

## **Project Abstract**

**ML 2019 , First Special Session, Ch 4, Art. 2, Sec. 2, Subd. 9(o)**

For the Period Ending June 30, 2021

**PROJECT TITLE:** Restoring Five Sections of the Superior Hiking Trail

**PROJECT MANAGER:** Lisa Luukkala, Executive Director

**AFFILIATION:** Superior Hiking Trail Association

**MAILING ADDRESS:** PO Box 315

**CITY/STATE/ZIP:** Two Harbors, MN 55616

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

**LEGAL CITATION:** ML 2019 , First Special Session, Ch 4, Art. 2, Sec. 2, Subd. 9(o)

**APPROPRIATION AMOUNT:** \$ 191,000

**AMOUNT SPENT:** \$ 191,000

**AMOUNT REMAINING:** \$ 0

### **Sound bite of Project Outcomes and Results**

The Superior Hiking Trail (SHT), which traverses the ridgeline of Minnesota's North Shore, was repaired in some of its most damaged sections. A well maintained SHT keeps people on the trail and water off of it, the adjacent land and water are protected, and a human connection to nature is preserved.

### **Overall Project Outcome and Results**

The 310-mile Superior Hiking Trail (SHT), part of the larger North Country National Scenic Trail, is nationally recognized as a premier long trail in the United States. Almost the entire trail was built without application of modern trail-building standards. As a result, and due to the extreme popularity of the Trail, the SHT is in rough shape: decrepit built structures (boardwalks, bridges), severe erosion, and long stretches of muddy trail. With earlier assistance from LCCMR, we were able to complete multiple professional assessments of some of its most damaged sections, which came to known as "the Big Bad Five."

Using the assessments as a framework to identify distinct projects within those five sections of trail, we worked in partnership with land managers/owners to determine the project scope and type of trail renewal application. We rebuilt, replaced or rerouted trail segments to eliminate around a dozen dangerously built structures (e.g., stairways, small bridges); repaired 1.5 miles of the most eroded or degraded segments.; and replaced or built 1,500 feet of boardwalk.

Ability to maintain the Trail at a level that meets or exceeds industry standards has long-lasting impacts on both the critical role the Trail plays to connecting people to nature and to stewarding the land and water through which the Trail passes. Every year, thousands of Minnesotans utilize the unique access the Superior Hiking Trail affords, allowing people to interact with public lands otherwise not available to them and leaving them with the tenants of land stewardship and conservation that carries on after they return home.

### **Project Results: Use and Dissemination**

The project results (construction) are very tangible and can be seen and experienced. The processes we developed in the implementation, such as the development of design plan sets and identifying alignments through particularly challenging terrain are well documented so they can be used internally and by fellow trail organizations as a resource. [Our Trail Maintenance Manual](#), which highlights many of the sustainable design and maintenance techniques used in our projects is available on our website for the public to access.



## Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund (ENRTF) M.L. 2019 ENRTF FINAL REPORT

**Today's Date:** February 3, 2022

**Date of Next Status Update Report:** FINAL REPORT

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

**Project Completion Date:** June 30, 2022

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

**PROJECT TITLE:** Restoring Five Sections of the Superior Hiking Trail

**Project Manager:** Lisa Luukkala, Executive Director

**Organization:** Superior Hiking Trail Association

**Mailing Address:** P.O. Box 315

**City/State/Zip Code:** Two Harbors, MN 55616

**Telephone Number:** 218-834-2700

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**Web Address:** [www.superiorhiking.org](http://www.superiorhiking.org)

**Location:** Northeastern MN (Lake Superior North Shore)

**Total Project Budget:** \$191,000

**Amount Spent:** \$191,000

**Balance:** \$0

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

**Appropriation Language:**

\$191,000 the first year is from the trust fund to the commissioner of natural resources for an agreement with the Superior Hiking Trail Association to restore and repair the most damaged parts of five sections of the Superior Hiking Trail and restore an abandoned route to a natural footpath for hikers.

## **I. PROJECT STATEMENT:**

The Superior Hiking Trail is showing its middle age. That's due in part to heavy use but it's also because the Trail was initially built before sustainable trail building standards were understood. Moreover, the Trail was routed in places where, from a resource protection standpoint, it shouldn't have gone. Our project intends to repair and renew the Trail in five "worst of the worst" sections (totaling nearly 30 miles) that make the Trail safer for users; reduce or eliminate the environmental impact of upwards of 100,000 annual users of a natural footpath; and create a new 4-mile section of hiking trail near Grand Marais that moves the SHT off a snowmobile trail.

