove-management-on-ruffed-grouse-habitat-in-the-lake-states</a>
Outdoor News Covers LCCMR ENRTF RGS Hunter Walking Trail Effort	<a href="https://www.outdoornews.com/2024/10/03/hunter-walking-trails-get-a-facelift-in-northern-minnesota/">https://www.outdoornews.com/2024/10/03/hunter-walking-trails-get-a-facelift-in-northern-minnesota/</a>
Duluth Tribune Covers LCCMR ENRTF Hunter Walking Trails	<a href="https://www.duluthnewstribune.com/sports/northland-outdoors/ruffed-grouse-society-works-on-habitat-hunter-walking-trails">https://www.duluthnewstribune.com/sports/northland-outdoors/ruffed-grouse-society-works-on-habitat-hunter-walking-trails</a>

## Difference between Proposal and Work Plan

### *Describe changes from Proposal to Work Plan Stage*

1) changed activity 1 & 2 milestone dates to 12/31 end dates to better reflect the end of a construction field season; 2) entered Dissemination information; 3) since this grant now has a 6/30/24 (3 year) end date, increased consultant/project manager FTE to .6 (.2/year) and increased cost to \$36,000; 4) adjusted contract line to reflect changes in consultant contract and printing need.

## Additional Acknowledgements and Conditions:

The following are acknowledgements and conditions beyond those already included in the above workplan:

**Do you understand and acknowledge the ENRTF repayment requirements if the use of capital equipment changes?**

N/A

**Do you understand that travel expenses are only approved if they follow the "Commissioner's Plan" promulgated by the Commissioner of Management of Budget or, for University of Minnesota projects, the University of Minnesota plan?**

Yes, I understand the Commissioner's Plan applies.

**Does your project have potential for royalties, copyrights, patents, sale of products and assets, or revenue generation?**

No

**Do you understand and acknowledge IP and revenue-return and sharing requirements in 116P.10?**

N/A

**Do you wish to request reinvestment of any revenues into your project instead of returning revenue to the ENRTF?**

N/A

**Does your project include original, hypothesis-driven research?**

No

**Does the organization have a fiscal agent for this project?**

Yes, Sponsored Projects Administration

## Work Plan Amendments

Amendment ID	Request Type	Changes made on the following pages	Explanation & justification for Amendment Request (word limit 75)	Date Submitted	Approved	Date of LCCMR Action
1	Amendment Request	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Project Collaborators - Project Manager Info</li> </ul>	Scott Johnson is the newly hired RGS Forest Conservation Coordinator for MN and will be the new LCCMR project manager. We are therefore requesting project manager be changed from Jon Steigerwaldt to Scott Johnson	November 18, 2022	Yes	December 1, 2022
2	Project Manager	Previous Manager: Jon Steigerwaldt (scottj@ruffedgrousesociety.org) New Manager: scott johnson (scottj@ruffedgrousesociety.org)	New Project Manager	November 18, 2022	Yes	November 23, 2022
3	Amendment Request	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Project Collaborators - Project Manager Info</li> <li>Attachments</li> <li>Other</li> <li>Budget - Professional / Technical Contracts</li> <li>Budget - Capital, Equipment, Tools, and Supplies</li> </ul>	Amendment to add completed work location map/ visual, budget adjustment to add line item and description of need to utilize public land administrators to directly execute a portion of work themselves or via contracts, and to add seed under supplies for needed accomplishment of best practices soil stabilization where soils were disturbed by project work	November 5, 2024	Yes	November 20, 2024

# Status Update Reporting

## Final Status Update August 14, 2024

**Date Submitted:** November 5, 2024

**Date Approved:** November 20, 2024

### Overall Update

As noted in this grant's Work Plan, approximately 1,000 miles of hunter walking trails exist in Minnesota on various public forest lands. Stated broad purpose of this grant was to ensure that forest related recreational trail opportunities in Minnesota include non-motorized hunter walking trails which will promote ongoing participation of current and future hunters, birders and hikers that seek this type of trail experience.

