

Final Abstract

Final Report Approved on September 28, 2026

M.L. 2023 Project Abstract

For the Period Ending June 30, 2026

Project Title: Addressing Erosion Along High Use River Loops

Project Manager: Lisa Luukkala

Affiliation: Superior Hiking Trail Association

Mailing Address: PO Box 315 618 1st Ave

City/State/Zip: Two Harbors, MN 55616

Phone: (218) 834-2700

E-mail: lluukkala@superiorhiking.org

Website: <https://superiorhiking.org/>

Funding Source:

Fiscal Year:

Legal Citation: M.L. 2023, Chp. 60, Art. 2, Sec. 2, Subd. 08n

Appropriation Amount: \$368,000

Amount Spent: \$368,000

Amount Remaining: -

Sound bite of Project Outcomes and Results

Thanks to ENRTF's support, Superior Hiking Trail's Split Rock River Loop is fully renewed, and the Cascade River Loop is 70% renewed. The renewal reset the lifespan of these river loops, increasing safety and accessibility for users while aligning with visitor use patterns of these popular North Shore destinations.

Summary of Project and Outcomes

The project focused on renewing the Superior Hiking Trail's (SHT) most popular looped trail experiences, which are the most visited sections of trail within the system and attract large numbers of beginning and new users. Superior Hiking Trail Association's (SHTA) focus was to reset the lifespan of these popular river loops to withstand high traffic use and assure visitor safety and adjacent land and water protection. Specific activities included repairing tread; updating boardwalk, puncheon and steps; armoring; and retrofitting with drainage management techniques. The work plan was based on formal assessments that were funded in part by LCCMR in previous years and enabled SHTA to design the trail to align with current industry best practices.

The poor starting condition of these popular loops cannot be overstated, which led to serious problems of both

environmental degradation and visitor safety. The results of the work were transformational to the trail and user experience.

The work occurred over two construction seasons thanks to volunteers, Trails Anonymous LLC and Trail Logic LLC. A map showing the location and nature of the work was included for your review. Major project outcomes of the grant were:

- 9 miles of trail loops renewed (tread, armoring, drainage)
- 2,528 linear feet of boardwalk, puncheon or steps replaced
- Renewal of 1 mile of wayside spur trail
- Reassessed a damaged location along river loops due to 2022 flooding

ENRTF funding also enabled the SHTA to strengthen our volunteer connections, fostering opportunities for personal growth, making meaningful contributions and building community.

The remaining 30% of work for the Cascade River Loop includes a focus on the northwest portion of the loop with a series of reroutes and installing new steps leading into and out of a very steep drainage. The remaining scope of work is included in a new funding request.

Project Results Use and Dissemination

Superior Hiking Trail Association (SHTA) highlighted the Split Rock River and Cascade River loops projects in four issues of our Ridgeline print publication, two Trail Mix E-Newsletter updates, and numerous blog and social media posts. ENRTF signs were physically installed at key trailheads and intersections in the project area. Documentation of these activities was uploaded for your review. SHTA is planning to host an official ribbon cutting event in Fall of 2026. We will send an invite to LCCMR staff and Commissioners when a date is confirmed.



Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

M.L. 2023 Approved Final Report

General Information

Date: October 5, 2026

ID Number: 2023-189

Staff Lead: Mike Campana

Project Title: Addressing Erosion Along High Use River Loops

Project Budget: \$368,000

Project Manager Information

Name: Lisa Luukkala

Organization: Superior Hiking Trail Association

Office Telephone: (218) 834-2700

Email: lluukkala@superiorhiking.org

Web Address: <https://superiorhiking.org/>

Project Reporting

Final Report Approved: September 28, 2026

Reporting Status: Project Completed

Date of Last Action: September 28, 2026

Project Completion: June 30, 2026

Legal Information

Legal Citation: M.L. 2023, Chp. 60, Art. 2, Sec. 2, Subd. 08n

Appropriation Language: \$368,000 the first year is from the trust fund to the commissioner of natural resources for an agreement with the Superior Hiking Trail Association to rehabilitate and renew popular river loops of the Superior Hiking Trail to withstand high visitor use and serve Minnesotans for years to come.

Appropriation End Date: June 30, 2026

Narrative

Project Summary: Rehabilitate and renew popular river loops of the Trail for a more resilient future to withstand high visitor use and serve Minnesotans for years to come.