In a targeted conditions assessment of about 80 miles (around one fourth) of the Superior Hiking Trail (SHT) in the fall of 2017, the Superior Hiking Trail Association (SHTA) found five sections totaling nearly 30 miles in need of fundamental, urgent repair. We've come to call these sections "the Big Bad Five," which speaks to their seriousness and urgency. What makes them serious and urgent? They all show slope or gully erosion or damage to wetlands; there are built structures in these sections that are now or will be dangerous to trail users; and all these sections are popular with the public (which explains to some extent why they are more worn out than other parts of the SHT).

The Superior Hiking Trail was the mid-80s brainchild of North Shore business owners and resource agency officials to create a natural footpath on the ridgeline from Grand Marais to Two Harbors. As the Trail grew in popularity, ambitions for its final shape grew as well. Just a year ago, the Association installed a bridge over the Red River, south of Jay Cooke State Park. That bridge was the missing link to making the SHT a 310-mile-long continuous footpath from the MN-WI border to the Canadian border. The SHT is a nationally renowned hiking and trail running destination.

A 2018 LCCMR ENRTF grant allows the SHTA to contract with trail experts in the summer and fall of 2018 who will recommend detailed and specific trail repairs on the Big Bad Five. With a 2019 grant from LCCMR, we can get the work done on the SHT that these trail experts recommend. But we don't want to simply fix up old problems; we also intend to use a portion of this grant to create a new 4-mile section of the SHT, north of Grand Marais, that restores an abandoned section of the SHT, brings the Trail to Sawtooth Bluff and its vistas, and removes the SHT from the North Shore State (snowmobile) Trail for about 2 miles.

### **Project Goals:**

- Make the SHT safer for trail users in the 30 miles that are most worn out or damaged.
- Reduce or eliminate erosion and wetland damage caused by overuse or poor trail design, thereby protecting Lake Superior basin streams from sediment pollution.
- Make anew a section of the SHT nearby Grand Marais by creating a new segment that takes the hiking trail off a snowmobile trail.

### **How Goals Will Be Achieved:**

- By following the recommendations of trail experts outside the SHTA organization (whose services were purchased with LCCMR grant support).
- By contracting with highly experienced and nationally renowned contractors who will, using aforementioned recommendations, design and build trail that is resilient and safe and will conserve and protect soil and water.
- By ensuring quality control throughout the trail design and construction process.

### **Why This Project Should Be Done:**

- In its most popular sections, the SHT is well worn and in some cases dangerous to trail users.

- The current state of the 30 miles of trail targeted by this project (the “Big Bad Five”) is such that the soil and water resources of the North Shore will continue to be damaged unless they are protected and made more resilient for inevitable climate change.
- A gem in the hiking trail community, the SHT is considered one of Minnesota’s finest recreational amenities.

## **II. OVERALL PROJECT STATUS UPDATES:**

### **First Update March 1, 2020**

We are just getting started with using the funds from this grant. But some things are already clearer than they were when we wrote the proposal in April of 2018:

Our projects will undergo much more scrutiny by the Minnesota DNR. Around one third of the Superior Hiking Trail is on state land (park land, forest land, aquatic management area, scientific and natural area). Given increasing pressures on state land for recreation, the agency is paying much closer attention to trail projects, especially those that would reroute a segment of the SHT. For example, while two trail evaluators recommended a reroute of about one mile of a loop trail in Split Rock Lighthouse State Park, an ecological review by DNR of the proposed reroute showed that a new trail was undesirable at that location and the agency prohibited a reroute.

Related to the increased scrutiny by all land management agencies is the increasing competition for land to install trails of all kinds – mountain bike, cross-country ski, ATV, and snowmobile.

We fully support more serious environmental review and we will fully cooperate with our agency partners in those reviews. It means that some projects will take longer to complete, and some projects we want to do may not be possible.

### **Second Update September 1, 2020**

Amendment Request: SHTA’s requested amendment is related to the Project Manager role transfer from Denny Caneff to Lisa Luokkala, as noted above. Caneff retired from his position in July of 2020 and Lisa Luokkala is now the acting Executive Director for the Superior Hiking Trail Association.

### **Amendment approved by LCCMR 12/10/2020**

Update: All things considered that could deter our ability to do work during a pandemic, SHTA staff, contractors and volunteers were able to make significant progress during these unprecedented times.

One major feat for the organization is an updated DNR lease that allows for the reroute referred to the Gooseberry Gap. The ability to gain these permissions allows SHTA to address a prominent gap in our trail alignment. Work will begin on the gap will begin spring of 2021.

2020 construction season focused more heavily on smaller volunteer projects that incorporated increased safety measures, while foregoing some of the larger planned volunteer build events. This was a difficult decision to make, but SHTA staff and lead volunteers were able to adapt course. Contracted work was able to proceed as planned, some smaller trail building trainings were held and smaller groups of volunteers hit the trails for annual maintenance work.

2020 has also led to unprecedented use of the SHT. Although no formal trail counts were held, testimonials from SHTA staff, volunteers and trail users have indicated that the Trail is seeing the highest use in its history. The impacts of the increase wear and tear on the trails and campsites have yet to be fully assessed, but we anticipate 2021 being a big maintenance year for our organization.

