



# Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

## 2025 Request for Proposal

### General Information

**Proposal ID:** 2025-116

**Proposal Title:** SHT Bridge, Boardwalk and Trailhead Renewal

### Project Manager Information

**Name:** Lisa Luukkala

**Organization:** Superior Hiking Trail Association

**Office Telephone:** (218) 834-2700

**Email:** lluukkala@superiorhiking.org

### Project Basic Information

**Project Summary:** The Superior Hiking Trail seeks to renew bridges, boardwalk and trailheads to increase user safety, improve the user experience, and protect adjacent land and water.

**ENRTF Funds Requested:** \$532,000

**Proposed Project Completion:** December 31, 2027

**LCCMR Funding Category:** Methods to Protect or Restore Land, Water, and Habitat (F)

### 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?**

Statewide

**When will the work impact occur?**

In the Future

## Narrative

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

The SHT's bridges are its most expensive and complex infrastructure. SHTA, in partnership with land managers, conduct assessments when a bridge has notable signs of aging or potential failure. If a bridge is compromised, it may be assigned a weight restriction, be signed for closure, or be removed. Often a bridge will be closed or removed years before a replacement bridge can be installed. This is primarily due to the challenge is the expense of bridges and the complexity and SHTA's capacity to implement complex bridge projects in remote locations with limited resources.

SHT trailheads are an important component to the trail experience. There are over 50 trailheads within our system, most of which are managed and maintained solely by the Association. Due to compounding deferred maintenance at trailheads there are serious issues including rutting, widening, and pooling. As visitor use increases along the Superior Hiking Trail, we see the need to explore expansion at some of our smaller or more heavily used trailheads. In addition, some trailhead locations are not optimal and identifying new locations is a more viable long-term solution to assure greater safety, reduce impacts on the environment or reduce maintenance costs.

### **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.**

Using asset inventory data collected through our larger Master Planning effort, SHTA will prioritize the replacement of bridges at critical water crossings in high use areas along the Trail near steep and challenging terrain. In 2017 SHTA launched its Trail Renewal Program and a core focus was reducing the number of bridged water crossings along our the Trail by (1) identifying alternative crossing locations (2) rerouting the trail (3) using natural stepping stones in place of a bridge. We have made great progress in reducing our bridges and boardwalk by using these methods, yet there always remain some water crossings that require a bridge or a low area that requires boardwalk. We will use modern, sustainable bridge design and partner with knowledge land management agencies. SHTA volunteers will provide over 4,000 hours to assist with the installations.

Through the Master Planning process the need for trailheads improvements was brought up time and time again by our users. The trail experience begins at the trailhead and SHTA plans to improve that experience by updating our most degraded locations. Applications will include regrading, new signage and, in some cases, small expansions or even relocation. These activities will take part by contractors.

### **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?**

SHTA's Trail Renewal Program strives to build using the most modern, sustainable methods to ensure our 400,000 seasonal visitors do not cause unnecessary harm to surrounding lands and waters. This includes bridges and trailheads, often overlooked elements of the Trail. Our efforts to make the SHT resilient to climate changes and withstand increase visitor use will help protect and preserve the sensitive habitats and ecosystems through which the Trail traverses.

The Trail is a space for exploration and education -- it's where tens of thousands of Minnesotans start their lifelong connection to the outdoors.

## Activities and Milestones

**Activity 1: Replace the most compromised foot bridges along the Superior Hiking Trail Corridor and reestablish the Split Rock River bridge.**

**Activity Budget:** \$358,415

**Activity Description:**

Over 2026 and 2027 we will replace 3 to 4 bridges of these most compromised. These are bridges that span steep ravines and span in length from 35 - 55 feet.

Bridges priorities have been identified by SHTA staff and land managers. These include, in order of priority:

1. Split Rock River Bridge -55 foot span
2. Onion River Bridge - 55 foot span
3. Baptism River Bridge -- 35 foot span
4. Devil Track River Bridge -- 42 foot span

SHTA will install a 55 foot bridge across the Split Rock River. Trail users have long advocated to reinstate a bridge at this location since its removal in 2016. This will finally complete the full renewal of the popular loop trail experience, the other components of the renewal are being completed in 2024 and 2025 with ENTRF support. The project will include a 225' trail extension on each side of the river adjust to the crossing location, which has already been identified.

Bridge projects, will be project managed by SHTA staff and implemented by staff and volunteers. SHTA has a long history of completing bridge installations. We plan to use bridge manufacturer, Arete, a product we have experience installing.

**Activity Milestones:**

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Permits/permission with land managers complete for 2026 work	December 31, 2025
Contractors secured & materials ordered for 2026 work	March 31, 2026
Volunteer recruitment for 2026 projects complete	May 31, 2026
Replacement 1 to 2 bridges in 2026	November 30, 2026
Construct trail extension to SRR bridge location (approximately 225' on each side)	November 30, 2026
Permits/permission with land managers complete for 2027 work	December 31, 2026
Contractors secured & materials ordered for 2027 work	March 31, 2027
Volunteer recruitment for 2027 projects complete	May 31, 2027
Replacement 1 to 2 bridges in 2027	November 30, 2027

**Activity 2: Relocate or improve SHT Trailheads to provide adequate parking and signage and better protect the adjacent land and water.**

**Activity Budget:** \$60,907

**Activity Description:**

Work will include the relocation of the trailhead at Arrowhead Trail to a more optimal location less than a half mile from its current location. The new relocation will double the parking spots from 6 to 12. The new location will eliminate the need for the current lengthy spur trail with failing bridges. The new 54' x 60' trailhead will include a new trail kiosk. The project will include the decommissioning of the spur trail and the old trailhead.

