

**Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund
2020 Request for Proposals (RFP)**

Project Title:

ENRTF ID: 266-G

Minnesota Hunter Walking Trails, Public Land Recreational Access

Category: G. Land Acquisition for Habitat and Recreation

Sub-Category:

Total Project Budget: \$ 545,000

Proposed Project Time Period for the Funding Requested: June 30, 2023 (3 yrs)

Summary:

Within Minnesotas ~1,000 hunter walking trail system; restore/upgrade ~200 trailheads and ~80 miles of trail; develop ~20 miles of new trail; and compile enhanced maps for management and public users.

Name: Gary Drotts

Sponsoring Organization: Ruffed Grouse Society

Job Title: RGS MN Grant Manager

Department: NA

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Brainerd MN 56401

Telephone Number: (218) 232-7740

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Web Address: ruffedgrousesociety.org

Location:

Region: Central, Northwest, Northeast

County Name: Aitkin, Beltrami, Cass, Clearwater, Crow Wing, Hubbard, Itasca, Koochiching, Lake, Lake of the Woods, Mille Lacs, Morrison, Pine, Roseau, St. Louis, Wadena

City / Township: BRAINERD

Alternate Text for Visual:

Map shows an example of an existing hunter walking trail on the Chippewa National Forest, also lists assessment information to be gathered.

<input type="checkbox"/>	Funding Priorities	<input type="checkbox"/>	Multiple Benefits	<input type="checkbox"/>	Outcomes	<input type="checkbox"/>	Knowledge Base	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Extent of Impact	<input type="checkbox"/>	Innovation	<input type="checkbox"/>	Scientific/Tech Basis	<input type="checkbox"/>	Urgency	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Capacity Readiness	<input type="checkbox"/>	Leverage	<input type="checkbox"/>		TOTAL	<input type="checkbox"/>	%



PROJECT TITLE: Minnesota Hunter Walking Trails – Public Land Recreational Access

I. PROJECT STATEMENT

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. The goal of this grant proposal as sponsored by the Ruffed Grouse Society is to update a significant portion of that system through: 1) restore and upgrade ~200 trailheads and 80 miles of existing trail; 2) development of ~20 miles of new trails; and, 3) updating of maps for both management and public users.

Currently this statewide system of HWTs is located on State Wildlife Management Area (35%), 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. The broad purpose of this request is therefore 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 folks to upland hunting traditions while also facilitating forest habitat improvements through access for forest management (timber harvest).

The broad purpose of this request is therefore to ensure that recreational trail opportunities in Minnesota continue to include non-motorized hunters walking trails. The trail will promote the ongoing participation of current users that seek this type of recreational experience, encourage the introduction of new users to upland hunting traditions, and facilitate forest habitat improvements through access for forest management activities (e.g. timber sales).

In preparation for this effort, the Ruffed Grouse Society is currently undertaking a detailed assessment of HWTs across all public forest land administrators in Minnesota. This assessment will serve to provide a single dataset and process to prioritize HWT needs for this grant if funded. Based on this assessment RGS will also be looking at future LSOHC, MNCPL grant proposals to enhance forest habitats (e.g. young forest, within-stand diversity, legacy patches, etc.) within influence areas of these trails.

II. PROJECT ACTIVITIES AND OUTCOMES

Activity 1: Restore, upgrade existing HWT trailheads and trails.

ENRTF BUDGET: \$400,000

Outcome	Completion Date
1. <i>Restore, upgrade ~200 HWT trailhead: Confirm, prioritize HWT trailhead infrastructure needs; bid and contract efforts based on controlling land administrator’s environmental and construction requirements; secure supplies as needed; document and certify successful completions.</i>	12/31/2022
2. <i>Restore, upgrade ~80 miles of existing trails: Confirm, prioritize existing HWT trail needs; bid and contract for the construction of new HWTs based on controlling land</i>	12/31/2022



**Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund (ENRTF)
2020 Main Proposal Template**

<i>administrator’s environmental and construction requirements; document and certify successful completions.</i>	
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Activity 2: Construct new hunter walking trails.

ENRTF BUDGET: \$100,000

Outcome	Completion Date
<i>1. Construct ~20 miles of new hunter walking trails: Confirm, prioritize new HWT trail needs; bid and contract for the construction of new HWTs based on controlling land administrator’s environmental and construction requirements; document and certify successful completions.</i>	<i>12/31/2022</i>

Activity 3: Update, improve HWT information necessary for management and public recreational use (~200).

ENRTF BUDGET: \$45,000

Outcome	Completion Date
<i>1. Ongoing field assessment, information, map updates with respective public land administrators, contracted GIS support.</i>	<i>12/31/2022</i>
<i>2. Finalize and complete information and map updates with respective public land administrators, link all to MNDNR’s HWT webpage for public access.</i>	<i>6/30/2023</i>

III. PROJECT PARTNERS AND COLLABORATORS:

Partners receiving ENRTF funding: *None*

Partners not receiving ENRTF funding:

Project partners include the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources; Chippewa and Superior National Forests; and various Minnesota counties that choose to be involved with this grant. Partner participation will include in-kind assistance through staff efforts, existing trailhead and trail footprints, design assistance, site certification of accomplished work, etc.

