

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

Project Title:

ENRTF ID: 271-G

Superior Hiking Trail As Environmental Showcase

Category: G. Land Acquisition for Habitat and Recreation

Sub-Category:

Total Project Budget: \$ 450,000

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

Summary:

Renew the Superior Hiking Trail (SHT) to minimize environmental damage, make it safer for users, and make it more resistant to increased traffic and climate change.

Name: Denny Caneff

Sponsoring Organization: Superior Hiking Trail Association

Job Title: Executive Director

Department: _____

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Location:

Region: Northeast

County Name: Carlton, Cook, Lake, St. Louis

City / Township: Duluth, Grand Marais

Alternate Text for Visual:

Photos of badly worn trail, and a map illustrating segments of trail compromised by water or erosion.

_____ Funding Priorities	_____ Multiple Benefits	_____ Outcomes	_____ Knowledge Base
_____ Extent of Impact	_____ Innovation	_____ Scientific/Tech Basis	_____ Urgency
_____ Capacity Readiness	_____ Leverage	_____ TOTAL	_____ %



PROJECT TITLE: Making the Superior Hiking Trail A Showcase for Resource-Sensitive Hiking Trail Construction

I. PROJECT STATEMENT

Our main goal for this project is to renew and rebuild the Superior Hiking Trail (SHT) to minimize environmental damage, make the Trail safer for users, and make it more resistant to the impacts of increased traffic and climate change. Secondary goals are to meet or exceed expectations of landowners, both private and public, to responsibly manage the SHT on their lands, and enhance users' experience on the SHT.

Much of the SHT was built well before national trail building standards were established. The SHT is hugely popular and was not built to withstand the impact of an estimated 100,000 users annually. As a result, there is considerable environmental damage to the Trail, and damage caused by users of the Trail.

A 2018 ENRTF grant allowed the Superior Hiking Trail Association (SHTA) to hire trail experts to evaluate root causes of environmental damage and user dangers on the SHT. Their findings were at once sobering and inspiring: the problems on the SHT were not limited to the 30 miles that they evaluated but were in fact endemic along the entire 300-mile length of the Trail. Their advice to the Association: adopt national hiking trail construction standards; change organizational systems and processes to support sustainable trail building; and focus intensely on managing water. This advice dovetailed nicely with the SHTA's own Trail Renewal Program, launched in early 2018, a commitment to reduce natural resource damage caused by SHT users.

Outcomes: Sections of the Trail showing the most environmental damage (mud holes, eroding hillsides) will be repaired. Built structures (e.g. board walks, stairways, bridges) will be constructed to minimize environmental damage and reduce hazards for trail users. Wetlands through which the SHT passes will be far less impacted; erosion-prone slopes and stream banks will be better protected.

Achieving the Goal: Commit to environmental responsibility by adopting and implementing national hiking trail construction standards for every project on the SHT; and training staff, volunteers and contractors in those principles and practices.

Why Do This? It is simply the right thing to do, by the land and water, to renew the SHT to minimize user impacts. A 2020 ENRTF grant would enable the SHTA to continue the renewal work stemming from a 2019 ENRTF grant that focuses on the "worst of the worst" sections of the SHT. If we fulfill the promise of our Trail Renewal Program, the SHTA can be a showcase for how an "old" hiking trail can be renewed and built to last.

II. PROJECT ACTIVITIES AND OUTCOMES

Activity 1 Title: Renew and Rebuild the Most Damaged and Dangerous Segments

Description: There are countless board walks, stairways, small bridges and other structures – and, conversely, a lack of them – needing reconstruction and renewal. Our focus in this activity will be to replace weak or decrepit built structures, using construction standards for trail structures developed by the National Park Service and used by most other national scenic trail groups. In addition, this activity will include retrofitting the SHT with water management devices (e.g. water bars, drainage dips, swales, ditches) so that water is deflected away from and off the tread (footpath) of the Trail, thereby reducing or eliminating erosion and mud holes.



