

**2019 ENRTF Project Abstract**

For the Period Ending June 30, 2021

**PROJECT TITLE: Crane Lake to Vermilion Falls Trail**

**PROJECT MANAGER: Bruce Beste**

**AFFILIATION: Voyageur Country ATV**

**MAILING ADDRESS: Box 414, 7511 Gold Coast Road**

**CITY/STATE/ZIP: Crane Lake, MN 55725**

**PHONE: 218-391-5108**

**E-MAIL: bruce@cabinsoncrane.com**

**WEBSITE: [N/A]**

**FUNDING SOURCE: Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund**

**LEGAL CITATION: M.L. 2019, First Special Session, Chp. 4, Art. 2, Sec. 2, Subd. 09n**

**APPROPRIATION AMOUNT: \$ 400,000**

**AMOUNT SPENT: \$ 400,000**

**AMOUNT REMAINING: \$ 0**

**Sound bite of Project Outcomes and Results**

This project created a safe, marked 5.6-mile long corridor for ATV and snowmobile riders connecting the resort community of Crane Lake to the popular Vermilion Falls Picnic area. An elevated boardwalk was built on helical piles to minimize impacts and protect areas that are environmentally sensitive.

**Overall Project Outcome and Results**

The resort community of Crane Lake is a popular tourist destination due to its unique geographic location. Crane Lake is the southernmost lake in Voyageurs National Park, Minnesota's only national park. Many visitors explore, by boat, the beautiful neighboring lakes including Namakan, Kabetogama and Rainy Lakes to the north. To the east of Crane Lake lies Superior National Forest & the Boundary Waters Canoe Area and Quetico Provincial Park. Visitors may arrive with canoes and backpacks, setting out for a wilderness adventure with tents and fishing poles in hand. Another activity, notably increasing in popularity, is the visitor bringing the family and an ATV or snowmobile. Snowmobiling has been popular here for decades and Crane Lake has a well-established winter trail system. However, the beauty of this area with its many streams, lakes, and beaver ponds presents a challenge for ATV riders once the ice melts. To lessen the impact on our environment, and to keep visitors as safe as possible, our ATV club is working to establish a system of wooded, marked corridor routes (like this one) for the ATV enthusiasts.

This trail project was a priority as part of a Master Plan to improve the 5.6 miles between the resort community of Crane Lake and the very popular Vermilion Falls picnic area to create a safe and more immersive experience for riders, keeping them off the paved road. Trail improvements included culvert replacements and new installations, trail hardening, the construction of drainage ditches, and the installation of a 256 foot long pier-supported boardwalk. This bridge built on helical piles is low impact and 12' wide able to accommodate a snowmobile trail grooming machine, making the boardwalk safe and appropriate for year round use. This project was completed with the blessing of the US Forest Service. Hundreds of people visit the Vermilion Falls picnic area each year and this trail will be perfect for making their experience safer and more enjoyable as they connect with the beautiful Northwoods of Minnesota's Voyageur Country.



# Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund (ENRTF)

## M.L. 2019 ENRTF Work Plan (Main Document)

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**Today's Date:** March 3, 2021

**Date of Next Status Update Report:** Final Report

**Date of Work Plan Approval:** June 5, 2019

**Project Completion Date:** June 30, 2021

**Does this submission include an amendment request?** No

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**PROJECT TITLE:** Crane Lake to Vermilion Falls Trail

**Project Manager:** Bruce Beste

**Organization:** Voyageur Country ATV

**College/Department/Division:**

**Mailing Address:** Box 414

**City/State/Zip Code:** Crane Lake, MN 55725

**Telephone Number:** 218-391-5108

**Email Address:** bruce@cabinsoncrane.com

voyageurcountryatv@gmail.com

**Web Address:** www.VoyageurCountryATV.com

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**Location:** Voyageur Country ATV is planning to designate and improve a 5.6-mile wooded trail from the resort community of Crane Lake to the Vermilion Falls US Forest Service Picnic/Recreation Area.

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**Total Project Budget:** \$400,000

**Amount Spent:** \$400,000

**Balance:** \$0

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**Legal Citation:** M.L. 2019, First Special Session, Chp. 4, Art. 2, Sec. 2, Subd. 09n

**Appropriation Language:**

\$400,000 the first year is from the trust fund to the commissioner of natural resources for an agreement with St. Louis County in cooperation with Voyageur Country ATV Club to designate and improve a wooded trail from Crane Lake to Vermilion Falls to accommodate all-terrain vehicle and snowmobile users. This appropriation is available until June 30, 2021, by which time the project must be completed and final products delivered.

**I. PROJECT STATEMENT:**

Voyageur Country ATV is proposing a 538-mile trail system throughout northern St. Louis and Koochiching Counties in order to provide safe and designated routes for ATV riders. The core routes lie between Cook, Crane Lake, Orr, and Buyck, but proposed trails will extend to Ely, International Falls, and other cities.