### **Third Update March 1, 2021**

In the Fall 2020 Trail season SHTA was able to complete two large-scale contractor-built projects that addressed existing erosion and water runoff issues along the Trail. In addition to the contract-built projects, SHTA staff were able to mobilize small pods of volunteers to complete a few projects that had remained “hanging” since last season, one of which was the installation of a bear pole at Onion River.

Volunteer Hours End of Year Tally. As expected, our FY2020 volunteer numbers are dramatically lower than previous years, a little over 2,000 volunteer hours, about a fourth of our typical 8,000+ volunteer hours per year. The pandemic required us to dramatically scale back our volunteer events and opportunities, focusing on more independent work like lopping, weed whipping and a few small trainings and workdays. Volunteer hours that typically would be put to larger-scale construction projects (like those associated as match for this grant) had to be dramatically reduced and many of those events were postponed. What does this mean for 2021? We expect another lower than normal year, although we have gained both perspective and time to plan for volunteer events that will be compliant with COVID safety protocols. Staff feel confident that we can have more volunteer offerings in 2021 than 2020. The secondary impact of the low 2020 volunteer hours is the trail condition itself. With historical levels of trail use and lower than normal maintenance, the physical condition of the trail will likely tell its own story next year.

To learn more about our organization’s experience traversing the pandemic see the following article from our Fall 2020 Ridgeline Newsletter publication -- <https://superiorhiking.org/the-best-kind-of-medicine/>

### **Fourth Update September 1, 2021**

Amendment Request: SHTA Administrator, Lisa Knight caught a budgeting error in the volunteer in-kind match. The estimated hours were 1,200 at \$20/hr which equals \$24,000. Currently, the budget report states “\$240,000.” We would like to amend to the correct amount of \$24,000.

### **LCCMR approved amendment 10/26/21**

During the 2021 trail construction season, SHTA was able to integrate a greater number of volunteer-powered renewal projects as COVID restrictions loosened and we were able to gather in slightly larger groups. We were able bounce back to our pre-COVID annual volunteer hours of over 6,000 per year.

### **Final Report between project end (November 2021) and March 2022**

Almost the entire Superior Hiking Trail (SHT) was built without application of modern trail-building standards. As a result, and due to the extreme popularity of the Trail, the SHT was (is) in rough shape: decrepit built structures (boardwalks, bridges), severe erosion, long stretches of muddy trail. With earlier assistance from LCCMR, the Association was able to complete multiple professional assessments of some of its most damaged sections. These assessments referred to these most egregious sections as “the Big Bad Five.”

Using the assessments as a framework to identify distinct projects within those five sections of Trail, the Association worked in partnership with corresponding land managers/owners to determine the project scope and type of trail renewal application – repair or reroute.

Project Objectives:

- **Restore and Renew Dangerous and Resource-Damaging Sections of the SHT**
- **Bring Back a “Lost” Section of the SHT**

**Project Methods:**

Restoration and renewal of the most damaged sections of the SHT were pursued through the following methods

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- Rebuilt, replaced, or rerouted to eliminate around a dozen dangerously built structures (e.g., stairways, small bridges)
- Repaired 1.5 miles of the most erosive or degraded segments.
- Replace or built anew 1,500 feet of board walk.

Building back a lost section of the SHT was pursued through the following methods –

- Gained the approval (and permits) from the public landowners for the restored route through a series of stakeholder engagements, public meetings, environmental reviews, and assessments.
- Established the final alignment for the new (restored) route with the assistance of professional wetland ecologists and trail professionals.
- Completed approximately 50% of the new trail through the hiring of professional trail building contractors (2.2 miles).

**Project Significance**

The 310-mile Superior Hiking Trail, also a part of the larger North Country National Scenic Trail, is nationally recognized as a premier long trail in the United States. The Association’s ability to maintain the Trail at a level that meets or exceeds industry standards has long-lasting impacts on both the critical role the Trail plays to connecting people to nature and to stewarding the land and water in which the Trail is located. Every year, thousands of Minnesotans utilize the unique access the Superior Hiking Trail affords, allowing people to interact with public lands otherwise not available to them and leaving them with the tenants of land stewardship and conservation that carries on after they return home.

**III. PROJECT ACTIVITIES AND OUTCOMES:**

**ACTIVITY 1 Title: Restore and Renew Dangerous and Resource-Damaging Sections of the SHT**

**Description:**

These sections include the well-worn SHT loops at the Split Rock River and Bean and Bear lakes; a new section of trail north of Gooseberry Falls State Park; and muddy stretches of the SHT between Britton Peak and Oberg Mountain; and between Oberg Mountain and the Lutsen ski area. The objective is to repair the “worst of the worst” parts of these sections – those that endanger trail users and that show the most ecological damage.