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

ENRTF BUDGET: \$225,000

Outcome	Completion Date
<i>1. Up to 40 structures will be rebuilt or built anew in areas most in need.</i>	<i>December 2022</i>
<i>2. Up to 25 miles of the SHT will be retrofitted with water management devices.</i>	<i>December 2022</i>
<i>3. Up to 10 short reroutes totaling up to 2 miles will be completed.</i>	<i>December 2022</i>

Activity 2 Title: Renewing the SHT By Making Brand-New Trail

Description: Some segments of the SHT were simply put in the wrong place from the beginning: at the bottom of a slope, through a wetland area, or onto a nearby snowmobile trail for lack of a better route. In this activity, we intend to build entirely new sections of trail (1,000 -10,000 feet), because the existing trail simply can't be fortified enough to withstand the natural and human forces undermining it. In these cases, starting over is the best course of action. There are many vagaries to getting a "reroute" approved, making it difficult to determine exactly which segments would get rerouted. Those listed below are high-priority candidates for rerouting:

ENRTF BUDGET: \$225,000

Outcome	Completion Date
<i>1. Soggy segments of Britton-to-Oberg and Lutsen-to-Caribou Trail sections of SHT totaling up to 5 miles, will be rerouted to higher, firmer ground</i>	<i>December 2022</i>
<i>2. A new 2.5 mile segment near Grand Marais will be built to take the SHT off the North Shore State (snowmobile) Trail.</i>	<i>December 2022</i>
<i>3. A new route (about 1.5 miles) will be built to create a second Northern Terminus for the SHT, allowing users to arrive at the Pigeon River (Canadian border)</i>	<i>December 2022</i>

III. PROJECT PARTNERS AND COLLABORATORS:

- Minnesota DNR (state parks and forestry) – land access, technical assistance, environmental permitting.
- U.S. Forest Service (Superior National Forest) – land access, technical assistance, materials contributions, environmental permitting.
- St. Louis County, Lake County (forestry, highways, land) – land access, technical assistance, permitting.
- City of Duluth (parks dept.) – land access, financial assistance, technical assistance.
- North Country Trail Association – advice and counsel, technical assistance.
- Ice Age Trail Alliance – advice and counsel, technical assistance.

IV. LONG-TERM IMPLEMENTATION AND FUNDING:

The Trail Renewal Program has focused the Association's energy, resources and systems so that the lofty goal of creating and supporting a hiking trail that lasts a century is achievable. The Trail Renewal Program has brought about a significant increase in private donations that will support the operations of the organization. Big trail-building projects will require support from wherever we can get it, including public sources (local governments, IRRRB, ENRTF, Parks Greater MN Parks and Trails Commission) and private sources (private foundations, major donors and investors).

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



Legal Citation:

Project Manager: Denny Caneff, executive director

Project Title: Making the Superior Hiking Trail A Showcase for Resource-Sensitive Hiking Trail Construction