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

Popular river trail loops such as those in or adjacent to state parks and waysides have shown the greatest impacts from high visitor use. These are destinations along the North Shore and serve as a connection to nature for thousands of Minnesotans each year. The majority of the SHT north of Two Harbors was built over 30 years ago and is showing its age. Erosion due to natural causes and visitor use has impacted the trail tread. Tight-to-shoreline trail sections create unique maintenance challenges and require attention. Safety is also a great concern, with aging infrastructure and the loops being most popular with more casual and less experienced hikers. The recent flooding events have only exacerbated the situation along these loops. The need to renew and reset the lifespan of these river loops is vital not only to the health and wellbeing of the land and water but also intrinsically tied to the economic and community vitality of the North Shore.

ENRTF is one of the few funding sources available to the Superior Hiking Trail Association to make these large-scale renewal projects possible.

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.

We will renew, rebuild and reinforce the river loops that see the highest use and user impacts. Our staff, lead volunteers and professional trailbuilding contractors will employ modern sustainable trail building practices that will focus on mitigating the negative effects caused by heavy use. One of the keys to successful implementation is to install infrastructures and features to keep people on the trail and water off. Where infrastructure replacement is needed, SHTA will identify and design solutions that maximize user safety and long-term resiliency and minimize environmental impacts.

Working with our project collaborators, SHTA will address the adverse affects of heavily trafficked sections of the Trail and strengthen visitor use management practices in these popular areas to assure the natural resource is protected. The SHTA is committed to providing meaningful connections to nature and public lands of Minnesota to create life-long stewards of our shared natural resources.

Due to the variability of weather in northern Minnesota for construction projects, we anticipate needing two full trail seasons -- typically June to November -- to complete this project.

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?

Through our Trail Renewal Program initiative, we will ensure that every mile of this natural footpath along the North Shore is sustainably built sustainably to be enjoyed by tens of thousands of annual visitors for decades to come -- all without causing unnecessary harm to surrounding lands and waters. The SHT is where thousands of visitors start to truly value public lands and commit to conserving and enhancing them. Our efforts to make the SHT resilient to climate changes and increase visitor use will help protect and preserve the sensitive habitats and ecosystems through which the Trail traverses.

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?

During the Project and In the Future

Activities and Milestones

Activity 1: Renew the Most Popular Looped Experiences Along the Trail Corridor

Activity Budget: \$368,000

Activity Description:

The SHT's looped trail experiences are the most popular sections of trail used within the system. Loops are often used by beginner day hikers and offer the greatest accessibility to diverse populations just starting out in outdoor recreation. These trails sections need to be armored to withstand high traffic use and include up-to-date infrastructure to assure visitor safety and adjacent land and water protection. Improvements to the loops have been identified through formal assessments that were funded in part by LCCMR in previous years. These assessments will serve as a blueprint for planning projects. Work will be completed by a mix of volunteer, staff and professional trail building contractors.

Work will include renewing up to 13 miles with tread repair, armoring and retrofitting with drainage management techniques. Up to 3,000 feet of boardwalk, puncheon or steps will be replaced along the two river loops. The current infrastructure has ended its useful life and is made up of outdated trail designs that are no longer up to industry best practices. This project will reset the lifespan of these popular river loop sections of the Superior Hiking Trail.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Permits/permission with land managers complete for 2024 work	October 31, 2023
Reassessment of damaged locations along river loops due to 2022 flooding	November 30, 2023
Contractors secured for 2024 work (RFP, Bidding process, contract execution)	February 28, 2024
Volunteer recruitment for 2024 projects complete	June 30, 2024
Permits/permissions with land managers complete for 2025 work	October 31, 2024
Contractors secured for 2025 work (RFP, bidding process, contract execution)	February 28, 2025
Volunteer recruitment for 2025 projects complete	June 30, 2025
9 to 13 miles of trail loops will be renewed (tread, armoring, drainage)	November 30, 2025
2,000 to 3,000 linear feet of boardwalk, puncheon or steps replaced	November 30, 2025
One 1-mile wayside spur trail renewed	November 30, 2025