As part of their proposed master plan, Voyageur Country ATV is planning to designate and improve a 5.6-mile wooded trail from the resort community of Crane Lake to Vermilion Falls USFS Picnic/Recreation Area (See Visual) for ATV/Snowmobile-usage. This route connects the Crane Lake area with the Vermilion Falls overlook and picnic area and is currently a snowmobile trail during winter. The club considers this a priority route within their core trail system since it avoids paved and gravel county roads and instead traverses through the woods, creating a more immersive experience for riders.

Improvements to the trail would include several culvert replacements and new installations, constructing drainage ditches, and installing a 250-foot long pier-supported boardwalk. The boardwalk piers will have significantly less impact to environmentally-sensitive wetland areas versus traditional options such as filling with earthen material. Corrugated metal culverts will be placed in other sensitive areas to provide water flow while allowing ATV traffic. This will help minimize trail rutting and undesired mud holes. The drainage ditches along the sides of the trail are also intending to help keep the trail surface dry and relatively smooth.

The route is already an established trail; however, approximately 1,000 linear feet of trail will need to be cleared as new trail through the woods to avoid an expansive pond. This area is frozen in the winter and does not affect snowmobile traffic; however, there isn't a reasonably feasible or cost-effective way to cross this area on ATV. The new corridor will be cleared at 12 foot width and height to provide adequate space for ATV travel.

The club has used funding from a couple of sources to develop a master plan, conduct environmental assessments (wetland delineations, permitting), design a bridge, and develop engineered trail improvement plans. Potential funding through the LCCMR would help with construction costs associated with the raised boardwalk, culverts, and other construction items. The US Forest Service owns the land affected by this project and has approved of the engineered plans through their NEPA process.

Apart from final environmental mitigation, the Crane to Vermilion Falls' route is ready to be improved. Once the trail is ATV-ready, it will provide a safer, more scenic route through the woods between Crane Lake and Vermilion Falls for tourists and locals.

**II. OVERALL PROJECT STATUS UPDATES: (see below)**

**II. PROJECT ACTIVITIES AND OUTCOMES:**

ACTIVITY 1 Title: Construction of the 5.6 mile trail from Crane Lake to Vermilion Falls

**Description:** Trail improvements, elevated boardwalk construction

**ACTIVITY 1 ENRTF BUDGET: \$ 400,000**

Outcome	Completion Date
1. Project Bid	June 2019
2. Construction Commencement	July 2019

**First Update September 1, 2019**

Waived by LCCMR staff.

**Second Update March 1, 2020**

We started the overall construction of this project in December 2019. During the early winter months we installed 8 culverts and rip-rap, cut and cleared two re-routes, and prepared the worksite to begin constructing the 256.5' X 12' elevated boardwalk. During January and February, we added trail hardening in areas deliver equipment mobilized to the boardwalk site. We did test boring for and installed 32 helical piles and prepared ground for abutments and approaches. In February we installed the stringers and deck joist framing. We continued with work on trail-hardening on the re-route segments with fabric and gravel. One gate was installed.

**Third Update September 1, 2020**

In March and April we constructed the boardwalk abutments and approaches. The boardwalk was decked and railings installed. Approach rails and signs all installed at the boardwalk site. Direction signs, assurance markers, and Do Not Litter signs installed along the trail mounted on galvanized u-posts. Added trail hardening was completed. Due to spring breakup, work was halted mid-April. During summer months amid Covid concerns, and other projects for the contractor, work on our system remained halted.

**Amendment request February 8, 2021:**

1. We wish to extend the project to June 30, 2021 as a result of delays due to COVID.
2. We would also like to make the following changes to the budget:

Change the SEH Construction budget line from \$400,000 to \$361,279.13

Create trail engineering budget line of \$25,668.67

Create signing budget line of \$3,362.

Create a budget line of \$9,690.00 for gates and locks.

The reason for these changes is that our inexperience led to an incomplete definition of our funding request. To us, construction meant taking a designed plan and building the trail to include engineering, construction, signing, gates/locks, and inspection.

**Fourth Update March 1, 2021 (Submitted early on February 8, 2021)**

We were fortunate to resume work in October 2020 to complete the project. We installed remaining culverts and riprap, added pit run gravel for fill, and final grading of the project. Three sets of gates were installed with locks for the club and US Forest Service. Final signing was completed in late November. The project was formally accepted by Voyageur Country ATV on January 5, 2021 and Compliance Certificate to US Army Corps of Engineers on January 18, 2021.