Organization: Superior Hiking Trail Association

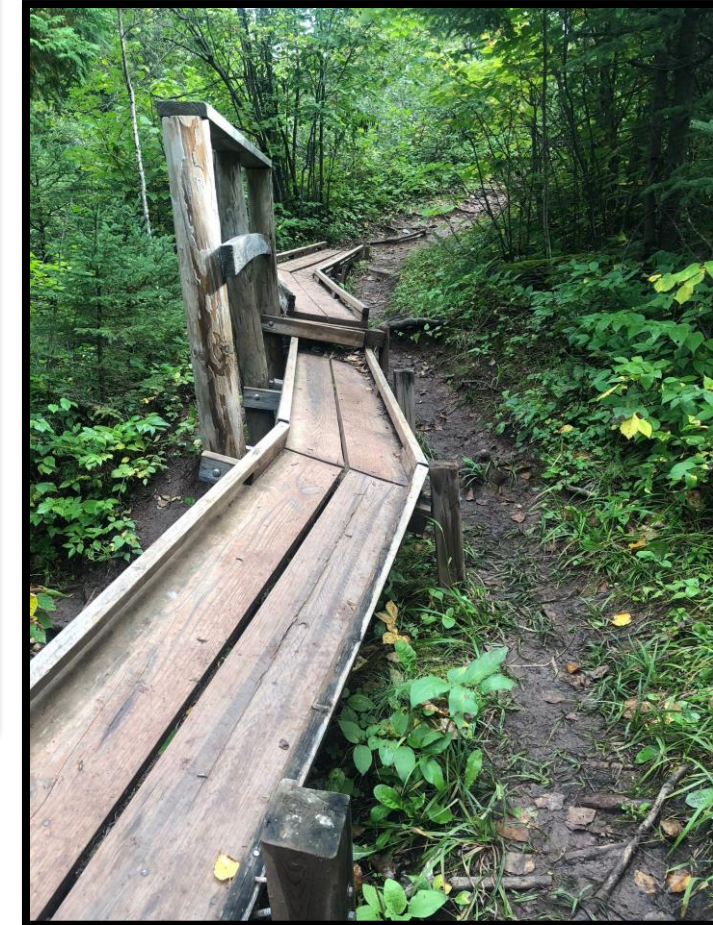
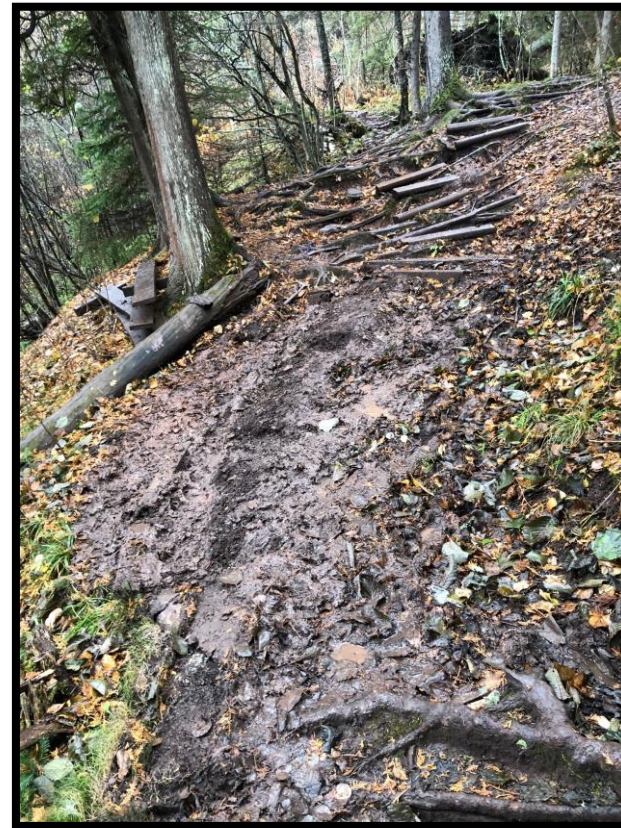
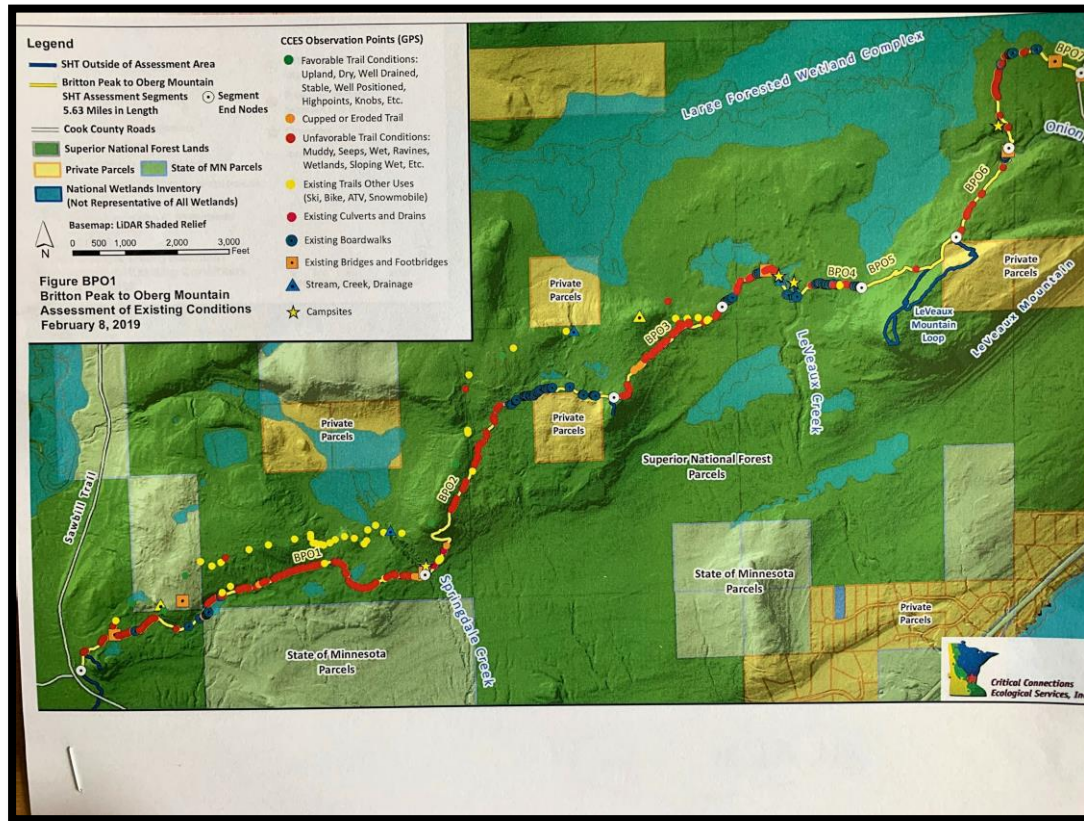
Project Budget: \$450,000