Project Partners and Collaborators

Name	Organization	Role	Receiving Funds
Mike Young	MN DNR Division of Forestry	Liaison to SHTA from DNR to assist in planning and executing trail projects within northeastern Minnesota forest lands	No
Christa Maxwell	Minnesota DNR Parks and Trails Division	Liaison to SHTA from DNR to assist in planning and executing trail projects within North Shore state parks	No
Jonathan Benson	US Forest Service	Liaison to the SHTA for any work done on the SHTA within the boundaries of Superior National Forest.	No
Cathy Quinn	US Forest Service	Liaison to the SHTA for any work done on the SHTA within the boundaries of Superior National Forest.	No
Matt Davis	North Country Trail Association	Provides advice, counsel, technical assistance.	No

Dissemination

Describe your plans for dissemination, presentation, documentation, or sharing of data, results, samples, physical collections, and other products and how they will follow ENRTF Acknowledgement Requirements and Guidelines.

The Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund 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 Acknowledgment Guidelines. Specifically, SHTA will target the follow audiences to acknowledge the ENRTF: (1) users of the trail through SHTA's e-newsletter "Trail Mix" that goes out monthly to approximately 11,000 individuals. There is no cost to sign up for the newsletter and is most often viewed by users and supporters of the Trail. (2) SHTA members through our twice annual publication "Ridgeline" that is distributed to nearly 3,000 households and (3) general public through press releases, earned media, events and social media.

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?

Advancements in sustainable trail building techniques will allow SHTA to reset the lifespan of the Trail. 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. SHTA's 2020-2023 Strategic Plan clearly 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
Enhancement Plan for Superior Hiking Trail	M.L. 2018, Chp. 214, Art. 4, Sec. 2, Subd. 09f	\$100,000
Restoring Five Sections of the Superior Hiking Trail	M.L. 2019, First Special Session, Chp. 4, Art. 2, Sec. 2, Subd. 09o	\$191,000
Bioacoustics for Broad-Scale Species Monitoring and Conservation	M.L. 2021, First Special Session, Chp. 6, Art. 6, Sec. 2, Subd. 03n	\$305,000

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

Budget Summary

Category / Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Purpose	Gen. Ineligible	% Benefits	# FTE	Classified Staff?	\$ Amount	\$ Amount Spent	\$ Amount Remaining
Personnel										
Trail Operations Director		Oversees all trail construction work (planning, design, implementation)			15%	1		\$24,543	-	-
Volunteer Coordinator		Oversee volunteer coordination for construction projects			15%	0.5		\$7,542	-	-
							Sub Total	\$32,085	\$32,085	-
Contracts and Services										
Professional Trail Building Contractor - Trails Anonymous (SRR) and Trail Logic (Cascade)	Service Contract	Trail construction contractors will be experts in recreational trail building. They will be sourced via competitive RFP process. Services would include trail construction, board walk and stairway construction (wood or stone), but could include trail route identification and mapping.				0.6		\$320,613	\$320,613	-
							Sub Total	\$320,613	\$320,613	-
Equipment, Tools, and Supplies										
	Tools and Supplies	Construction materials and tools	This includes lumber, cement, hardware, gravel, metal bog pans and related hardware.					\$11,920	\$11,920	-
							Sub Total	\$11,920	\$11,920	-
Capital Equipment										
							Sub Total	-	-	-
Acquisitions and Stewardship										

							Sub Total	-	-	-
Travel In Minnesota										
	Miles/ Meals/ Lodging	Travel to work sites by SHTA staff	Staff supervision and expertise needed on site					\$3,382	\$3,382	-
							Sub Total	\$3,382	\$3,382	-
Travel Outside Minnesota										
							Sub Total	-	-	-
Printing and Publication										
							Sub Total	-	-	-
Other Expenses										
							Sub Total	-	-	-
							Grand Total	\$368,000	\$368,000	-

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	\$ Amount Spent	\$ Amount Remaining
State						
			State Sub Total	-	-	-
Non-State						
In-Kind	SHTA Volunteer Hours	2,520 volunteer hours valued at approx. \$29.50/hour	Secured	\$74,254	\$74,254	-
Cash	Donations and memberships	Various related expenses, including: materials, tools, volunteer support, lodging, travel, and other professional services to support this project.	Secured	\$133,627	\$133,627	-
			Non State Sub Total	\$207,881	\$207,881	-
			Funds Total	\$207,881	\$207,881	-

Attachments

Required Attachments

Visual Component

File: [d4a7d02e-010.pdf](#)

Alternate Text for Visual Component

Maps showing location and nature of work completed on Split Rock River Loop and Cascade River Loop....