To tackle this effort, grant sponsor (Ruffed Grouse Society/American Woodcock Society) worked with fifteen public forest land administrators (Chippewa National Forest, seven Counties, and seven DNR Area Wildlife offices) to assess and identify needs, secure contract and supply needs, finalize and implement trailhead and trail enhancements. Specifically, portions of 134 trails totaling 326 miles were enhanced, upgraded through a combination of efforts on 24 parking lots, 65 gates, 171 map/sign sets, 83 new or enhanced trail maps, restoration of 66.0 trail miles, and construction of 9.3 trail miles as listed in attached admin worksheet and photo log.

This grant was well received and supported by grant partners. An unspent balance for this grant does not reflect a lack of need, was primarily due to an extremely wet 2024 spring.

### Activity 1

Milestones: Restore, upgrade 120 trailheads, 50 miles of trail; budget target of \$210,000

- 6/30/24, final activity accomplishments totaled 171 trailheads through a combination of efforts on 27 parking lots (gravel); removal, installation of 65 gates; and/or 171 map/sign set upgrades. Also, 66.0 miles of trail were restored, upgraded on 35 trails.

- 6/30/24, final activity budget totaled \$189,873.35 spent, balance of \$20,126.65 (9.6%). An extremely wet spring/early summer and the logistics of trying to find dry sites to work on is the primary reason for the unspent balance.

*(This activity marked as complete as of this status update)*

### Activity 2

Milestones: Develop, construct ~12 miles of new hunter walking trails and related trailheads; budget target of \$50,000.

- 6/30/24, final activity accomplishments totaled 9.3 miles on four trails. Final reporting efforts found that 4/1/24 accomplishments should have noted four trails for 9.3 miles, not 8.8 miles. New trail miles constructed were primarily trail segments or loops to make connections within existing trail systems.

- 6/30/24, final activity budget totaled \$14,449.63, balance of \$35,550.37 (71.1%). Due to the nature of trail construction efforts (i.e., dirt work, installation of culverts, etc.), completion of activity goals was severely impacted by 2024 spring/early summer extremely wet conditions, one planned effort for 3.7 miles had to be canceled.

*(This activity marked as complete as of this status update)*

### Activity 3

Milestones: Update, improve hunter walking trail information necessary for management and public recreation users (~100 trails); budget target of \$40,000.

- 6/30/24, final activity accomplishments totaled 83 trail maps either created or enhanced, printed for display as part of map/sign sets at 171 trailheads.

- 6/30/24, final activity budget expenditures totaled \$12,436/78, balance of \$27,563.22 (68.9%). \$20,000.00 of the unspent balance was related to what was planned as GIS mapping support for public land agencies that was not needed,



did not fit into update process or timing, or was contributed as in-kind.

*(This activity marked as complete as of this status update)*

### **Dissemination**

- RGS staff and contracted grant consultant worked in ENRTF verbiage and LCCMR reference into everyday correspondence with public agency grant partners and private contracting, supply orders, etc. The \$221,345 in ENRTF funds expended for this grant translates to 59 vendor invoices that included both a connection to ENRTF and an economic boost to small business in northern Minnesota.
- 40 ENRTF signs were purchased with grant funds.
- Now that grant and trail efforts are complete, a media blitz (Duluth, Star Tribune, MN Outdoor News) is planned for this fall to note ENRTF support for trail and trailhead accomplishment of this grant.
- A large format map/information sign created and installed on the Chippewa National Forest's Johnson Lake hunter walking trail system was used as a backdrop and video point for a "We the Forest" 3:30 minute YouTube video segment (85K views to date) titled "The Impact of Active Aspen Grove Management on Ruffed Grouse Habitat" that while primarily focused on aspen, habitat management also worked in hunter walking trail use for management and public recreation use.

# Status Update Reporting

## Status Update April 1, 2024

**Date Submitted:** April 4, 2024

**Date Approved:** July 26, 2024

### Overall Update

- The \$106,445 noted as budget expenditures to date in this grant's budget table (pages 7-9) reflect Total Reimbursement (column F) from RGS's 2/12/24 RGS's grant reimbursement request #2 submitted to DNR OMBS dated 2/12/24. This request has been reviewed, approved and payment received by RGS. Budget, work activity between 2/12/24 and this 4/1/24 status report has primarily consisted of ongoing project coordination efforts by RGS and contracted grant consultant with project partners (Chippewa National Forest, 7 Counties, 10 DNR Wildlife Area offices) to prepare for spring, early summer field work necessary to complete this grant by 6/30/24.
- Further detail on activities completed and currently planned can be referenced in related file attachments: 1) RGS-LCCMR FY21 HWT grant, admin worksheets.xls (specific activity information by grant partner, trail, GPS location, etc.) and 2) RGS-LCCMR FY21 HWT grant, project photo log.doc.
- RGS is committed to the successful completion of budget and activity milestones set for this grant by 6/30/24.