Project Length and Completion Date: July 1, 2020 to December 1, 2022

Today's Date: April 9, 2019

ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES TRUST FUND BUDGET		Budget	Amount Spent	Balance
BUDGET ITEM				
Personnel (Wages and Benefits)		\$ 32,500	\$ -	
Trail operations director oversees trail construction work. Wages: 20% (.2 FTE) of \$52,000 annual salary x 2.5 years = \$26,000. Benefits; 25% of salary supported by grant (or \$26K)x 2.5 years = \$6,500.				
Professional/Technical/Service Contracts				
Trail construction contractors will be experts in recreational trail building. They will be sourced via competitive RFP process. Services would include trail construction, board walk and stairway construction (wood or stone), but could include trail route identification and mapping.		\$ 381,000	\$ -	
Equipment/Tools/Supplies				
This includes lumber, cement, hardware, gravel, metal bog pans and related hardware.		\$ 25,000	\$ -	
Capital Expenditures Over \$5,000				
Used snowmobile to transport materials to remote locations on frozen ground.		\$ 8,000	\$ -	
Fee Title Acquisition				
		\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Easement Acquisition				
		\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Professional Services for Acquisition				
		\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Printing				
		\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Travel expenses in Minnesota				
Travel to work sites by SHTA staff = \$1,200. Material vendors' transport costs = \$2,300		\$ 3,500	\$ -	
Other				
		\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
COLUMN TOTAL		\$ 450,000	\$ -	\$ -
SOURCE AND USE OF OTHER FUNDS CONTRIBUTED TO THE PROJECT				
	Status (secured or pending)	Budget	Spent	Balance
Non-State: Donations and memberships	Secured	\$ 200,000	\$ -	\$ 200,000
State: Recreational Trails Program, IRRRB	Pending	\$ 150,000	\$ -	\$ 150,000
In kind: Volunteers (4,000 hours x \$20/hr.)	Secured	\$ 80,000	\$ -	\$ 80,000
Other ENRTF APPROPRIATIONS AWARDED IN THE LAST SIX YEARS				
	Amount legally obligated but not yet spent	Budget	Spent	Balance
M.L. 2018, Chp. 214, Art. 4, Sec. 02, Subd. 09f		\$ 59,683	\$ -	\$ -

Below: The red and yellow dots represent “undesirable trail conditions.” From a 2018 assessment funded by ENRTF grant.



Superior Hiking Trail Association

LCCMR-ENRFT Submission (2020 funding)

April 2020

Organization Description

The mission of the Superior Hiking Trail Association is to build, maintain, renew and promote the Superior Hiking Trail – linking people with nature by footpath along Lake Superior’s North Shore.

The founder of the Superior Hiking Trail toiled quietly and steadily to build a hiking trail paralleling the North Shore. The original ambition was to build a hiking trail from Grand Marais to Two Harbors, but by the late 1990s the Association expanded its ambition and committed to stretch the trail border to border – from the Canadian border to the Minnesota-Wisconsin state line.

In July of 2017, the final link of this 310-mile long natural footpath – a bridge over the Red River near the southern terminus of the SHT, near Jay Cooke State Park – was completed. In addition to the main SHT, there are nearly 40 miles of loops and spurs (main trail offshoots) and 94 campsites operated by the SHTA.

Numbers of trail users are hard to verify, but we estimate nearly 100,000 people use the SHT annually, from all over the state and country: trail runners competing in nationally renowned trail races near Lutsen, Twin Citians enjoying the watery glory of the Split Rock River, grandmothers walking their grandchildren and dogs in Duluth. At the heart of the SHT are the hundreds of volunteers putting in tens of thousands of hours scratching out tread, whipping weeds, building bridges and board walks, and generally keeping the trail in shape.

Because the Trail is over 30 years old; built before modern trail-building standards; located in places that were more convenient than ecologically appropriate; and heavily used, it was clear the existing trail management system was not equal to the task and needed a reboot. In 2018, the Association initiated a Trail Renewal Program to better plan trail renewal and prioritize projects. The program includes better planning, improved volunteer training and engagement, and a full time position at SHTA devoted to trail operations.

Trail Operations Director

Trail operations director Tamer Ibrahim will be the primary project manager for this effort. He is a 20-year veteran of the U.S. Forest Service as a wilderness ranger, building trails and portages throughout the Superior National Forest. He has considerable experience in working with volunteers, working with contractors, handling large tools and equipment, and developing and executing trail-building projects, all of which will serve him well at SHTA. He developed and leads our Volunteer Crew Leader program (a small cadre of highly skilled and experienced volunteers) and oversees all trail construction initiatives and the logistical support they require.