**ACTIVITY 1 ENRTF BUDGET: \$170,000**

Outcome	Completion Date
1. <i>Up to 20 of the most dangerous built structures (e.g. stairways, small bridges) are rebuilt or replaced.</i>	October 2021
2. <i>Up to 1.5 miles of the most erosive or degraded segments are repaired and renewed.</i>	October 2020
3. <i>Up to 5,000 feet of board walk is replaced or built anew.</i>	October 2021

**First Update March 1, 2020**

We have put out a request for proposals for a project to replace a 300-foot-long boardwalk over a beaver dam (that's its problem) on Sawmill Creek, near Finland. We expect that work to start in July or August.

We have accepted a proposal for rerouting the Superior Hiking Trail in Duluth off of a treacherous stairway on a highly erosive slope. The new trail will be easier and safer for trail users, and much less damaging to the land and water in the area (Spirit Mountain Recreational Area). Work will begin on that project in July.

We have plans to repair about 300 feet of badly beaten-up puncheon (boardwalk that sits on the ground) and to sculpt the tread of the Trail so that water gets off of it faster or drains away. This repair is located in the area of Lusten Mountains ski area and along the Poplar River. That work will take place in June.

**Second Update September 1, 2020**

Sawmill Creek boardwalk project is currently underway, 615 linear feet of puncheon has been installed. Fabrication of an additional 400 feet of boardwalk is currently underway and the Anticipated installation and completion project is October 2020.

Work was slightly delayed on the 138 Step Reroute project due to contractor availability. An agreement with the landowner, the City of Duluth is in place. Work will commence on the 138 Step Reroute project on September 21, 2020. Anticipated completion date is October 2020.

The Poplar River puncheon project has been delayed until spring of 2021 because of COVID-19 safety protocols. The initial schedule and work plan for this particular project required a large volume of volunteers working in close proximity together. Staff and lead volunteers determined it was unwise to move forward with the project based on CDC guidelines provided to us at the time. Since then, guidelines have changed, and in addition our volunteer work crew model will be modified to assure a safe volunteer experience 2021. All materials have been transported to this remote site and are ready for installation.

In August 2020 SHTA installed 31 stone steps on a heavily traveled and eroded section of trail up to a popular lookout between Britton Peak and Oberg Mountain. This stair project also served as a training for SHTA staff and volunteers to learn how to use native stone harvested in areas adjacent to the trail for sustainable building purposes. Additionally, SHTA anticipates a volunteer-led project between Britton Peak and Oberg Mountain of 150 feet of puncheon near the Onion River to address a chronically muddy, high trafficked area of trail.

Further addressing the most well-worn and visited sections of the SHT, contractors installed 512 ft of puncheon on the Bean and Bear Loop. The loop was also the location of a July 2020 trail plumbing workshop that served as both a work project and trained SHTA staff and volunteers on sustainable trail plumbing techniques to keep water off the trail tread.



### **Third Update March 1, 2021**

Sawmill Creek boardwalk project was completed in October 2020. The Trail section is reopened to users and adds a beautiful, safe traverse across the adjacent beaver pond. We were fortunate to work with a contractor who wanted to document their work. Below you will find a link to the drone video footage that highlights the project along with an article from our Fall Trail Mix that showcases the project. The contractor-driven project (Trail Source) replaced the decrepit boardwalk that sits on top of a beaver dam. The end product is quite stunning.

The 138 Step Reroute project nears completion as of October of 2020. The project rerouted the trail from a rotting staircase and created a gentle 1,077 ft. switchback trail alignment up a very steep ridgeline within the Spirit Mountain Recreation Area in Duluth. This project was a mix of machine built contracted construction and also 123 ft. volunteer-led hand-built section including 16ft of puncheon and 18 c-steps. The project is at 90% completion as of October 2020, minor touch-ups will take place in the Spring of 2021 and an associated retainer was held till completion.

In late Fall 150 ft. of puncheon was installed along the Onion River with the help of Northwoods Volunteer Connection (NCV), a 501(c)(3) charitable organization, dedicated to recruiting, training, and delivering volunteers to work on projects within or near the Superior National Forest in northeastern Minnesota. Over 50 volunteer hours were contributed through this partnership and it helped finish up the final details on the Onion River puncheon project and also install SHTA's first bear pole.

### **Fourth Update September 1, 2021**

The winter of 2021 brought along a lot of staff time spent on the permitting and planning of the Gooseberry Gap Project more complex construction projects that required the attention of our Trail Operations Director. Gooseberry Gap construction began in 2021, and while LCCMR funds did not fund the actual construction, it helped fund the important project management oversight of our Trail Op Director.