### Activity 1

Milestones: Restore, upgrade 120 HWT trailheads, 50 miles of trails, budget target of \$210,000

- As of 4/1/24, current grant expenditures have led to restoration, upgrade efforts on a total of 47 trailheads through related project efforts on installation of 36 gates, 3 map/sign sets, and graveling of 4 parking lots. Also, an additional 37.4 miles of trail restoration efforts have been undertaken on 12 trails.
- As noted in the RGS-LCCMR FY21 HWT grant, admin worksheet.xls file, another 31 gates, 13 parking lots, 107 map/sign sets, and an additional 40 miles of trail restoration efforts are planned by this grant's 6/30/24 end date.

### Activity 2

Milestones: Develop, construct ~12 miles of new hunter walking trails and related trailheads.

- As of 4/1/24, current grant expenditures have led to 8.8 miles of trail development efforts on four sites/trails.
- As noted in the RGS-LCCMR FY21 HWT grant, admin worksheet.xls file, another 3.7 miles on 3 sites are planned by this grant's 6/30/24 end date.

### Activity 3

Milestones: Update, improve hunter walking trail information necessary for management and public recreation users (~100).

- As stated in previous updates, this is primarily an activity that will be undertaken during and finalized towards the end of the grant period after trailhead infrastructure and trail improvements have been completed so as to provide accurate mapping information. Ongoing coordination has taken place with all partners (Aitkin, Beltrami, Carlton, Cass, Crow Wing, Koochiching and Itasca counties, Chippewa National Forest, and 10 DNR Wildlife field offices). 20+ maps go to the printer in the next two weeks, majority of this effort will take place in June.

### Dissemination

- As always, RGS staff and contracted grant consultant work in ENRTF verbiage and LCCMR reference into everyday correspondence, contracting, supply orders, etc. The grant admin worksheet which notes trails worked and type of activity along with related grant photo log will be used for a late summer media blitz on grant accomplishments.

# Status Update Reporting

## Status Update October 1, 2023

**Date Submitted:** October 30, 2023

**Date Approved:** October 31, 2023

### Overall Update

This Status Update reflects a move to field/site efforts for hunter walking trail activities noted for this grant that were built on trail assessment and priority efforts stated in previous Status Updates.

The \$38,313 noted as budget expenditures in this grant's budget table mirrors a 9/27/23 Payment Request to DNR OMBS, reflects invoices RGS has received/paid or in active process of being paid. While these current budget expenditures (\$38,313) and related activity accomplishments (e.g., trailheads, trails) noted below may seem modest, significant budget commitments (~\$114,000 in active contracts, agreements, etc.) and related activity accomplishments have been set in motion through grant admin and field work secured during this reporting period.

RGS is committed to the successful completion of budget and activity milestones set for this grant by 6/30/24.

### Activity 1

Milestones: Restore, upgrade 120 HWT trailheads, 50 miles of trails.

- As of 10/1/23, current RGS expenditures have led to restoration, upgrade efforts on a total of 19 HWT trailheads: 1) 17 gate replacement efforts on the Chippewa National Forest of which 10 were in the Fiske Lake trail system [Itasca County, T. 150 N., R. 27, S. 30] and 7 were in the Johnson Lake trail system [Cass County, T. 143 N., R. 26, S. 23]; and 2 additional parking lot graveling efforts on the joint Itasca County/DNR Peloquin trail system [T. 60 N. R 22. S. 9]; 2) a total of 6.8 miles of trail restoration, upgrade efforts of which 5.2 miles were on Crow Wing County's Blueberry Bog trail [T. 138, R. 28, S. 30], and 1.6 miles on Beltrami County's Three Island trail system [Beltrami County, T. 148, R. 32, S. 20]. Consult attached LCCMR photo file for pre and post site photos.

