



Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

M.L. 2024 Approved Work Plan

General Information

ID Number: 2024-188

Staff Lead: Noah Fribley

Date this document submitted to LCCMR: June 7, 2024

Project Title: Increasing Accessibility of Environmental Education at Deep Portage

Project Budget: \$228,000

Project Manager Information

Name: Lindsay Bjorklund

Organization: Deep Portage Learning Center

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Project Reporting

Date Work Plan Approved by LCCMR: June 20, 2024

Reporting Schedule: June 1 / December 1 of each year.

Project Completion: November 30, 2025

Final Report Due Date: January 14, 2026

Legal Information

Legal Citation: M.L. 2024, Chp. 83, Sec. 2, Subd. 05q

Appropriation Language: \$228,000 the second year is from the trust fund to the commissioner of natural resources for an agreement with Deep Portage Learning Center to enhance the accessibility of environmental education and outdoor recreation at Deep Portage Learning Center through projects that provide opportunities and support independence for physically disabled students visiting the campus.

Appropriation End Date: June 30, 2027

Narrative

Project Summary: To enhance the accessibility of environmental education and outdoor recreation at Deep Portage Learning Center through projects that provide opportunities and support independence for physically disabled students visiting the campus.

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

Deep Portage Learning Center hosts approximately 5000 students from around the state of Minnesota every year. Students participate in experiential lessons focused on environmental science, natural resources, and outdoor recreation. Currently, students with physical disabilities are encouraged to attend trips along with their peers. Many classes and activities are accessible, and accommodations and adaptations are available, however there are certain barriers to meaningful participation that require specific, adaptive equipment.

Additionally, some current adaptations, such as transporting students in an electric UTV on challenging terrain, do not always promote student independence and exploration.

Deep Portage's land is also open to the public and receives 2000-3000 visitors year-round who enjoy its many habitats, scenic views, and abundant wildlife. The project would increase access for enjoying some of the most beautiful parts of Deep Portage. Some of the best birding, especially spring warbler migration, could be made more universally accessible for those with mobility limitations, elderly individuals, and families using strollers.

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.

The proposed solution includes ADA upgrades to existing trails, the purchase of adaptive equipment and tools for school program use, and staff research and training for best practices, policies, and procedures for implementing these tools into our regular programming. Our intention is to make the campus and our educational and recreational offerings more accessible for visiting school groups and public visitors.

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?

These projects will increase access to environmental education and outdoor recreation for many Minnesotan students. Being able to offer activities, access, and exposure to different parts of the state's natural resources or ways to enjoy them can create a trajectory of change or newfound passion that shapes their future role as a responsible outdoor recreator, natural resources scientist, or environmentally-conscious citizen. Deep Portage experiences are all about creating a "spark," so increasing ways to offer sparks for our students is vital. With over 70 school groups coming per year, there are many opportunities to improve the educational experience for all.

Project Location

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

County(s): Cass

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

Statewide

When will the work impact occur?

In the Future

Activities and Milestones

Activity 1: Improve Accessibility on Existing Trails

Activity Budget: \$74,000

Activity Description:

1. There is a 0.25 mile trail leading from the main building/parking lot along the west side of Bass Pond, to an end point with views of both Bass Pond and Big Deep Lake. This trail is already paved, however it is in need of asphalt overlay to improve the trail quality as it was originally paved 30 years ago. This trail meanders through mixed forest, holds towering pines, and passes by vernal ponds that come alive with amphibians every spring. It has amazing views of Bass Pond and finally ends at a peaceful resting spot where one can relax and take in the beauty of Bass Pond and Big Deep Lake. Birds abound in this location; one can sometimes observe 15 different species of warblers in one day, making it a premier location to recommend as a spot for its "Birdability."
2. Pave a trail to allow individuals with limited mobility easy access to Bass Pond. A trail currently exists, however it's not accessible. Bass Pond is commonly used with students for paddle-sports, aquatic ecology, fishing, and wildlife viewing. Access to this location would open up a multitude of programmatic opportunities those with limited mobility.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Seek bids for paving project	September 30, 2024
Complete Big Deep Lake Trail Overlay	August 31, 2025
Complete Bass Pond Trail Paving	August 31, 2025