**Amendment Approved by LCCMR 3/1/2021**

**Final Report** submitted March 3, 2021

The resort community of Crane Lake is a popular tourist destination due to its unique geographic location. Crane Lake is the southernmost lake in Voyageurs National Park, Minnesota's only national park. Many visitors explore, by boat, the beautiful neighboring lakes including Namakan, Kabetogama and Rainy Lakes to the north. To the east of Crane Lake lies Superior National Forest & the Boundary Waters Canoe Area and Quetico Provincial Park. Visitors may arrive with canoes and backpacks, setting out for a wilderness adventure with tents and fishing poles in hand. Another activity, notably increasing in popularity, is the visitor bringing the family and an ATV or snowmobile. Snowmobiling has been popular here for decades and Crane Lake has a well-established winter trail system. However, the beauty of this area with its many streams, lakes, and beaver ponds presents a

challenge for ATV riders once the ice melts. To lessen the impact on our environment, and to keep visitors as safe as possible, our ATV club is working to establish a system of wooded, marked corridor routes (like this one) for the ATV enthusiasts.

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#### **IV. DISSEMINATION:**

**Description:** Voyageur Country ATV makes it a priority to generate positive interest in our growing ATV trail system among our community and local media. We have created a new map which includes a focus on the area between Crane Lake and Vermilion Falls. Once this trail is completed, including the elevated boardwalk, the map will reflect this improvement immediately. This trail will also be included on the winter snowmobile map as being a year-round accessible trail. Hundreds of these maps are given out to locals and tourists every season.

Once this trail is completed, we will host an event, inviting community leaders and local media to see this project. Media outlets will be instructed to acknowledge ENRTF support in all stories and coverage of the event. We will invite Destination Polaris and Midwest Outdoors to ride this trail. These two organizations have done filming here within the past year and have great enthusiasm about riding ATVs here in Voyageur Country.

We will post information about this project on social media, specifically our Voyageur Country ATV website and Facebook page. We will send updates to our membership via the Club newsletter that goes to 450-500 addresses each quarter. In each of these actions, we will acknowledge the support of ENRTF.

The Minnesota Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund (ENRTF) will be acknowledged through use of the trust fund logo or attribution language on project print and electronic media, publications, signage, and other communications per the [ENRTF Acknowledgement Guidelines](#).

#### **First Update September 1, 2019**

Waived by LCCMR staff.

#### **Second Update March 1, 2020**

Signs were placed in the community and at the work site October 2019. Major construction began over the winter, so priority was given to alert snowmobilers to use caution in that area. Posters of the trail work and re-routes (including photos) were printed and distributed to area businesses open during the winter. Photos of the construction were regularly put up on the Club's Facebook page.

#### **Third Update September 1, 2020**

Photos of the elevated boardwalk along with a progress report was the subject of the Club's Spring 2020 newsletter. Updates have been on several additional Club newsletters. Five thousand foldable ATV trail maps were printed in August 2020 including the newly improved trail and photos of the project. On the Club's Facebook page, riders often commented on the beauty of the new trail and hundreds of tourists were able to ride to the popular Vermilion Falls Picnic site using the enhanced wooded trail rather than the paved road.

**Fourth Update March 1, 2021 (Submitted early on Feb 18, 2021)**

The new elevated boardwalk and surrounding trails were safe for travel over the winter. The popular snowmobile map (2021 edition) included/highlighted this feature. At the Club meeting in November, the minutes will reflect plans in place for constructing a kiosk at the boardwalk to acknowledge ENRTF as a funding source. Posters are being created for area businesses to display during the summer of 2021 promoting ATV travel over this beautiful bridge. Midwest Outdoors filmed the area February 2021. A club ride in April 2021 is being planned to celebrate completion of this project.

**Final Report** submitted March 3, 2021

**V. ADDITIONAL BUDGET INFORMATION:**

**A. Personnel and Capital Expenditures**

**Explanation of Capital Expenditures Greater Than \$5,000:** Construction costs

The completion of the 256 foot elevated boardwalk will be a permanent source of safety and enjoyment for outdoor enthusiasts in Voyageur Country. Throughout its useful life it will be maintained by the local ATV club and Snowmobile club members and will continue to be used to keep riders off the paved roads. Gates that were fabricated and installed at the site will benefit riders and property owners for years to come. They were designed and installed as permanent gates.

**Explanation of Use of Classified Staff:** N/A

**Total Number of Full-time Equivalent (FTE) Directly Funded with this ENRTF Appropriation:** N/A

Enter Total Estimated Personnel Hours for entire duration of project:	Divide total personnel hours by 2,080 hours in 1 yr = TOTAL FTE: N/A
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**Total Number of Full-time Equivalent (FTE) Estimated to Be Funded through Contracts with this ENRTF Appropriation:**

Enter Total Estimated Contract Personnel Hours for entire duration of project:	Divide total contract hours by 2,080 hours in 1 yr = TOTAL FTE: TBD Contractors will supply number of hours worked
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**VI. PROJECT PARTNERS**

**A.Partners outside of project manager’s organization receiving ENRTF funding**

St. Louis County will be receiving the appropriation as fiscal agent for the Voyageur Country ATV Club Benchmark Engineering of Mt Iron, MN will contract and manage trail work construction including culvert replacements and new installations, construction of drainage ditches, adding gravel, etc. SEH of Duluth, MN will contract and manage the 250-foot elevated boardwalk construction. Both of these firms were vetted and hired through a fair and competitive bidding process by the City of Orr who acted as Voyageur Country ATV’s fiscal agent at the start of this project.