SHT will also improve another 3 to 5 trailheads within our corridor. Improvements could include small expansions, culverts, gravel and grading, new trailhead signage.

All projects will involve consultation with the associated land manager and the completion of any required environmental reviews.

Trailhead improvements were one of the most frequently cited issue by trail users through public feedback collected as part of our larger 2023/2024 Master Planning effort. Alongside parking lots improvements, SHTA is committed to providing better wayfinding and trail user "Leave No Trace" education at trailhead kiosks.

**Activity Milestones:**

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Permits/permission with land managers complete for 2026 work	January 31, 2026
Contractors secured & materials ordered for 2026 work	April 30, 2026
Volunteer recruitment for 2026 projects complete	May 31, 2026
Build new Trailhead on Arrowhead	November 30, 2026
Decommission old trailhead and spur trail on Arrowhead	November 30, 2026
Permits/permission with land managers complete for 2027 work	January 31, 2027
Contractors secured & materials ordered for 2027 work	April 30, 2027
Improve 3 to 5 trailheads with small expansions, grading, and new signage.	November 30, 2027

**Activity 3: Replace failing boardwalk on popular section of SHT.**

**Activity Budget:** \$112,678

**Activity Description:**

Replace 420' linear feet of boardwalk at East Sawmill Creek, between Sawmill Pond and Section 13 Cliffs. This area is swampy and requires replacement of elevated boardwalk and use of more durable materials. The project requires 108 linear feet of Wickcraft boardwalk product, which is made with a galvanized steel frame guaranteed to last for 100 years. The decking of this type of boardwalk is wide and level, which makes to easier to traverse.

SHTA has installed Wickcraft boardwalk, thanks in part to ENTRF support, in other key swampy, lowland locations along the SHT Corridor. Due to project complexity, the installation will be completed by a paid contractor.

**Activity Milestones:**

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Permits/permission with land managers	January 31, 2026
Contractors secured & materials ordered	April 30, 2027
108 linear feet of Wickcraft Boardwalk installed	November 30, 2027
305 linear feet of puncheon installed	November 30, 2027

## Project Partners and Collaborators

Name	Organization	Role	Receiving Funds
Jonathan Benson	US Forest Service -- Superior National Forest	Liaison to SHTA within the boundary of the national forest	No
Christa Maxwell	Minnesota DNR - Division of Parks & Trails	Liaison to the SHTA within the boundary of state park land	No
Nathan Eide	Lake County - Forestry/Land Department	Liaison to the SHTA within the boundary of Lake County land	No
Mike Young	Minnesota DNR - Division of Forestry	Liaison to SHTA with the project boundary of DNR Forestry lands	No
Matt David	North Country Trail Association	Technical assistance	No

## 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?**

SHTA continues to diversify its funding streams and strengthen partner relationships with land managers to guarantee a high-quality recreational experience now and into the future. Last year over half our annual budget was secured by the generosity of SHT members and donors. SHTA's 2024 Master Plan outlines a road map to secure the trail corridor for future generations of users, address emerging needs around visitor use management all while assuring adequate resources are in place to support the longevity of the Trail corridor and support people to safely and respectfully use Minnesota's public lands.

## Other ENRTF Appropriations Awarded in the Last Six Years

Name	Appropriation	Amount Awarded
Restoring Five Sections of the Superior Hiking Trail	M.L. 2019, First Special Session, Chp. 4, Art. 2, Sec. 2, Subd. 09o	\$191,000
Plumbing The Muddy Depths Of Superior Hiking Trail	M.L. 2021, First Special Session, Chp. 6, Art. 6, Sec. 2, Subd. 08h	\$187,000
Superior Hiking Trail As Environmental Showcase	M.L. 2021, First Special Session, Chp. 6, Art. 5, Sec. 2, Subd. 09k	\$450,000
Renewing Access to an Iconic North Shore Vista	M.L. 2023, , Chp. 60, Art. 2, Sec. 2, Subd. 08m	\$197,000

## Project Manager and Organization Qualifications

**Project Manager Name:** Lisa Luokkala

**Job Title:** Executive Director

**Provide description of the project manager’s qualifications to manage the proposed project.**

Superior Hiking Trail Association's Executive Director, Lisa Luukkala has a decade and half of experience overseeing large-scale recreational infrastructure projects. Luukkala led in the planning, designing, funding and construction of multi-million dollars recreation improvements during her time as the City of Duluth Parks & Recreation. In addition, she holds over 17 years of managing state and federal grants in the nonprofit sector as well as the public sector. Luukkala is attuned to state environmental and outdoor recreational trends and associated policies. Her expertise has been used, as steering committee member, to help craft the Minnesota Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan 2020-2024 and she currently sits on the Society of Outdoor Recreation Professional's Board of Directors.