### Activity 2

Milestones: Develop, construct ~12 miles of new hunter walking trails and related trailheads.

- As of 10/1/23, current RGS expenditures have led to the completion of 1.0 miles of new hunter walking trails constructed in conjunction with Beltrami County's Three Island trail system effort noted above. Consult attached LCCMR photo file for pre and post site photos.

### Activity 3

Milestones: Update, improve hunter walking trail information necessary for management and public recreation users (~100).

- As stated in previous updates, this is primarily an activity that will be undertaken during and finalized towards the end of the grant period after trailhead infrastructure and trail improvements have been completed so as to provide accurate mapping information. Significant coordination has taken place with Aitkin, Beltrami, Carlton, Cass, Crow Wing, Koochiching and Itasca counties, and Chippewa National Forest. Coordination with the DNR has been slow, but a process has been agreed to so that significant map and sign sets progress are in line for completion by 6/30/24. Consult attached LCCMR photo file for an example of map work completed by Aitkin County.

**Dissemination**

As always, RGS staff and contracted grant consultant work in ENRTF verbiage and LCCMR reference into everyday correspondence, contracting and supply orders as often as possible. A couple of news articles that note current accomplishments is being worked on for later this fall. ENRTF sign order to be placed soon to make sure completed and upcoming site work is adequately recognized.

# Status Update Reporting

## Status Update April 1, 2023

**Date Submitted:** April 5, 2023

**Date Approved:** April 14, 2023

### Overall Update

Since the October 1st, 2022, status update a substantial amount of site/trail assessment, priority and needs effort has been undertaken with public land partners by RGS's contracted grant consultant (Gone Wildlife Enterprises, LLC) and Scott Johnson (RGS staff) as designated Grant Manager. This recent effort built on the establishment of proper working channels/contacts, process and expectations noted in the October 1, 2022, status report to actual trail specific needs (i.e., gates, map and information signs, trail improvements, etc.), priorities, funding, and timing to complete projects. To date this has involved the DNR Section of Wildlife, DNR Division of Forestry, Chippewa National Forest, and the counties of Beltrami, Cass, and Crow Wing. This recent effort has resulted in trail specific needs for 60+ trails and \$500,000+ that will be used to guide project budgets to public land partners and their trail specific efforts to be completed this summer/fall.

- The \$4,314 noted in this grant's budget table is for an invoice RGS has processed/paid for contracted grant consultant efforts submitted to RGS on 1/31/23, GWE LLC inv. #951. RGS has not yet submitted this invoice to OMBS for reimbursement.

### Activity 1

No direct, trail specific accomplishments to date. However as noted in the Overall Update, trail specific and related funding needs are nearly complete; contracting, supply, sign needs, etc. are being worked on; project is well positioned to accomplish activity milestones during upcoming 2023 construction season (May-November).

### Activity 2

No direct, trail specific accomplishments to date. However as noted in the Overall Update, trail specific and related funding needs are nearly complete; contracting, supply, sign needs, etc. are being worked on; project is well positioned to accomplish activity milestones during upcoming 2023 construction season (May-November).

### Activity 3

This is primarily an activity that will be undertaken during and finalized towards the end of the grant period after trailhead infrastructure (i.e. gates, signs, etc.) and trail improvements have been completed so as to provide accurate mapping information. Ongoing discussions with various partner needs during this status report period have brought forth good progress on map types, content and standards that should be used across all public forest land administrators.

### Dissemination

No public dissemination efforts this past reporting period. However, we are working on a couple of trail tours and related news articles for this fall. As always, RGS staff and contracted grant consultant work in ENRTF verbiage and LCCMR references into everyday correspondence, contracting and supply orders as often as possible.

# Status Update Reporting

## Status Update October 1, 2022

**Date Submitted:** November 29, 2022

**Date Approved:** December 1, 2022

### Overall Update

RGS has completed the hiring of a Forest Conservation Director for Minnesota and NW Wisconsin (Scott Johnson, 412-860-3481, [scottj@ruffedgrousesociety.org](mailto:scottj@ruffedgrousesociety.org)). A grant amendment request will be submitted soon to have Scott noted as Project Manager.