As cited in the "Big Bad 5 Assessment," SHTA worked with the MN DNR to identify a scope of work to be completed on the Split Rock River Loop for 2021. With over 500 volunteer hrs. donated, SHTA was able build a new longer span 24 ft foot bridge over a small ravine where the original bridge abutments and banks had been severely compromised. The removed bridge was able to be reused in another location, along with 180 ft. completed some stone steps, tread, and erosion control work. Volunteers included two Minnesota Conservation Corps crews who gain valuable trail experience on the guidance of our Trail Op Director.

The Poplar River Puncheon project was completed in June of 2021 construction season. The long-delayed project, because of the pandemic, is now complete. The project provides an elevated boardwalk using innovative bog pans design method. Over 200 ft. of boardwalk was installed to keep users high and dry and protect adjacent land and water.

### **Final Report between project end (November 2021) and March 2022**

No additional work was complete since November 2021.

### **ACTIVITY 2 Title: Bring Back a "Lost" Section of the SHT Near Grand Marais**

#### **Description:**

In the early days of the SHT, the Trail followed a high ridge that took it to Sawtooth Bluff, near Grand Marais, and its fetching Lake Superior overlook. For reasons lost to time, that section was abandoned in the early 1990s and the Trail was routed in part onto the North Shore State (snowmobile) Trail. That land is now owned by the



City of Grand Marais, which has invited us to propose a new route for the SHT as part of its master plan for that property. Our objective is to restore the SHT to this original route (about four miles) and improve trail users' experience in that area -- a natural footpath, intended solely for hiking, with stunning vistas and towering pines.

## **ACTIVITY 2 ENRTF BUDGET: \$21,000**

<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Completion Date</b>
1. <i>Approval for the restored route and any permits needed will be acquired from public landowners.</i>	June 2020
2. <i>The new (restored) route will be marked ("flagged") and mapped via GPS.</i>	June 2021
3. <i>Preliminary tread building will be completed on up to 25% of the new trail.</i>	November 2021

### **First Update March 1, 2020**

Our idea to create a dedicated pedestrian trail in the Sawtooth Bluff area around Grand Marais by bringing back a "lost section" of the SHT was ultimately rejected by the U.S. Forest Service. To be able to connect to the "lost trail," we would have to create new trail on national forest lands. Their environmental assessment found that a new hiking trail would negatively affect some sensitive wetlands in this area.

But there is no shortage of trail rerouting projects, so we will direct this Activity to what we call the "Gooseberry Gap," a nearly 3-mile section of new trail between Gooseberry and Split Rock Lighthouse state parks. This has to be built because we were asked to leave private land in that area. This proposed reroute is currently under review by Minnesota DNR. Part of the proposed reroute is on Lake County forest land, and there will be a conditional use permit required by the county.

### **Second Update September 1, 2020**

SHTA continues to work with land managers to gain access to the Sawtooth Bluff area. As land ownership remains dynamic in this area, SHTA remains optimistic that a route may identified to provide a high-quality user experience, but likely this will take multiple more years to accomplish.

The Gooseberry Gap reroute is currently in design. The Minnesota DNR as agreed to the alignment and it is now included into the SHTA's updated lease agreement with the DNR. This was a critical step in the project. In September SHTA staff will ground truth the alignment with our designers and prepare to post a contractor RFP this fall in preparation for a spring/summer 2021 trail build.

### **Third Update March 1, 2021**

After the DNR lease agreement was secured, the next and final step for SHTA was to obtain the final permit required to proceed with the Gooseberry Gap trail project. On February 22, 2021, Lake County Planning and Zoning Commission approved SHTA's request for a Conditional Use Permit for the use of Lake County Forestry parcels to addressing the missing trail segment from Gooseberry State Park to Blueberry Hill Road. The permit will allow SHTA to proceed with a 2021 construction of this important section of trail and allow us to end the detour that took hikers on a long road walk, crossing of highway 61 and long walk on the paved Gitchi-Gami State Trail. The RFP will be released in early March to identify a contractor. The new trail section is 3.94 miles in length.

### **Fourth Update September 1, 2021**

The Gooseberry Gap Phase I, 2.2 miles was completed during the 2021 construction season. The contractor work funded by a grant through IRRRB. Materials were purchased through cash donations from SHTA and project management/staff oversight was funded through LCCMR. This particular project took a lot of

coordination by SHTA's Trail Op Director who had to work extraordinarily hard to source all the necessary lumber for the project during a year of extreme shortages. In addition, the lumber required a safe storage and staging area and he coordinated with Gooseberry State Park to find a location to use of the season. Because we sourced our own materials versus requiring the contractor to do so, we were able to keep the overall project cost. All lumber was sourced locally.

#### **Final Report between project end (November 2021) and March 2022**

The Gooseberry Gap Phase I, 2.2 miles, is now complete, allowing us to make immense progress on establishing a lost section of Trail. SHTA is pursuing Phase II to implement in June of 2022.