Financial Capacity

File: [9d44974e-85d.pdf](#)

Board Resolution or Letter

Title	File
SHTA Board Resolution_May 2022	69d6b7de-42f.pdf

Supplemental Attachments

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

Title	File
Background Check Certification Form	2e9de6af-a15.pdf
Split Rock River Loop LCCMR Site Visit - Aged Steps	1f23c6c0-058.pdf
MN Public Radio Article 2024	de8f821a-60a.pdf
WDIO News Article 2024	c948c1f5-612.pdf
Cascade Trout Creek Volunteer Work Project	15757060-df0.jpe
Cascade River Loop Renewal - stone step installation	0cc52a6b-1e4.jpe
Trail Closure Press Release, April 15, 2024	c9173a24-48e.pdf
2024 Installation of New Staircase on Cascade River Loop	26e6abe2-030.jpe
Split Rock River Loop (east) Boardwalk Installation 2024	6d4a7b93-054.jpe
Split Rock River Loop (east) newly installed rock armoring 2024	21f8cc05-208.jpe
Before & After of Strand Creek Staircase on Split Rock River Loop	fe7802b2-bf2.jpe
Before & After Steep hill of stone steps on West side of Split Rock River Loop	8ec4260e-87d.jpe
Volunteers install stone retaining wall along Cascade River Loop 2025	9dd48394-b64.jpe
Volunteers rough in a short reroute on the Cascade River Loop 2025	edc2a978-b62.jpe
550 ft of Boardwalk and steps on west side of Split Rock River Loop: Protecting slope from erosion through cedar stand.	e00d9577-ba3.jpe
2026 Stepped Boardwalk on Split Rock River Loop - west side	b8fb993a-15a.jpe
ENRTF Signage - Cascade River Loop	3a139887-b04.jpe
ENRTF Signage - Split Rock River Loop - Wayside Spur	a83b6884-9ae.jpe
Cascade River Loop Completed Work Map & Datasheet	130992b4-1b9.pdf
Split Rock River Loop All Completed Work Map & Datasheet	4b120e9b-23a.pdf
Original Work Plan Visual Component	c7a114e6-8d7.pdf

Media Links

Title	Link
Trail Mix Newsletter (Nov. 2023)	https://mailchi.mp/superiorhiking.org/nov2023trailmix
SHTA Spring 2024 Ridgeline Publication	https://superiorhiking.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/SHTA-003-Ridgeline-5-2024_HiRes.pdf

SHTA Blog Post	https://superiorhiking.org/two-trail-renewal-projects-require-closures/
SHTA Fall 2024 Ridgeline Publication	https://superiorhiking.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/SHTA-Ridgeline_Fall-2024.pdf
SHTA Dec. 2024 Superior Hiking Trail Blog Post	https://superiorhiking.org/2024-trail-work-year-in-review/
Year in Review Blog Post	https://superiorhiking.org/2025-trail-work-year-in-review/
Fall 2025 SHTA Ridgeline	https://superiorhiking.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/Ridgeline-Fall-2025-SHTA.pdf
WDIO Helicopter Provides Help for Project on SHT	https://www.wdio.com/front-page/top-stories/helicopter-provides-help-for-project-on-superior-hiking-trail/
SHTA Blog Post: 2026 Renewal Projects	https://superiorhiking.org/2026-trail-renewal-projects/
SHTA Spring 2026 Ridgeline	https://superiorhiking.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/04/2026-Spring-Ridgeline_Online_Final.pdf

Difference between Proposal and Work Plan

Describe changes from Proposal to Work Plan Stage

Activity removed: One .8 mile trail section overlook renewed. The removal of this activity reflects the work that can be completed by the recommended \$368,000 allocation.

Updated budget line items to increase the Contractor line item to \$166,300 and reduce the construction supplies/materials to \$150,000 -- still totaling \$368,000.

Additional Acknowledgements and Conditions:

The following are acknowledgements and conditions beyond those already included in the above workplan:

Do you understand and acknowledge the ENRTF repayment requirements if the use of capital equipment changes?

N/A

Do you understand that travel expenses are only approved if they follow the "Commissioner's Plan" promulgated by the Commissioner of Management of Budget or, for University of Minnesota projects, the University of Minnesota plan?