- While there are no direct site accomplishments or \$ expenditures to report to date there has been a substantial amount of site/trail assessment effort undertaken by the contracted grant consultant and Scott Johnson to discuss coordination and needs with public forest land administrators. This effort has secured proper working channels/contacts, process and expectations for how this grant can move forward. To date this has involved the DNR Division of Fish and Wildlife, DNR Division of Forestry, Chippewa and Superior National Forests, and the counties of Aitkin, Beltrami, Cass, Crow Wing and Koochiching. This effort is critical to the successful completion of this grant since it updates trail data, work/site needs for 2023/24.

### Activity 1

As noted under Overall Update, no direct trail specific accomplishments have been completed as of 10/1/22 primarily due to a lack of timely responses from various public land agencies that would have allowed for trail related accomplishments to be completed during the 2022 summer/fall construction season. These issues are/have been worked out and will not be an impediment in 2023. We fully expect to spend/encumber a majority of the \$210,000 allocated for this Activity in 2023, fully spend this allotment by 6/3/24. However, we may not be able to fully meet trail activity milestones noted primarily due to increases in supply and contracting costs reflected in the recent economy.

### Activity 2

As noted under Overall Update, no direct trail specific accomplishments have been completed as of 10/1/22 primarily due to a lack of timely responses from various public land agencies that would have allowed for trail related accomplishments to be completed during the 2022 summer/fall construction season. These issues are/have been worked out and will not be an impediment in 2023. We fully expect to spend/encumber a majority of the \$50,000 allocated for this Activity in 2023, fully spend this allotment by 6/3/24. However, we may not be able to fully meet trail activity milestones noted primarily due to increases in supply and contracting costs reflected in the recent economy.

### Activity 3

This is primarily an activity that will be undertaken towards the end of the grant period after trailheads and trails have been worked on. Current discussions during this status report period however have brought forth good discussions on map types, content and standards that should be used across all public forest land administrators.

### Dissemination

This grant and related ENRTF, LCCMR process has received a significant amount of exposure with the various public forest land administrators we have been dealing with. Also, RGS/Scott Johnson sponsored a field day on 8/2/22 at two hunter walking trails in the Chippewa National Forest. Field topics discussed were previous trail and habitat management efforts as well as what this grant can be used for going forward. The 20+ attendees included public forest land field staff and forest industry staff. This field day also ended up being a late August article in MN Outdoor News.

# Status Update Reporting

## Status Update April 1, 2022

**Date Submitted:** April 11, 2022

**Date Approved:** April 20, 2022

### Overall Update

A State of Minnesota grant contract agreement (204435/3-201095) was not fully executed until December 6th, 2021, due to state grant writing backlogs and RGS review and approval needs. Since that date, grant sponsor (Ruffed Grouse Society) has secured the services of a grant consultant through a contract with Gone Wild Enterprises, LLC (\$36,000, 12/28/21) as noted in the grant's work plan budget summary table, contract and services budget line. RGS has also recently hired a State Forest Conservation Director (50% now, 100% come July 1st) that will provide universal support to all RGS grants in Minnesota. Grant efforts completed this status report period include paper and computer file organization, ongoing collection of trail needs and priorities, and a recent letter to state (DNR), federal (Chippewa and Superior National Forests) and county land departments to engage them in this grant. RGS grant admin and implementation needs are setup, activity accomplishments will start this 2022 field season as noted under each respective Activity category.

### Activity 1

No accomplishments for status report period, expect to work on ~40 trailheads and ~20 miles of trail by next status report date (10/1/22).

### Activity 2

No accomplishments for status report period, expect to work on ~2 miles of new trail by next status report date (10/1/22).

### Activity 3

No accomplishments for status report period. This is primarily an activity that will be undertaken towards the end of the grant period after trailheads and trails are worked on. However, it is hoped that ~30 trail systems will have new data and maps available for land managers and the public by the next status report date (10/1/22).

### Dissemination

Only public dissemination for this status report period was the grant engagement letter that went out to DNR, USFS and County land administrations which included numerous ties ins to funding source (ENRTF) and process (LCCMR).