



Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

2025 Request for Proposal

General Information

Proposal ID: 2025-268

Proposal Title: Enhancing Preservation and Accessibility at Hawk Ridge Nature Reserve

Project Manager Information

Name: Katie Bennett

Organization: City of Duluth

Office Telephone: (218) 430-4317

Email: kbennett@duluthmn.gov

Project Basic Information

Project Summary: Enhance outdoor recreation and education opportunities that promote conservation of raptors and preservation of natural resources through development of an accessible trail and removal of invasive species at Hawk Ridge.

ENRTF Funds Requested: \$155,000

Proposed Project Completion: June 30, 2027

LCCMR Funding Category: Small Projects (H)

Secondary Category: Land Acquisition, Habitat, and Recreation (G)

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.

Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory (Observatory) was established to further bird research, preservation, education, and stewardship at the Hawk Ridge Nature Reserve (Hawk Ridge), an internationally recognized observation site for bird migration. The Observatory has monitored bird population health for 50 years through migration counts and banding research at Hawk Ridge, and educates thousands of people from around the world on the ecological importance of birds and bird conservation each year.

A community-based planning process for Hawk Ridge revealed three primary challenges: 1) Limited accessible facilities and trails for education programs and outdoor recreation; 2) Visitor safety and conflicts with vehicle traffic; and 3) Limited space and resources for high-quality conservation-based education programming.

This Phase 1 proposal addresses the problem that people of all abilities do not have access to high-quality outdoor recreation and conservation-based education at Hawk Ridge, and the negative effects of invasive species on native plant species. Accessibility to facilities at Hawk Ridge is challenging or non-existent. Accessible viewing areas are limited to the unsafe roadside and one small education program area; the viewing platform is not accessible. There are no accessible trails and, therefore, trail-based education, programming, and research opportunities are not available to all people.

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.

This funding will support Phase I improvements of the Hawk Ridge Nature Reserve Plan to provide visitors of all abilities with access to high-quality outdoor recreation and conservation-based education opportunities. Approximately 1,300 linear feet of universally accessible trail will be constructed, including an accessible loop and access to the viewing platform. The loop will be established through a combination of newly constructed trail, segments of new boardwalk to protect and preserve wetlands, and upgrades to existing trail to meet the firm and stable surface requirements for an accessible trail. All trail will be designed to meet the ABA recreational trail accessibility standards and MN DNR sustainability guidelines. Approximately 1.25 acres of invasive species removal will be completed along the accessible trail corridor.

With the implementation of future project phases, the accessible trail loop will connect a variety of new accessible facilities, including: parking, educational spaces, an amphitheater, permanent restrooms, a playscape, and an overlook area.

Phase I improvements will make the uniquely situated natural area of Hawk Ridge a safer, more sustainable, accessible, and equitable space, allowing the Observatory to expand outdoor conservation-based education opportunities to more people and inspire new stewards of birds and our natural spaces.

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?

Phase 1 improvements at Hawk Ridge will:

- Sustain and expand outdoor environmental education opportunities that enhance youth and family understanding of the importance of protection, conservation, preservation, and enhancement of local natural resources.
- Construct 1,300 linear feet of new accessible trail to expand outdoor education opportunities and promote protection and conservation of local natural resources for people of all abilities.
- Protect and preserve the hydrological integrity of wetlands by constructing 180 linear feet of raised boardwalk.
- Protect nature resources and native plant species by removing invasive species on approximately 1.25 acres of land.