IV. LONG-TERM IMPLEMENTATION AND FUNDING:

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.

V. SEE ADDITIONAL PROPOSAL COMPONENTS:

A. Proposal Budget Spreadsheet: See attached, submitted information.

B. Visual Component or Map: See attached, submitted information.

C. Parcel List Spreadsheet: NA

D. Acquisition, Easements, and Restoration Requirements: NA

E. Research Addendum: NA

F. Project Manager Qualifications and Organization

Description: See attached, submitted information

G. Letter or Resolution: See attached, submitted information.

H. Financial Capacity: See attached, submitted RGS 2017 annual fiscal report.

Attachment A: Project Budget Spreadsheet
 Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund
 M.L. 2020 Budget Spreadsheet

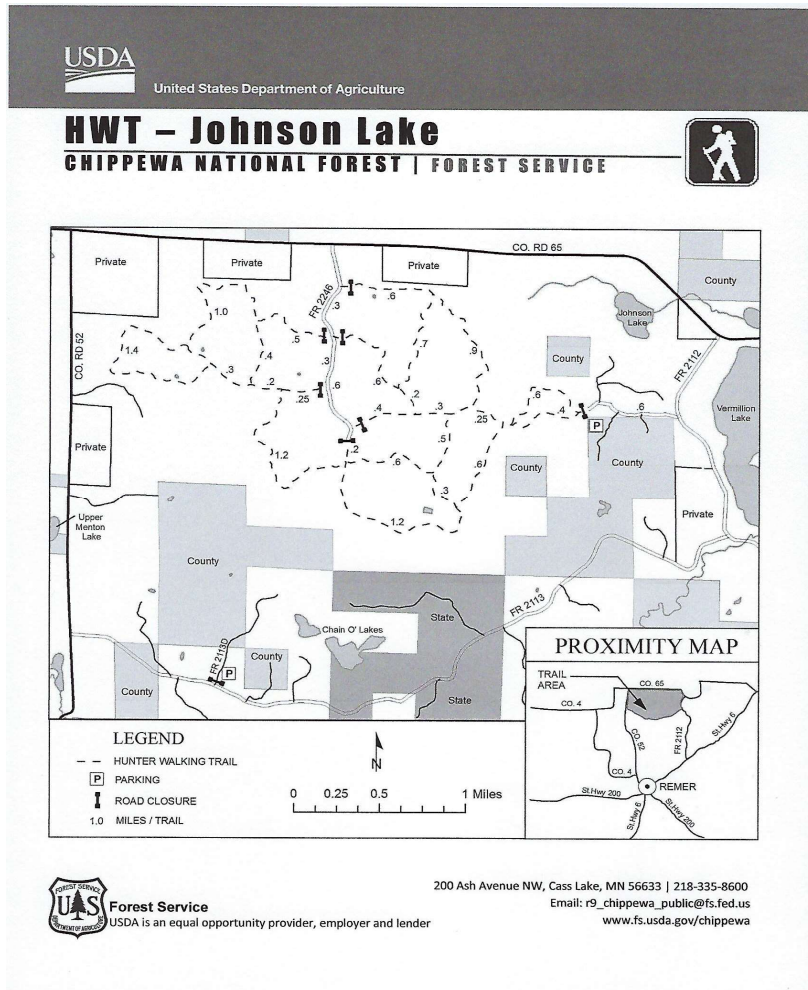


Legal Citation:
 Project Manager: Gone Wild Enterprises, LLC
 Project Title: Minnesota Hunter Walking Trails - Public Land Recreational Access
 Organization: Ruffed Grouse Society
 Project Budget: \$545,000
 Project Length and Completion Date: June 30th, 2023
 Today's Date: April 12, 2019

ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES TRUST FUND BUDGET	Budget	Amount Spent	Balance
BUDGET ITEM			
Personnel (Wages and Benefits)			
	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Professional/Technical/Service Contracts			
1) a project/grant manager will be contracted by the grant sponsor (RGS) to implement, administer, and see to successful completion of this grant.	\$ 40,000	\$ -	\$ 40,000
2) based on priorities identified in the HWT Assessment, service contracts for infrastructure work will be bid and secured by either the Project Manager or by the public administrator as per their respective contracting, environmental standards. Majority of contracts are expected to be in the \$2-10,000 range, very few over \$10,000. In most cases supplies (i.e. culverts, gravel, etc.) will be speced out and included in contract needs. However gate and sign needs may have to be purchased, secured as a supply based on design specifications of the respective public land administrator.	\$ 380,000	\$ -	\$ 380,000
3) it is also expected that a certain level of GIS/map support (\$20,000) will need to be contracted to support the updating of management information and related public use support needs (maps).	\$ 20,000	\$ -	\$ 20,000
Equipment/Tools/Supplies			
1) Misc. equipment, tool needs for the Project Manager to accomplish various site needs (installation of gates, signs, etc.) are not expected to exceed \$5,000.	\$ 5,000	\$ -	\$ 5,000
2) it will probably be necessary, cost effective to bid and secure certain bulk supply needs (i.e. gates, signs) based on design, specification needs of respective public land administrators.	\$ 100,000	\$ -	\$ 100,000
Capital Expenditures Over \$5,000			
	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Fee Title Acquisition			
	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Easement Acquisition			
	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Professional Services for Acquisition			
	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Printing			
	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Travel expenses in Minnesota			
	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Other			
	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
COLUMN TOTAL	\$ 545,000	\$ -	\$ 545,000

SOURCE AND USE OF OTHER FUNDS CONTRIBUTED TO THE PROJECT	Status (secured or pending)	Budget	Spent	Balance
Non-State:		\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
State:		\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
In kind: 1) \$10,000 in RGS field and corporate staff support, funding of the 2019 Minnesota Hunter Walking Trail Assessment, 2) \$10,000 in MNDNR staff support, 3) \$5,000 in Chippewa, Superior National Forest staff support.	RGS is secured, others are pending	\$ 25,000	\$ -	\$ 25,000
Other ENRTF APPROPRIATIONS AWARDED IN THE LAST SIX YEARS	Amount legally obligated but not yet spent	Budget	Spent	Balance
		\$ -	\$ -	\$ -

HWT map and example of possible HWT data to be collected, used to drive grant priority setting.



- County: Cass
- Land administrator: Federal
- Mgmt. Unit: Chippewa NF
- MU name: Johnson Lake HWT
- # of trails: 3
- # of miles: 14.0
- # of acres: size of trail influence area
- Mgmt. priority: H, M, L based on land administrator input
- Current maintenance: text on when, how often the HWT has been maintained (i.e. trails mowed every 2 years, trail heads checked each fall, no infrastructure work for 20+ years)
- Assessment info.: current condition, use (heavy), what infrastructure and habitat needs are there, ???
- Management needs: Note infrastructure and habitat management needs for the future (i.e. replace two gates, gravel one parking lot, three new entrance signs, etc.)
- Other: ???

Project Manager Qualifications

A project manager will be contracted to oversee and manage this grant. This manager will work with and under the supervision of the MNDNR's Forest Game Bird Coordinator, a position that the Ruffed Grouse Society shares with the MNDNR through an annual contribution to this position's salary.

Project manager duties for this grant are expected to be contracted by RGS with Gone Wildlife Enterprises, LLC (Gary Drotts). GWE is currently under contract with RGS as a project/grant manager for existing FY17 (\$217,270), FY18 (\$189,475), and FY19 (\$120,000) MN Conservation Partner Legacy grants RGS has secured over the last three years. GWE is also being contracted by RGS to undertake and complete the HWT Assessment report noted in the grant application.

Gary Drotts is a life-long resident of northern Minnesota, avid outdoorsman, hunter, and fisherman. This passion for the outdoors led to a BS in Wildlife Management from the University of Minnesota in 1974; a 39-year professional natural resource career working for MNDNR Wildlife in Brainerd (primarily wetland and forest habitats, retired as Area Wildlife Manager); and in retirement has stayed actively engaged in outdoor issues through volunteer efforts (recently on the Governor's Wild Rice Task Force) and natural resource consulting efforts (Ruffed Grouse Society and National Wild Turkey Federation). Gary's background and expertise in site needs, contracting, public land contacts, and grant administration will fit well with project manager needs for this grant.

Organization Description

Consult the Ruffed Grouse Society's webpage for complete detail on this organization at <http://www.ruffedgrousesociety.org>. The following notes a summary of this organization's Mission Statement and About Us from this website.

Mission Statement: Established in 1961, the Ruffed Grouse Society is North America's foremost conservation organization dedicated to preserving our sporting traditions by creating healthy forest habitat for ruffed grouse, American woodcock and other wildlife. RGS works with landowners and government agencies to develop critical habitat utilizing scientific management practices.

About Us: Our members are mainly grouse and woodcock hunters who support national scientific conservation and management efforts to ensure the future of the species. Our organization is headquartered in Coraopolis, PA, employs a team of wildlife biologists to work with private landowners, and government, including local, state and federal, land managers who are interested in improving their land for ruffed grouse, American woodcock and the other songbirds and wildlife that have similar requirements.

The Ruffed Grouse Society is a national organization with chapters in 26 states and several Canadian provinces. In Minnesota they have 14 Chapters.