Yes, I understand the Commissioner's Plan applies.

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

Do you understand that a named service contract does not constitute a funder-designated subrecipient or approval of a sole-source contract? In other words, a service contract entity is only approved if it has been selected according to the contracting rules identified in state law and policy for organizations that receive ENRTF funds through direct appropriations, or in the DNR's reimbursement manual for non-state organizations. These rules may include competitive bidding and prevailing wage requirements

Yes, I understand

Work Plan Amendments

Amendment ID	Request Type	Changes made on the following pages	Justification For Amendment Request (word limit 75)	Date Submitted	Approved	Date of LCCMR Action
1	Amendment Request	• Other • Budget - Personnel • Budget - Professional / Technical Contracts • Budget - Capital, Equipment, Tools, and Supplies • Budget - Travel and Conferences	SHTA would like to shift funding between expense line items.\$6,000 from Personnel to Services/Sub-Awards. \$137,217 from Tools and Supplies and move \$2,500 to Travel and \$134,717 to Services/Sub-Awards. These shifts are due to the inclusion of material costs as part of our paid contractor's agreements and over-estimate of staff time needed to oversee the project. As mentioned in earlier reports, our Contractor costs far exceeded our initial estimates.	April 11, 2025	Yes	April 14, 2025
2	Completion Date	Previous Completion Date: 11/30/2025 New Completion Date: 06/30/2026	2025 construction season window closed, and we need to carry over remainder construction deliverables into the spring/early summer of 2026.	April 20, 2026	Yes	April 20, 2026
3	Amendment Request	• Budget • Other • Budget - Personnel • Budget - Professional / Technical Contracts • Budget - Capital, Equipment, Tools, and Supplies • Budget - Travel and Conferences • Budget - Non-ENRTF Funds Contributed • Attachments	Requesting remaining funds in Personnel, Materials and Travel to be moved to Services/Sub-Awards - a total of \$13,592. The project went over budget with Services/Sub-Awards by \$74,000, so moving these funds over would be helpful in addressing this budget shortfall. The remaining shortfall is being addressed through cash donations from our members/donors.	July 24, 2026	Yes	August 4, 2026

Status Update Reporting

Final Status Update August 14, 2026

Date Submitted: July 24, 2026

Date Approved: August 4, 2026

Overall Update

Superior Hiking Trail's Split Rock River Loop is now fully renewed thanks to ENRTF funds matched by donations from SHTA volunteers and donors. While the project ran over budget, SHTA still committed to seeing through the majority of the scope of work. Split Rock River Loop is 100% renewed, while Cascade River Loop is 70% complete and will need to await further funding till fully renewed. Even without fully renewing the Cascade Loop, SHTA was able to meet the deliverables laid out in Activity 1. The renewal has reset the lifespan of these river loops, making them safer, more accessible and aligned with the visitor use patterns of these popular North Shore destinations.

I have attached a map and associated datasheet on each site location so that breadth of renewal is fully documented.

Activity 1

The last milestone to be completed was the spur trail of the Split Rock River Wayside. This is important link to the public who access this popular trailhead location (site of LCCMR visit in 2023).

Milestones:

- 1 9 to 13 miles of trail loops renewed (tread, armoring, drainage) - 9 MILES COMPLETE
- 2 2,000 to 3,000 linear feet of boardwalk, puncheon or steps replaced - 2,528 FT COMPLETE
- 3 One 1-mile wayside spur trail renewed - COMPLETE June 2026

For more detail you will find attachments of the completed project maps and associated data sheets for each loop location.

The remaining 30% of work for Cascade River Loop includes a focus on the northwest portion of the loop trail where a series of long reroutes and installing new steps leading into and out of a very steep drainage. The remaining scope of work is included in SHTA's LCCMR 2027 funding request proposal.

Detailed elements of the Cascade River Loop Renewal to complete the project are as follows:

177 LF of Puncheon

152 Wood Steps

96 Wood C-Steps

6 water checks

70 LF of Rock Work (steps, Hardening)

1,098 LF of Treadwork

5,770 LF Reroute

(This activity marked as complete as of this status update)

Dissemination

SHTA intends to coordinate a ribbon cutting event for the fall of 2026, and will extend invitation to elected officials, including all LCCMR staff and Commissioners. ENRTF signs have been installed at Split Rock River Wayside and Cascade River County Road 45 Trailhead. Photos of the installations can be found under Attachments.