Activities and Milestones

Activity 1: Pre-Design / Design

Activity Budget: \$13,000

Activity Description:

Evaluate project requirements and objectives, establish project metrics and budget, complete necessary consultations and approval process, and secure funding.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Dept. of Administration Pre-Design Review*	July 31, 2024
Consultation with SHPO*	July 31, 2025
All Construction Funds Legally Secured*	July 31, 2025
Approval of Plans	August 31, 2025
Other Permitting / Agency Review	August 31, 2025

Activity 2: Pre-Construction / Construction

Activity Budget: \$140,000

Activity Description:

Prepare construction documents to competitively bid and award the construction contract, and hold pre-construction meetings with the contractors, and begin physical construction and construction management.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Advertisement for Bid	September 30, 2025
Construction Contractor Selected	October 31, 2025
Pre-construction Meetings	April 30, 2026
Construction, Oversight, & Administration Begins	May 31, 2026
Mobilization/Site Preparation/Staking	May 31, 2026
Substantial Completion	June 30, 2026
Construction, Oversight, & Administration Ends	July 31, 2026

Activity 3: Closeout

Activity Budget: \$2,000

Activity Description:

Post-construction activities to close the project out, including addressing punch list items, addressing all permitting and grant requirements, re-opening the facility to the public, and completing final payments and reports.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Stabilization/Punch List Items/As-builts Approved	July 31, 2026
Certificate of Occupancy or Equivalent Obtained*	July 31, 2026
Signage Installed with ENRTF Language or Logo*	July 31, 2026

Open for Intended Use* / Grand Opening	July 31, 2026
Notice of Funding Restriction Recorded*	December 31, 2026
Ongoing Reporting / Final Report	June 30, 2027

Project Partners and Collaborators

Name	Organization	Role	Receiving Funds
Janelle Long, Executive Director	Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory	Manage Hawk Ridge Nature Reserve in collaboration with the City of Duluth; Provide programming and nature-based education to promote conservation, research, and stewardship of raptors, migratory birds, and natural spaces; Seek grant funding and fundraise for implementation of future facility improvements identified under the Hawk Ridge Nature Reserve Mini-Master Plan.	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?

Long-term implementation of the multi-phased Hawk Ridge Plan will be a collaborative effort between the Observatory and the City of Duluth (City). The Observatory will continue to seek grant funding and fundraise to support future project phases to improve accessibility, safety, and conservation/educational facilities.

For this Phase 1 project, the City will be the project’s fiscal agent, procure a qualified contractor, and oversee construction. The City is committed to this role for future project phases, and will continue to coordinate future improvements.

During and post-construction, the Observatory will continue to manage Hawk Ridge and provide programming and educational services.

Other ENRTF Appropriations Awarded in the Last Six Years

Name	Appropriation	Amount Awarded
St. Louis River Re-Connect	M.L. 2022, , Chp. 94, Art. , Sec. 2, Subd. 09d	\$500,000
St. Louis River Re-Connect - Phase II	M.L. 2023, , Chp. 60, Art. 2, Sec. 2, Subd. 09j	\$1,375,000

Project Manager and Organization Qualifications

Project Manager Name: Katie Bennett

Job Title: Senior Parks Planner

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

Katie will be responsible for grant and project management, including coordinating efforts between the City’s construction management team, LCCMR, and the Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory to ensure all project elements are completed properly and in a timely manner.

Katie holds a B.S. in Urban and Regional Planning from Michigan State University, and dual Master of Urban Planning and Master of Public Administration degrees from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. Katie’s previous experience includes managing Community Development Block Grant funds, educating staff and contractors on federal regulations and labor standards, monitoring timeliness, conducting wage interviews, ensuring proper procurement processes, preparing annual action plans and performance reports, and record-keeping for federal monitoring. Katie served as a Peace Corps Volunteer in rural Moldova with a focus on community development, as well as a City Planner in the Milwaukee area with a focus on urban revitalization. In her current role as a Senior Parks Planner for the City of Duluth, Katie manages park planning and improvement projects of all sizes, including community engagement, budgeting, grant

management, and coordinating project implementation with the City's construction management team.

James M. Shoberg, PLA a Professional Landscape Architect and Senior Parks Planner for the City of Duluth, will manage all aspects of the project's construction. Jim has over 20 years of extensive experience managing trail projects, including planning, design, budgeting, permitting, construction, coordination of interdisciplinary teams, and working knowledge of best practices for stormwater management. He also has extensive planning, design, and construction administration experience on a range of other parks and recreation projects, including trail master plans, nature centers, ski resorts, habitat restoration, grassland restoration, and wetland mitigation and delineation, among others.

Organization: City of Duluth

Organization Description:

The City of Duluth manages over 11,368 acres of green space, including 162 parks and a diverse trail network of 10 miles of equestrian trail, 30 miles of paved accessible trail, 16 miles of gravel trail, 38 miles of cross-country ski trail, 85 miles of bike-optimized single-track trail, and over 150 miles of natural surface hiking trail nestled alongside Lake Superior and the St. Louis River. Parks vary from small neighborhood playgrounds to extensive natural areas. Parks and Recreation's mission is to promote the health and well-being of the Duluth community, environment, and economy by facilitating recreational opportunities and coordinating the enhancement of parks, facilities, and natural areas now and into the future.

Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory's (Observatory) mission is to promote conservation of raptors and other migratory birds in the Western Lake Superior Region through research, education, and stewardship. Under a trust agreement with the City, the Observatory manages the Hawk Ridge Nature Reserve (Hawk Ridge), which is open to the public for study and enjoyment. Hawk Ridge is internationally recognized as a major observation site for the fall bird migration, with thousands of visitors annually. The Observatory provides a variety of education programs about birds for all

Budget Summary

Category / Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Purpose	Gen. Ineligible	% Benefits	# FTE	Classified Staff?	\$ Amount
Personnel								
							Sub Total	-
Contracts and Services								
TBD	Professional or Technical Service Contract	Landscape and Design Consultant				0.05		\$13,000
TBD	Professional or Technical Service Contract	Trail Construction Contractor				0.46		\$140,000
TBD	Professional or Technical Service Contract	Invasive Species Removal				0.02		\$2,000
							Sub Total	\$155,000
Equipment, Tools, and Supplies								
							Sub Total	-
Capital Expenditures								
							Sub Total	-
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	\$155,000

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				
Cash	Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory / Duluth Superior Area Community Foundation	Accessible Trail Planning	Secured	\$1,932
Cash	Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory / Lloyd K Johnson Foundation (2019-20)	Hawk Ridge Nature Reserve Mini-Master Plan Development	Secured	\$10,000
Cash	Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory / Lloyd K Johnson Foundation (2021-22)	Hawk Ridge Nature Reserve Mini-Master Plan Development	Secured	\$10,000
In-Kind	Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory	Project Coordination	Secured	\$5,079
Cash	City of Duluth	Landscape and Design Plans	Secured	\$25,000
			Non State Sub Total	\$52,011
			Funds Total	\$52,011

Total Project Cost: \$207,011

This amount accurately reflects total project cost?

Yes

Attachments

Required Attachments

Visual Component

File: [064d44f7-f02.pdf](#)

Alternate Text for Visual Component

Site plan showing an aerial view of Hawk Ridge and Skyline Parkway, elevation contours, and three phases of improvement. Phase 1 includes an accessible trail loop. Phase 2 includes new educational/gathering spaces, restrooms, and road safety improvements. Phase 3 includes new educational/gathering facilities, a playscape, and connector trails....

Financial Capacity

Title	File
City of Duluth Management and Compliance Report	1660ef46-732.pdf

Board Resolution or Letter

Title	File
Resolution 24-0226R	0dd853a4-975.pdf

Supplemental Attachments

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

Title	File
Capital Construction Project Questionnaire	5e49226d-5f2.pdf
Capital Construction Project - Budget Addendum	5ab67da6-66b.xlsx
Letters of Support	76ab8b91-8a4.pdf
Hawk Ridge Nature Reserve Photos	18027ed9-8b9.pdf

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 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")?

No

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

Christine Penney - City of Duluth Grant Coordinator

Allison Brooks – City of Duluth Project Technician

James M. Shoberg, PLA - City of Duluth Landscape Architect and Senior Parks Planner

Janelle Long – Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory Executive Director