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

##### **Description:**

Dissemination of progress on our project will be continuous and comprehensive. The area's community newspapers (Cook County News Herald and Lake County News Chronicle) enjoy covering developments on the SHT, and they will keep tabs on each phase of this project. Even the regional publication Star Tribune, which ran a six-part series about the SHT in the summer of 2018, will pay attention to this project. Our own media include Instagram, Facebook, a print newspaper, and an e-newsletter. We will use all of these media to mark and publicize the project as it proceeds. (All these media can be found at [www.superiorhiking.org](http://www.superiorhiking.org) or via the search function of these platforms).

The SHT is affiliated with the North Country Trail, a national scenic trail running from New York to North Dakota. Its association has a quarterly publication that will track project developments too. In addition, the Parks and Trails Council of Minnesota is an enthusiastic supporter of the SHT and will no doubt highlight these developments (and the ENRTF as the funding source) in its publications.

We will strictly adhere to publication requirements for grant recipients of ENRTF funds. 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 March 1, 2020**

Because this project is just getting started, we have had little information to disseminate. But we make mention of the support of the ENRTF in every one of our (printed and mailed) newsletters, and occasionally in our monthly e-newsletter.

##### **Second Update September 1, 2021**

SHTA acknowledged the generous support of the ENRTF, and the projects which it has funded, in our latest *Ridgeline* newsletter ([Spring 2020](#)). We will do so again in our Fall 2020 and Spring 2021 issues. In April 2020, we recognized the support of the ENRTF and the LCCMR Staff in an [Earth Day post on our Facebook page](#). We will continue to recognize and acknowledge the support of the ENRTF (per acknowledgement guidelines) whenever possible.

##### **Third Update March 1, 2021**

The Superior Hiking Trail Association continues to acknowledge the generous support of the ENRTF and the projects which it has funded (per acknowledgement guidelines) whenever possible. The Association highlighted funding from ENRTF in our latest *Ridgeline* newsletter ([Fall 2020](#)) and will do so again in our Spring and Fall 2021 issues. In December 2020, the SHTA recognized the support of the ENRTF while highlighting the completion of the Sawmill Creek Pond Boardwalk project during a [Virtual "Behind the Scenes" presentation](#) with the University

of Minnesota-Duluth's Alumni Association. The project and ENRTF were also highlighted in social media posts when construction of the boardwalk was completed.

With more projects supported by ENRTF funding on the schedule for 2021, the Association will continue to acknowledge this critical source of funding during events and in online and print communications throughout the year.

#### **Fourth Update September 1, 2021**

The Superior Hiking Trail Association has educated our members on the important role ENRTF has played both in our past building of the trail and now during this critical period of renewal. This article was published April 2021 Trail Mix E-Newsletter that is distributed to over 6,000 individuals, along with a blog link on our website that can be found here: <https://superiorhiking.org/mn-enrtf-101/>

In addition, ENRTF is recognized both our Spring 2021 and Fall 2021 Ridgeline publications.

#### **Final Report between project end (November 2021) and March 2022**

The Superior Hiking Trail Association recognized the contributions of the ENRTF to our work as part of our Fall 2021 Ridgeline publications. This hardcopy publication is distributed to over 6,000 individuals, along with being available through our website: <https://superiorhiking.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Ridgeline-Fall-2021-compressed-2.pdf>

### **V. ADDITIONAL BUDGET INFORMATION:**

#### **A. Personnel and Capital Expenditures**

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

N/A

##### **Explanation of Use of Classified Staff:**

Though we are not a state agency with "classified staff," SHTA intends to backfill the time of our full-time trail operations director devoted to this project by assigning those duties to the SHTA executive director; SHTA trail development director; and a small amount to outside contractors (who are not supported by grant funds).

#### **Total Number of Full-time Equivalents (FTE) Directly Funded with this ENRTF Appropriation:**

Enter Total Estimated Personnel Hours for entire duration of project: 260 (10 hrs./mo. X 26 mo.)	Divide total personnel hours by 2,080 hours in 1 yr = TOTAL FTE: 0.19
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#### **Total Number of Full-time Equivalents (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:
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This number is extremely difficult to estimate. While we will certainly use contractors (\$121,000 of our budget is earmarked for contracted services), most contractors provide a lump-sum amount for their services, or at best provide a daily rate that often includes materials, travel, and profit, without segregating a labor rate.

## VI. PROJECT PARTNERS:

### A. Partners outside of project manager's organization receiving ENRTF funding

None

### B. Partners outside of project manager's organization NOT receiving ENRTF funding

Name	Title	Affiliation	Role
MN DNR		Landowner	Land management
U.S. Forest Service		Landowner	Land management
City of Grand Marais		Landowner	Land planning and mgmt.
Lake County		Landowner	Land management

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

SHTA will oversee and manage this project, working with competent and reputable contractors to carry out the work. This project takes place in the context of the launching of our Trail Renewal Program that will prioritize trail renewal through careful planning by SHTA staff and judicious use of volunteers.