Activity 2: Obtain Adaptive Equipment for School Program Use

Activity Budget: \$105,000

Activity Description:

Several pieces of adaptive equipment would substantially increase access for students to meaningfully participate in environmental education lessons and outdoor recreation activities. These include:

1. An all-terrain tracked power wheelchair capable of traversing Deep Portage's hilly, rugged terrain.
2. A cross-country sit-ski that would allow students a different way to experience cross country skiing and provide a more inclusive method of transportation along winter trails for many winter classes.
3. Adaptive kayaks and a kayak launching dock to provide access to the water for paddle sports, fishing, wildlife viewing, and aquatic ecology education.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Purchase track chair	October 31, 2024
Purchase nordic sit ski	November 30, 2024
Purchase adaptive kayaks	May 31, 2025
Install adaptive kayak launch	June 30, 2025

Activity 3: Expand Birding/Wildlife Observation Access of the Big Deep Lake Trail

Activity Budget: \$45,000

Activity Description:

To enhance the accessibility of the Big Deep Lake paved trail and take advantage of its exceptional birding potential, this activity is to construct an ADA compliant bird observation shelter for comfortable observation of birds for all. Such a shelter is also beneficial to wildlife as it reduces disturbances.

"Birdability" (see www.birdability.org) is an organization and movement working to make birding inclusive and accessible for all. Paving the trail from the building to Big Deep Lake (Activity 1) as well as adding a bird observation shelter would allow all students a comfortable place out of the elements to listen or watch for birds. It would also make this public trail a premier destination for wildlife observers of all abilities to come bird, as well as participate in public Big Day or BioBlitz events that contribute to the scientific understanding of phenology, migration patterns, and ecology.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Seek bids for construction of bird observation shelter	April 30, 2025
Construct ADA Accessible Bird observation shelter	October 31, 2025

Activity 4: Implement Adaptive Equipment into Program

Activity Budget: \$4,000

Activity Description:

One Deep Portage education staff member will be hired as a regular education team member with the special purpose of implementing the use of adaptive equipment into our programming. They will be responsible for researching and outlining best practices, policies and procedures. They will create documents for the Deep Portage website and provide resources to visiting schools so that visiting students and their families know what will be available to them. They will also gather basic information of what type of adaptive equipment is being used, where it can be acquired, where students may be able to rent it in Minnesota, and any potential financial support so that they may be able to continue these activities back home. This staff member will assist the rest of the education team with implementation.

Additionally, this staff member may also note other accessibility gaps at our center and help make a plan for continued improvement.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Identify education staff member responsible for implementation	September 30, 2024
Best practices/policies/procedures complete	August 31, 2025

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.

Deep Portage will share print and digital information about the adaptive equipment in use at Deep Portage with schools that attend as well as public visitors, allowing schools to know ahead of time what may be available for their students, as well as to provide them information to spread awareness of what type of adaptive equipment is out there and how it can be utilized for families or other organizations. We will document successes and lessons learned so that we are able to share that information with the other residential environmental learning centers and nature centers in the state that may be looking into similar projects. Deep Portage will share information about the project in newsletter articles, mailings, and social media posts. There will be opportunities to share what was accomplished with the project, as well as sharing the successes and photos of adaptive equipment being utilized. Physical signs will be installed at the bird observatory, adaptive kayak launch, and trailhead to acknowledge the physical infrastructure paid for by ENTRF. The Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund will be acknowledged through the use of the logo or attribution language on all project print and electronic media, publications, and signage per the ENTRF acknowledgement guidelines.

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?

The accessible trails would immediately expand access to several locations at Deep Portage. Deep Portage will be responsible for the maintenance and care of the trails and equipment. Adaptive equipment will be implemented into regular programming according to Activity 4 and integrated into any future curriculum. After project completion, Deep Portage will continue to fund for staff training to ensure safe, responsible, and inclusive use of equipment.