**B. Partners outside of project manager’s organization NOT receiving ENRTF funding**

Voyageur Country ATV Board of Directors – Role: Project Administration and Funding  
Voyageur Trail Committee – Role: Trail Maintenance  
Other Local ATV Clubs – Role: Future Planning and Project Development  
The All-Terrain Vehicle Association of Minnesota (ATVAM) – Role: Trail Marketing and Trail Development

**VII. LONG-TERM- IMPLEMENTATION AND FUNDING:**

Long-term activities includes highlighting the regional significance and future development of the Voyageur Country ATV trail system. The trail system currently covers most of northern St. Louis County utilizing several forest roads, county roads and other trails. Future development will include the addition of several miles of new routes and the construction of trail features including bridges and boardwalks. Voyageur Country ATV will be working closely with other area ATV clubs to connect all regional trail routes to enhance the ability to attract more visitors to northern Minnesota.

In order to ensure future funds for trail routing and construction, the Voyager Country ATV will be applying for local, state and regional funds including Federal Recreation Trail Program, DNR Trails Programs, Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission, State Bonding Bill Funds and Iron Range Resources programs.

**VIII. REPORTING REQUIREMENTS:**

- Project status update reports will be submitted March 1 and September 1 each year of the project
- A final report and associated products will be submitted between June 30 and August 15, 2021

**IX. SEE ADDITIONAL WORK PLAN COMPONENTS:**

- A. Budget Spreadsheet** attached
- B. Visual Component or Map** attached
- C. Parcel List Spreadsheet** N/A
- D. Acquisition, Easements, and Restoration Requirements** N/A
- E. Research Addendum** N/A



Attachment A:  
 Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund  
 M.L. 2019 Budget Spreadsheet  
 Legal Citation: M.L. 2019, First Special Session, Chp. 4, Art. 2, Sec. 2, Subd. 09n  
 Project Manager: Bruce Beste  
 Project Title: Crane Lake to Vermilion Falls Trail  
 Organization: Voyageur Country ATV  
 Project Budget: \$661,740  
 Project Length and Completion Date: June 2019-October 2020  
 Today's Date: March 3, 2021



ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES TRUST FUND BUDGET		Budget	Amount Spent	Balance
<b>BUDGET ITEM</b>				
<b>Personnel (Wages and Benefits)</b>			\$ -	
<b>Professional/Technical/Service Contracts</b>				
<b>Benchmark Engineering - trail improvements, culverts</b>				
SEH Engineering for trail, selected by competitive bid process		\$ 25,669	\$ 25,669	\$ (0)
S E H, Inc. - Construction of elevated boardwalk, trail improvements, culverts. Selected by competitive bid process.		\$ 361,279	\$ 361,279	\$ -
<b>Equipment/Tools/Supplies</b>			\$ -	
Signs, banners, rerout map		\$ 3,362	\$ 3,362	\$ -
<b>Capital Expenditures Over \$5,000</b>			\$ -	
Gates and Locks		\$ 9,690	\$ 9,690	\$ -
<b>Fee Title Acquisition</b>			\$ -	
<b>Easement Acquisition</b>			\$ -	
<b>Professional Services for Acquisition</b>			\$ -	
<b>Printing</b>			\$ -	
<b>Travel expenses in Minnesota</b>			\$ -	
<b>Other</b>			\$ -	
		\$ 400,000	\$ 400,000	\$ (0)
<b>COLUMN TOTAL</b>				
			<b>Spent</b>	<b>Balance</b>
<b>OTHER FUNDS CONTRIBUTED TO THE PROJECT</b>		<b>Status (secured or pending)</b>	\$ -	
Non-State: RTP funding Engineering, trail hardening, culverts		secured	\$ 150,000	\$ 150,000
Local Grants, Donations Engineering, wetland delineation, core drilling, enhance		secured	\$ 37,500	\$ 37,500
State:			\$ -	
In kind: Club labor to assist in construction - Wetland credits \$29,000, Materials \$27,000		pending	56,000	56,000
			<b>Spent</b>	<b>Balance</b>
<b>PAST AND CURRENT ENRTF APPROPRIATIONS</b>		<b>Amount legally obligated but not yet spent</b>	\$ -	
Current appropriation:			\$ -	
Past appropriations:				