LCCMR funding will be strictly put to trail restoration work; management and oversight expenses will largely be SHTA's responsibility. An LCCMR investment in these trail sections should last for at least 20 years and so no continued funding for the work completed *by this grant* will be needed. We fully expect that the "Big Bad Five" will require more restoration work than this LCCMR grant could support. Trail renewal is ongoing and unrelenting, and SHTA will seek funding from all sources at our disposal, for the entire Trail.

## 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 the end of the project (November 2021) and March 2022.

## IX. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Competitive Bid Process for Proposals: We will circulate a Request for Proposals for contractors we may engage to carry out the work described here. That RFP will be posted to our web site and Facebook page. It will be shared with "sister" trail organizations Ice Age Trail Alliance and North Country Trail Association, both for their distribution and for their interest as potential contractors. In addition, the RFP will be posted at the web site of the National Trail Builders Association, and the RFP will be submitted to the Minnesota Dept. of Administration's Certified Targeted Group, Economically Disadvantaged and Veteran-Owned Vendor List.

Travel Expenses: We are aware of and fully intend to follow the Guidance for Allowable Expenses and adhere to the directives of the Commissioner's Plan, as referred to and linked to in the Guidance.

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

**A. Budget Spreadsheet**

Attached

**B. Visual Component or Map**

Photo of Sawmill Creek boardwalk

Photo of the infamous “138 Steps,” within the Spirit Mountain Recreation in Duluth.

(Both are described in Activity 1)

9/1/20 Updates –

Britton Peak Stone Steps

3/1/21 Updates –

Fall 2020 Trail Mix Newsletter link:

<https://us17.campaign-archive.com/?u=48275102a4d69afb105291db8&id=87e4eaff04>

Completed Sawmill Creek Video link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YKE2MgflVMI&feature=youtu.be>