SHTA has continued to use our publications to tell the story of ENRTF's impact on the Superior Hiking Trail. A new

summer 2026 blog post, along with the spring edition of the Ridgeline publication highlight the ENRTF projects and recognizes the ENRTF as the lead funder.

Additional Status Update Reporting

Additional Status Update January 14, 2026

Date Submitted: January 14, 2026

Date Approved: April 20, 2026

Overall Update

Superior Hiking Trail's Split Rock River Loop and a portion of the Cascade River Loop is nearly fully renewed thanks to ENRTF funds matched by donations from SHTA volunteers and donors. The renewal has reset the lifespan of these river loops, making them safer, more accessible and aligned with the visitor use patterns of these popular North Shore destinations. While the project ran over budget, SHTA still committed to seeing through the majority of the scope of work. Split Rock River Loop will be completely renewed, while sections of Cascade will need to await further funding. Even without fully renewing the Cascade Loop, we are on track to meet the deliverables laid out in Activity 1.

Activity 1

We are currently working on the final deliverables of the project including, Milestone 3, "One 1-mile wayside spur trail renewed" remains to be completed under Activity 1, additional boardwalk and puncheon under Milestone 2. The work will be completed in spring 2026, as soon as the weather allows construction to commence. Most funds available from ENRTF have been used.

Milestones:

- 1 9 to 13 miles of trail loops renewed (tread, armoring, drainage) - 7.85 MILES COMPLETE thru September 2025
- 2 2,000 to 3,000 linear feet of boardwalk, puncheon or steps replaced - 1,494 FT COMPLETED thru September 2025
- 3 One 1-mile wayside spur trail renewed - PENDING FALL 2025 CONSTRUCTION
- 4 Reassessment of damaged locations along river loops due to 2022 flooding - COMPLETE
- 5 Permits/permissions with land managers complete for 2025 work - COMPLETE
- 6 Contractors secured for 2024 work (RFP, Bidding process, contract execution) - COMPLETE
- 7 Contractors secured for 2025 work (RFP, bidding process, contract execution) - COMPLETE
- 8 Permits/permission with land managers complete for 2024 work - COMPLETE
- 9 Volunteer recruitment for 2024 projects complete - COMPLETE
- 10 Volunteer recruitment for 2025 projects complete - COMPLETE

Dissemination

SHTA intends to coordinate a ribbon cutting event for the summer of 2026, and will extend invitation to elected officials, including all LCCMR staff and Commissioners. ENRTF signs have been installed at Split Rock River Wayside and Cascade River County Road 45 Trailhead. Refreshing all blazing and signage on the Trail will be the final step of the project that will be completed in the spring of 2026, this is inclusive of installation of a few additional ENRTF signs at key intersections along the Loops.

Status Update Reporting

Status Update October 1, 2025

Date Submitted: October 1, 2025

Date Approved: April 20, 2026

Overall Update

The 2025 construction season has been incredibly productive for the SHTA, our volunteers, and contractors collectively contributing to the Split Rock River and Cascade River Loop projects. We are tackling a problem that is relatively new to our trail in recent years, air quality. The air quality index has reached unhealthy levels along the SHT corridor causing us to postpone work and reschedule volunteer activities.

At Cascade we ran three volunteer work projects that contributed nearly 900 volunteer hours over the course of the summer months. One of the volunteer work projects was an all-female identifying volunteer crew, creating an opportunity for participants learn new skills and practice their leadership in a supportive all-female environment.

Contractor-led work continues at both Split Rock River and Cascade River into the later fall months, but are slated for full completion by the end of the trail season. Material transport continues to be one of the trickiest parts of our work. Reports from our staff who are monitoring these construction sites are saying that the trail sections are nearly unrecognizable when compared to their former state, even to the point of being slightly disorienting because of its vast improvements.

Activity 1

Prime fall conditions led to an extended trail construction season for both paid contractors at Cascade River and Split Rock River loops. The process on our the milestones are outlined below. While great progress was made in 2024, 2025 will be an even larger trail construction season for both paid contractors and volunteers.

Milestone Progress:

- 1 9 to 13 miles of trail loops renewed (tread, armoring, drainage) - 7.85 MILES COMPLETE thru September 2025
- 2 2,000 to 3,000 linear feet of boardwalk, puncheon or steps replaced - 1,494 FT COMPLETED thru September 2025
- 3 One 1-mile wayside spur trail renewed - PENDING FALL 2025 CONSTRUCTION
- 4 Reassessment of damaged locations along river loops due to 2022 flooding - COMPLETE
- 5 Permits/permissions with land managers complete for 2025 work - COMPLETE
- 6 Contractors secured for 2024 work (RFP, Bidding process, contract execution) - COMPLETE
- 7 Contractors secured for 2025 work (RFP, bidding process, contract execution) - COMPLETE
- 8 Permits/permission with land managers complete for 2024 work - COMPLETE
- 9 Volunteer recruitment for 2024 projects complete - COMPLETE
- 10 Volunteer recruitment for 2025 projects complete - COMPLETE

Work will continue by contractors into the late fall.

Dissemination

SHTA continues to tell our story of renewal on our media platforms, most prevalently ENRTF/LCCMR were thanked and credited for the funding of the loop projects in our Spring 2025 Ridgeline, along with our soon-to-be realized Fall 2025 Ridgeline, SHTA's largest print publication that is mailed out to approximately 5,000 households.

Status Update Reporting

Status Update April 1, 2025

Date Submitted: March 26, 2025

Date Approved: April 14, 2025

Overall Update

Generally, late fall and winter is a quiet time on the SHT, but the weather was cooperative for the paid contractor, Trails Anonymous, to work late into November on the east side of the Split Rock River Loop. While they came close to completing the east side, they still have some additional work to complete in the spring of 2025 before pivoting their attention to the west side of the river. The public has been very receptive and respectful of the east side of the Split Rock River Loop in 2024, but we do anticipate more challenges when closing the west side of the Loop in 2025 due to its popularity and access directly from the Split Rock River Wayside Trailhead. Additional public education and outreach will be deployed to help keep contractors and visitors safe.

Similarly at Cascade River Loop, paid contractor, Trail Logic worked late into the fall and completed the majority of the scope of work within their contractor, completing a complex set of 88 steps, along with boardwalk, puncheon and tread work. The remaining contracted scope of work will be completed in 2025, along with a the completion of three additional volunteer-led projects.

Activity 1

Prime fall conditions led to an extended trail construction season for both paid contractors at Cascade River and Split Rock River loops. The process on our the milestones are outlined below. While great progress was made in 2024, 2025 will be an even larger trail construction season for both paid contractors and volunteers.

Milestone Progress:

- 1 9 to 13 miles of trail loops will be renewed (tread, armoring, drainage) - 5 MILES COMPLETE in 2024
- 2 2,000 to 3,000 linear feet of boardwalk, puncheon or steps replaced - 758 FT COMPLETE in 2024
- 3 One 1-mile wayside spur trail renewed - PENDING 2025 CONSTRUCTION
- 4 Reassessment of damaged locations along river loops due to 2022 flooding - COMPLETE
- 5 Permits/permissions with land managers complete for 2025 work - COMPLETE
- 6 Contractors secured for 2024 work (RFP, Bidding process, contract execution) - COMPLETE
- 7 Contractors secured for 2025 work (RFP, bidding process, contract execution) - COMPLETE
- 8 Permits/permission with land managers complete for 2024 work - COMPLETE
- 9 Volunteer recruitment for 2024 projects complete - COMPLETE
- 10 Volunteer recruitment for 2025 projects complete - IN PROGRESS

Dissemination

SHTA has recognized ENRTF/LCCMR in multiple articles regarding their funding support of the river loop renewal projects. A recap of the two projects were featured in the Fall 2024 Ridgeline Publication, December 2024 SHTA blog post: "2024 Trail Work: Year in Review," which was also featured as a link in our December 2024 Trail Mix E-Newsletter. We also recognize ENRTF/LCCMR as part of our annual volunteer recognition celebrations presentation and as part of of our 2025 Annual Volunteer Opportunities Webinar. While not yet published, ENRTF/LCCMR will be publicly thanked again in SHTA's Spring 2025 Ridgeline publication.

Status Update Reporting

Status Update October 1, 2024

Date Submitted: September 26, 2024

Date Approved: October 24, 2024

Overall Update

The overall public and trail community response to the announcement of the renewal of the river loops has been incredibly positive. Because the Split Rock River project required a trail closure, SHTA partnered with the Minnesota DNR Parks & Trail communications team to assure wide dissemination of the closure. A press release was sent out on April 15, 2024 and was covered by multiple media outlets. We used this opportunity to provide alternative hike locations along the North Shore and also provide context to the larger issues related to increased visitor use, including Leave No Trace education.

Over the 2024 trail construction season, SHTA was able to complete a portion of the renewal at both of the loops -- Split Rock River and Cascade River. The significant portion of the work completed at Cascade, to-date, has been staff-led volunteer projects completed over multiple work weekends during the summer months. Paid contractors are still currently working at both project sites and will continue construction until they are shut down by winter weather restraints.

Activity 1

At Cascade River SHTA led three 4-day long volunteer projects. 1,146 volunteer hours were contributed over the three projects. The first project was the installation of 14 stone steps, three small drainages/muddy spots remediated with stepping stones, two short reroutes (100' and 20'), and about a half mile of tread maintained (debermed and reshaped and drainage installed). The second volunteer project was at Trout creek and included 10 step stone crossing, and a total of 16 steps installed on both sides of the creek to stabilize the banks, and stabilized an eroding section of the bank with stone riprap. We replaced an old 12' long two-plank puncheon and replaced it with a 5 step natural crossing and installed 3 checks, and realigned and repaired a section of the trail. The last project Eroded hillside repaired (stone steps installed), 200' reroute constructed within the state park boundary.

We also contracted with Trail Logic for renewal of the northern mile of the East side of the Cascade River and Trail Anonymous for the East side of Split River.

SHTA completed milestones: 4, 6, 7, 8 and 9.

Partial completion of milestones: 1,2, and 5.

Dissemination

SHTA has generated multiple blog posts and articles sharing the news about the river loop renewal projects.

Blog Post "Two Trail Renewal Projects Require Closures" <https://superiorhiking.org/two-trail-renewal-projects-require-closures/>

Spring 2024 Ridgeline article highlighting ENRTF projects as well as a thanks specific to grant funders. Link in "attachments."

April 15, 2024, SHTA Trail Closures Press Release is posted in "attachments" section of grant portal.

April 15, 2024, Minnesota Public Radio Article is posted in "attachments" section of grant portal.

April 15, 2024, WDIO article is posted in "attachments" section of grant portal.

Status Update Reporting

Status Update April 1, 2024

Date Submitted: March 29, 2024

Date Approved: May 8, 2024

Overall Update

Popularity of our looped hike experiences were only further confirmed during SHTA's larger master planning process that has been taking place over the last 14 months. Many of the public comments relate to the desire to see more resilient looped experiences to address the concentrated day-hiker use.

Since our LCCMR site visit at Split Rock River Loop in the fall of 2023, SHTA has been collaborating closely with land managers (DNR and Forest Service). Requests for permit review were submitted in late 2023 and are currently under view by the appropriate parties. The vast majority of the work taking place on the loops falls within our existing corridor and are permissible maintenance activities as outlined in our current lease agreements.

In early 2024 we bid out the projects and the bids came in far above our estimates. This was disheartening as we had spoken with professional trail builders during the grant proposal development to assure that our estimates aligned with the current market, but since then the market had changed. SHTA Board of Director's decided to continue with the full scope of the project as outlined in the grant and address the budget shortfall with SHTA cash reserves.

Activity 1

SHTA has completed Milestone 4 (reassess flood damage areas) and Milestone 6 (secured contractors for 2024 work). As mentioned above, the vast majority of the work outlined is proceeding in 2024 because it does not require additional land management review. The remaining elements of the projects that do require environmental and cultural review will proceed when approval is granted. This is anticipated by August 2024.

Additionally, SHTA has started the volunteer recruitment process for the 2024 construction season. Two 5-day long work parties have been identified for Cascade River Loop. This will be led by SHTA staff and support by Volunteer Crew leads.

SHTA has been working closely with Minnesota DNR Communications staff to help educate the public on the closures associated with the looped construction work.

Dissemination

SHTA highlighted these ENRTF supported projects in our November 2023 Trail Mix E-newsletter along with our site visit. This is distributed to 16,000 subscribers. <https://mailchi.mp/superiorhiking.org/nov2023trailmix>