**Organization:** Superior Hiking Trail Association

**Organization Description:**

Superior Hiking Trail Association is the non-profit organization that manages, maintains, promotes and supports the Superior Hiking Trail (SHT). The SHT is a nationally-recognized 300-mile long natural footpath running from the Ontario border to the Wisconsin border, passing through Duluth. Started in 1986, The SHT features 94 backcountry campsites and several loops and spurs. A beloved and popular Minnesota recreational amenity, the Trail hosts over 400,000 visitors annually between May and November. The SHT enjoyed by people age 6 to 86 -- long-distance hikers and day hikers, trail runners, church youth groups, and adventure travel enterprises all enjoy the stunning scenic beauty and the physical challenge that the SHT affords.

## Budget Summary

Category / Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Purpose	Gen. Ineligible	% Benefits	# FTE	Classified Staff?	\$ Amount
<b>Personnel</b>								
Volunteer Coordinator		Volunteer recruitment, coordination and oversight			15%	0.24		\$11,000
Trail Operations Director		Project managers -- leads permitting, hires contractors, manages contractors and volunteers			15%	0.5		\$35,000
							<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>\$46,000</b>
<b>Contracts and Services</b>								
TBD	Professional or Technical Service Contract	Installation of boardwalk				-		\$69,520
TBD	Professional or Technical Service Contract	Construction of new Trailhead				-		\$30,657
TBD	Professional or Technical Service Contract	Installation of bridges				0		\$40,000
							<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>\$140,177</b>
<b>Equipment, Tools, and Supplies</b>								
	Tools and Supplies	108' Wickcraft product, 420' boardwalk lumber	Boardwalk replacement materials					\$35,657
	Tools and Supplies	3-4 Fiberglass bridges, cement for abutments, timber beams, tools to assist with bridge install	Bridge replacements					\$276,716
	Tools and Supplies	Gravel, stone, timber for new sign posts, signage, plantings	Improvements at 3-5 existing trailheads, new trailhead at Arrowhead					\$22,750
	Equipment	Laser Level	Needed for bridge installations					\$700
							<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>\$335,823</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	2 years of mileage support along SHT corridor	Trail Op Director's mileage for project planning, oversight and implementation					\$3,000
	Miles/ Meals/ Lodging	2 years of mileage support	Volunteer Coordinator mileage for coordinating and supporting volunteer-led projects within the grant					\$1,000
	Other	Material Transport	Paid contractor transport costs					\$6,000
							<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>\$10,000</b>
<b>Travel Outside Minnesota</b>								
							<b>Sub Total</b>	-
<b>Printing and Publication</b>								
							<b>Sub Total</b>	-
<b>Other Expenses</b>								
							<b>Sub Total</b>	-
							<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>\$532,000</b>



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
<b>State</b>				
			<b>State Sub Total</b>	-
<b>Non-State</b>				
In-Kind	Volunteer Hours Contributed to the Projects (4,080 hrs @\$31.80/hr)	Bridge installations, decommissioning old spur trail and installing new signage	Secured	\$129,743
Cash	US Forest Service RAC grant	Support portion of bridge projects taking place on Superior National Forest	Pending	\$40,000
			<b>Non State Sub Total</b>	<b>\$169,743</b>
			<b>Funds Total</b>	<b>\$169,743</b>

**Total Project Cost: \$701,743**

**This amount accurately reflects total project cost?**

Yes

## Attachments

### Required Attachments

#### *Visual Component*

File: [59cd02bb-97e.pdf](#)

#### *Alternate Text for Visual Component*

The graphic depicts the problems (failing bridges, boardwalk and trailheads) we plan to address and the solutions we plan to pursue with ENTRF support....

#### *Financial Capacity*

Title	File
SHTA Audited Financial Statement	<a href="#">8cf3eda0-396.pdf</a>
SHTA 990	<a href="#">2fba8e9c-b36.pdf</a>

#### *Board Resolution or Letter*

Title	File
SHTA Board Resolution	<a href="#">1718560d-761.pdf</a>
SHTA Board Resolution	<a href="#">2a7bc60f-7d9.pdf</a>

### Supplemental Attachments

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

Title	File
Superior National Forest Letter of Support	<a href="#">907a6a2e-09f.pdf</a>
DNR Division of Parks & Trails Letter of Support	<a href="#">46609a38-bff.pdf</a>
Split Rock River Plan Set	<a href="#">553325f3-f12.pdf</a>
Capital Construction Project Questionnaire	<a href="#">d760dfe5-549.pdf</a>
Capital Construction Budget Addendum	<a href="#">53a8b3e3-244.xlsx</a>

## Administrative Use

**Does your project include restoration or acquisition of land rights?**

No

**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 ENTRF?**

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")?**

No

**Provide the name(s) and organization(s) of additional individuals assisting in the completion of this proposal:**

Tamer Ibrahim (STHA), John MacDonald (SHTA)