Other ENRTF Appropriations Awarded in the Last Six Years

Name	Appropriation	Amount Awarded
Increasing K-12 Student Learning to Achieve ENRTF's Goals	M.L. 2022, , Chp. 94, Art. , Sec. 2, Subd. 05b	\$1,602,000

Budget Summary

Category / Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Purpose	Gen. Ineligible	% Benefits	# FTE	Classified Staff?	\$ Amount
Personnel								
1 Education Staff		To research adaptive equipment implementation and procedures			0%	0.2		\$4,000
							Sub Total	\$4,000
Contracts and Services								
TBD	Professional or Technical Service Contract	Paving 2 trails, approximately 0.40 miles in total				-		\$74,000
TBD	Professional or Technical Service Contract	Construction of ADA Bird Observation Shelter				-		\$45,000
							Sub Total	\$119,000
Equipment, Tools, and Supplies								
	Equipment	Nordic Sit Ski - 1	To allow physically disabled students to try cross country skiing, and for easier and more comfortable movement on winter trails.					\$3,000
	Equipment	Adaptive kayaks - 2	To provide disabled students a chance to try out paddle sports, go fishing, and learn about aquatic ecology in a safe and comfortable mode of transportation.					\$3,000
							Sub Total	\$6,000
Capital Expenditures								
		All-terrain power track chair - 1	To allow physically disabled students access to more areas of the Deep Portage campus and more					\$24,000

			opportunities for independent participation and exploration in classes					
		Adaptive Kayak Launch	To allow for safe and independent access to Bass Pond via kayak.					\$75,000
							Sub Total	\$99,000
Acquisitions and Stewardship								
							Sub Total	-
Travel In Minnesota								
							Sub Total	-
Travel Outside Minnesota								
							Sub Total	-
Printing and Publication								
							Sub Total	-
Other Expenses								
							Sub Total	-
							Grand Total	\$228,000

Classified Staff or Generally Ineligible Expenses

Category/Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Justification Ineligible Expense or Classified Staff Request
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Non ENRTF Funds

Category	Specific Source	Use	Status	\$ Amount
State				
			State Sub Total	-
Non-State				
			Non State Sub Total	-
			Funds Total	-

Attachments

Required Attachments

Visual Component

File: [8ca18771-873.pdf](#)

Alternate Text for Visual Component

Figure 1: A satellite map of the area of the proposed trail upgrades.

Figure 2: The entire trail map of the Deep Portage trail system, with a rectangle showing the area depicted in Fig 1

Figure 3: Photos of adaptive equipment including track chair, sit ski, and kayak launch....

Financial Capacity

File: [8ecf5b51-69c.pdf](#)

Board Resolution or Letter

Title	File
Resolution Letter	af073dd6-a5e.pdf

Difference between Proposal and Work Plan

Describe changes from Proposal to Work Plan Stage

-Completed revisions as requested on 12/29/23 - moved trail work and construction of bird observatory to Professional/technical contracts, updated dissemination language, and added milestone for seeking bids for bird observatory construction.

6/6/2024 - reviewed project manager contacts, reviewed appropriation language, noted no new comments/revisions from LCCMR staff

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?

Yes

Do you agree travel expenses must follow the "Commissioner's Plan" promulgated by the Commissioner of Management of Budget or, for University of Minnesota projects, the University of Minnesota plan?

N/A

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?

No

Does your project include the pre-design, design, construction, or renovation of a building, trail, campground, or other fixed capital asset costing \$10,000 or more or large-scale stream or wetland restoration?

Yes

Do you propose using an appropriation from the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund to conduct a project that provides children's services (as defined in Minnesota Statutes section 299C.61 Subd.7 as "the provision of care, treatment, education, training, instruction, or recreation to children")?

Yes

Do you certify that background checks are performed for background check crimes, as defined in Minnesota Statutes, section 299C.61, Subd. 2, on all employees, contractors, and volunteers who have or may have access to a child to whom children's services are provided by your organization?

Yes