Photo: Completed Puncheon at Onion River

Photo: Completed Sawmill Creek Boardwalk Before and After

Photo: Completed Before and After 138 Step Reroute

10/15/21 Updates –

Photo: Completed Split Rock River 24 ft. bridge

Photo: Completed stone steps and erosion control along Split Rock River loop

Photo: Gooseberry Gap Phase II

Photo: Poplar River Puncheon with bog pans

Photo: Conservation Corps and SHTA volunteers at work

2/3/21 Updates --

No additional photos

**C. Parcel List Spreadsheet**

N/A

**D. Acquisition, Easements, and Restoration Requirements**

N/A

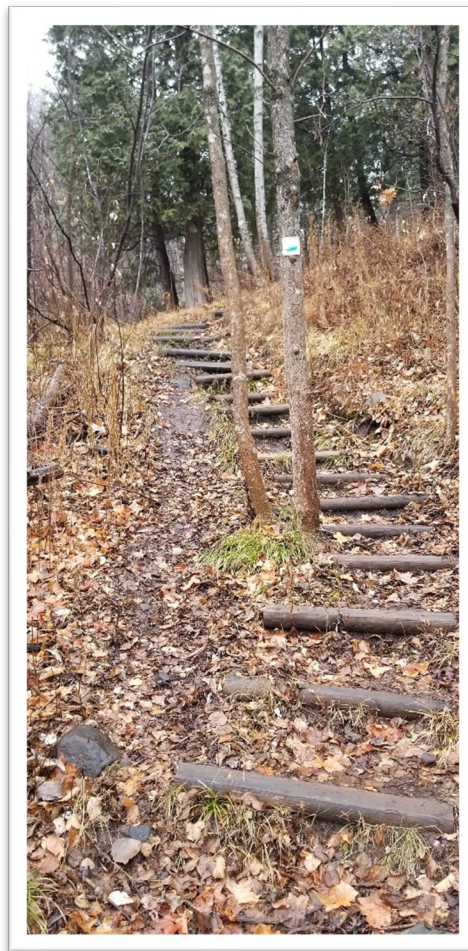
**E. Research Addendum**

N/A





***Left: Sawmill Creek boardwalk, near Finland***



***Right: 138 Steps stairway at Spirit Mountain Rec. Area in Duluth***





***Britton Peak Stone Steps – August 2020***





*Stonework Training and Build at Britton Peak: August 2020*

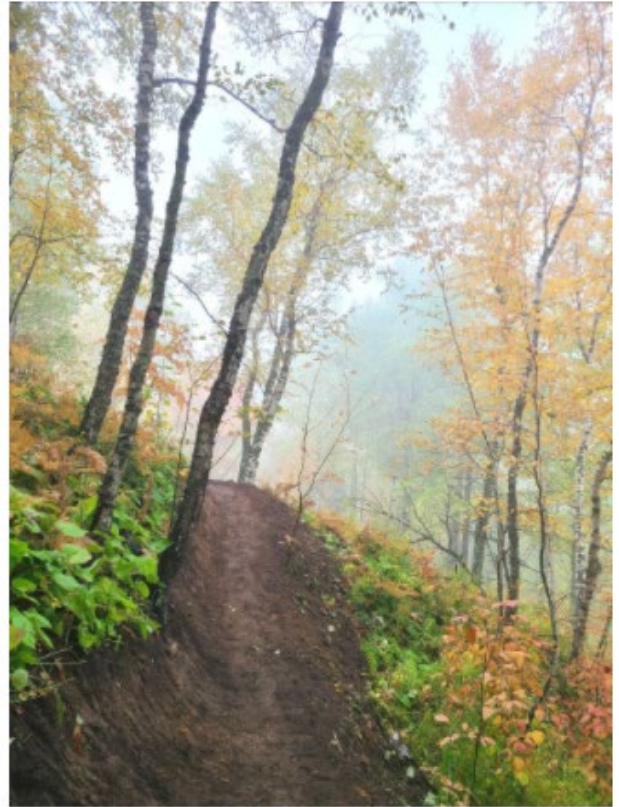




***Onion River Puncheon volunteer project with NVC (Northland Volunteer Connection): October 2020***



***Sawmill Creek 400 ft. boardwalk – After and Before Photos – Completed October 2020***



***Photo: Duluth's 138 Step Reroute Before and After Photos – October 2020.***





***Photo: Completed 24 ft. bridge built along the Split Rock River Loop – (part of a large renewal project)***





***Photo: Stone steps and erosion control along descent to new bridge along Split Rock River Loop.***





***Photo: Boardwalk along Phase I of the Gooseberry Gap Project***





*Photo: Elevated boardwalk using bog pans on Poplar River Puncheon Project*





***Photo: Conservation Corps and SHTA volunteers at Split Rock River bridge building***



Attachment A:  
 Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund  
 M.L. 2019 Final Report Budget Spreadsheet  
 Legal Citation: M.L. 2019, First Special Session, Chp. 4, Art. 2, Sec. 2, Subd. 09o  
 Project Manager: Lisa Luukkala  
 Project Title: Restoring Five Sections of the Superior Hiking Trail  
 Organization: Superior Hiking Trail Association  
 Project Budget: \$191,000  
 Project Length and Completion Date: 26 months (July 2019 - November 2021)  
 Today's Date: February 3, 2022



ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES TRUST FUND BUDGET	Budget	Amount Spent	Balance
<b>BUDGET ITEM</b>			
<b>Personnel (Wages and Benefits)</b>	\$ 26,250	\$ 26,250	\$ -
Wages of SHTA trail operations director (0.19 FTE --monthly salary of \$4,167 x 26 months = \$108,242) (\$21,000)(x%Fringe)			
Trail operations director benefits (25% of grant funds devoted to trail ops director wages) (\$5,250)(x%Fringe)			
<b>Professional/Technical/Service Contracts</b>			
Trail building and construction contractors (over 3 years). RFP's will be distributed and vendor	\$ 121,000	\$ 121,000	\$ -
<b>Equipment/Tools/Supplies</b>			
Safety equipt and tools for volunteers	\$ 5,000	\$ 5,000	\$ -
Supplies for trail construction: lumber, hardware, concrete, rented tools	\$ 35,000	\$ 35,000	\$ -
<b>Capital Expenditures Over \$5,000</b>			
	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
<b>Fee Title Acquisition</b>			
	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
<b>Easement Acquisition</b>			
	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
<b>Professional Services for Acquisition</b>			
	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
<b>Printing</b>			
	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
<b>Travel expenses in Minnesota</b>			
Travel expenses in MN for SHTA staff (3,500 miles @.545/mile IRS rate = \$1,910; \$1,200 lodging; \$640 meals, per State of MN regulations	\$ 3,750	\$ 3,750	\$ -
<b>Other</b>			
	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
<b>COLUMN TOTAL</b>	\$ 191,000	\$ 191,000	\$ -

OTHER FUNDS CONTRIBUTED TO THE PROJECT	Status (secured or pending)	Budget	Spent	Balance
<b>Non-State:</b> SHTA memberships, donations, non-state grants	secured	\$ 42,000	\$ 51,424	\$ (9,424)
<b>State:</b>				\$ -
In kind: Volunteer time (1,200 volunteer hrs. x \$20/hr.)	partial secured	\$ 24,000	\$ 51,040	\$ (27,040)

PAST AND CURRENT ENRTF APPROPRIATIONS	Amount legally obligated but not yet spent	Budget	Spent	Balance
<b>Current appropriation:</b> M. L. 2018, Chapter 214, Article 4, Subd. #09f	\$ 100,000	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
<b>Past appropriations:</b>	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -