

**Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund  
2018 Request for Proposals (RFP)**

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**Project Title:**

**ENRTF ID: 209-G**

Superior Hiking Trail Enhancement Plan

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**Category:** G. Land Acquisition, Habitat and Recreation

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**Total Project Budget:** \$ 100,200

**Proposed Project Time Period for the Funding Requested:** 2 years, July 2018 to May 2020

**Summary:**

Evaluate routing, safety, water management and other environmental and design issues of the Superior Hiking Trail and establish SHTA best practices methods for carrying out the resulting redesign plans.

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**Email** hike@shta.org

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**Location**

**Region:** Northeast

**County Name:** Carlton, Cook, Lake, St. Louis

**City / Township:** Duluth through Grand Marais

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**Alternate Text for Visual:**

Photos of hikers on trail, volunteer trail crew, and trail map of the 310-mile trail along North Shore connecting 8 state parks

_____ Funding Priorities	_____ Multiple Benefits	_____ Outcomes	_____ Knowledge Base
_____ Extent of Impact	_____ Innovation	_____ Scientific/Tech Basis	_____ Urgency
_____ Capacity Readiness	_____ Leverage	_____ TOTAL	_____ %

## PROJECT TITLE: Superior Hiking Trail Enhancement Plan

### I. PROJECT STATEMENT

Construction of Minnesota's 310-mile Superior Hiking Trail ("SHT") started 30 years ago with seed money from LCCMR. Scheduled for completion in July 2017, the trail gives an estimated 50,000 visitors per year access to spectacular vistas along Minnesota's rugged Lake Superior shoreline with its significant flora, fauna and geology. Backcountry trail design has evolved over the last three decades from the time when laid-off mine workers helped with the SHT's construction, and there are numerous opportunities to improve the trail to enhance its recreational value. This project will evaluate the SHT to improve this important resource by evaluating routing, safety, water management and other environmental and design issues and will also set up the organization to carry out the resulting redesign plans in a manner that employs scientific data and best practices.

Each year, Superior Hiking Trail Association ("SHTA") trail crews perform regular maintenance, repairing storm damage and dealing with normal water management concerns such as boardwalk and bridge repairs. This project is not intended to replace this ongoing maintenance, but is rather an opportunity to identify enhancements that will improve users' recreational and environmental experiences. Key outcomes of this project will be:

- A prioritized list of trail enhancement projects.
- A map-based inventory of the trail, to be accessible online, giving the SHTA and its contractors and volunteers an ongoing shared tool for documentation of findings and more efficient and effective trail management and communications.
- Infusing trail management best practices into the organization, specifically a modernized trail maintenance manual, an ability to measure trail traffic, and dissemination of state of the art design and water management methods among staff, contractors, members, and volunteers. This is critical for both trail durability and mitigation of environmental impacts, such as erosion control (the trail crosses about 50 designated trout streams.)
- Cost estimates of the trail enhancement projects, to be based on SHTA's successful model of pairing trail work contractors with volunteers. This will establish informed fundraising goals as the SHTA launches a capital campaign to carry out the trail enhancements.

### II. PROJECT ACTIVITIES AND OUTCOMES

#### **Activity 1: *Identify trail redesign needs and document in GIS database***

**Budget: \$77,900**

Using contractors, staff, and volunteer section adopters, the SHTA will take a trail inventory and document opportunities for re-routing and re-design to improve the experience of hiking the trail. This process will take two years, with Phase 1 in the summer of 2018 (roughly 150 miles) and the remaining sections as Phase 2 in the summer of 2019. Outcome measured as miles of trail evaluated and documented in the database.

Outcomes	Completion Date
1) A detailed physical evaluation of 310 miles, recording field observations and capturing GIS data elements (Trail Consultant, SHTA Intern with some supervision by SHTA Staff).	Phase 1: 9/30/18 Phase 2: 9/30/19
2) An interactive database in ArcGIS or similar platform, comprised of a detailed mapping of the trail with embedded images, notes, and trail attributes (e.g.: redesign project locations and notes, structures, signage, treadway descriptions, campsite and trailhead	Phase 1: 12/31/18 Phase 2: 12/31/19

descriptions, easements and jurisdictional borders, services.)	
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**Activity 2: *Establish Best Practices, with followup communications and outreach***

**Budget: \$22,300**

Identify best practices using a professional trail consultant. Document and communicate trail design innovations and proposed re-design and re-routing projects to trail staff, contractors, volunteers, land owners, members and public. Outcomes measured as documents created and field-tested

Outcomes	Completion Date
1) Establish Trail evaluation approach and database elements (SHTA staff, contractors and volunteers in consultation with trail consultant) Outcome is a description of evaluation approach and data design	7/31/18
2) New SHTA trail design/maintenance manual (staff, technical writer; volunteer reviewers)	4/30/19
3) New training materials for trail work leaders to use with crewmembers/volunteers (SHTA staff, technical writer, trail work contractors; volunteer reviewers)	7/31/19
4) Phase 1 and Phase 2 Reports, containing a list of redesign projects and their costs, with priorities established by taking into account severity of natural resource impacts, safety, and usage (SHTA staff, technical writer, trail work contractors)	Phase 1: 5/15/19 Phase 2: 5/15/20

### III. PROJECT STRATEGY

#### A. Project Team/Partners (all but Executive Director to be funded by LCCMR)

Project Manager: SHTA Executive Director, Described in section 6 – Project Manager Qualifications.

Outreach Coordinator: Current SHTA staff person to supervise intern, oversee database development, schedule and coordinate training, outreach and report production. (20% FTE – to be backfilled)

Trail Evaluator (TBD – have had initial conversations with two): Contractor to evaluate physical trail and perform cost estimates; preferably a knowledgeable contractor who is familiar with the trail and volunteer base.

GIS Assistant: A seasonal employee/intern to accompany the trail evaluator and record conditions data, and then report back to the Outreach Coordinator and GIS consultant.

Trail Consultant (TBD – have had initial conversations with two): Advise staff and trail evaluator in designing the evaluation approach, reviewing redesign plan and advising the organization on best practices.

GIS Consultant (TBD – either same as trail consultant or a separate resource): Help hire, train and supervise the GIS assistant; set up the GIS database; and train other staff and volunteers in its maintenance and use.

Technical Writer Contractor to help with maintenance manual, training materials, and Phase 1&2 reports.

#### B. Project Impact and Long-Term Strategy

- Permit the SHTA to prioritize improvement efforts and, in accordance with its strategic plan, to launch a capital campaign with informed fund-raising goals and well-considered projects.
- Reorient the organization, including its members and volunteers, towards a “culture of water management,” where an appreciation of sustainable trail building and maintenance practices will become a part of the operating values of everyone involved in the trail.
- GIS database may in the future serve as a platform for an interactive public outreach tool.

The SHT is an important trail to the State of Minnesota, and is regularly included in lists of the 10 best backcountry hikes in the country. It is re-discovered each year by thru-hikers, honeymooners, day-hikers, and scout troops. Over the years, there has been a great investment of time and resources in developing the Superior Hiking Trail, including early and important investments from the State of Minnesota. This project will make a real difference in its future.

**C. Timeline Requirements** The timeline is two years, beginning July 1, 2018 or as soon as funds are committed, and finishing May 2020.

## 2018 Detailed Project Budget

**Project Title:** Superior Hiking Trail Enhancement Plan

### IV. TOTAL ENRTF REQUEST BUDGET: 2 years

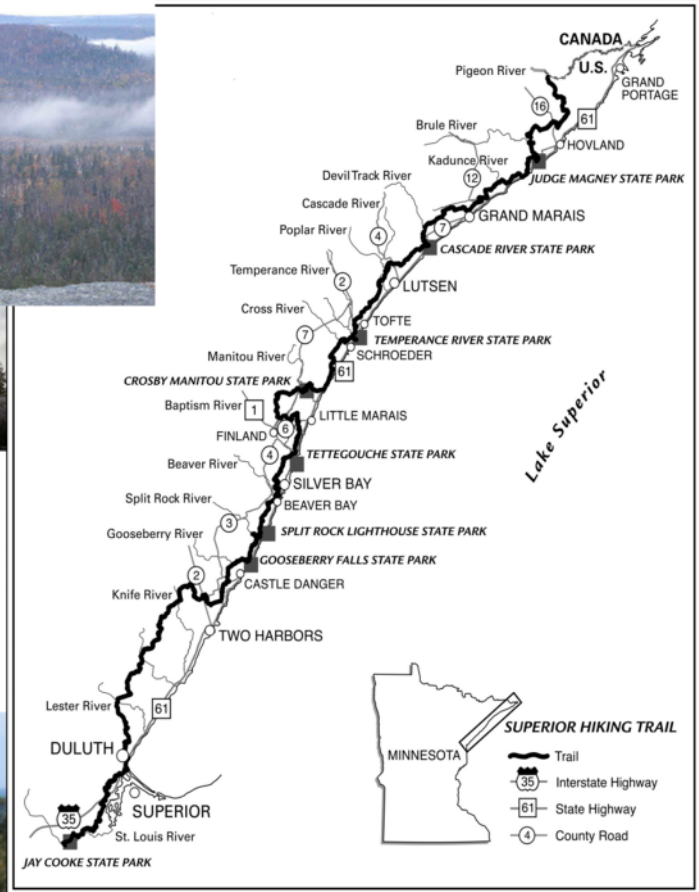
BUDGET ITEM		AMOUNT
<b>Personnel:</b>		
20% Outreach Coordinator (permanent staff) X 2 years (benefits=10.65% wages). Coordinate GIS mapping, supervise and assist data input & integrity, documentation, training, volunteer outreach. Funds will be used to hire part-time person to backfill and free up this person.		\$ 16,200
GIS intern 40 hrs/week X 13 weeks/yr X 2 years (benefits=8% of wages). Hired for this project		12,900
<b>Professional/Technical/Service Contract(s):</b>		
<i>This contract will be the result of an RFP that will have four separate deliverables. We have estimated these as separate lines to reflect estimates that we have received for each of the individual deliverables. They may or may not ultimately be separate contractors.</i>		
1) Contractor (\$50/hr X 300 hrs/yr) X 2 years (plus 3% inflation/yr) to carry out evaluation of complete system including re-routing and redesign proposals and corresponding cost estimates	31,400	
2) Trail design best practices consultant to provide high-level technical advice	7,500	
3) Technical writer 5 weeks @ \$40/hour over 2 years (with 3% inflation/yr) to write two reports, new maintenance and design manual, and training materials	8,300	
4) GIS technical assistance, training, and support to create a map-based internet-accessible database of detailed trail features and notes for entire trail system	16,750	
SUBTOTAL - OUTSIDE CONTRACTOR(S)		64,000
<b>Equipment/Tools/Supplies:</b>		
GPS Extenders (GARMIN GLO) (2)		300
Trail Counters (TrailMaster TM1050) 12 @ \$230/each.		2,800
Printing of 2 reports, maintenance manual and training handouts		500
<b>Travel:</b> 250 mi/week mileage X 13 weeks X 2 years @ .54/mileage reimbursement		3,500
<b>TOTAL ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES TRUST FUND \$ REQUEST =</b>		<b>\$ 100,200</b>

### V. OTHER FUNDS

SOURCE OF FUNDS		AMOUNT	Status
<b>Other Non-State \$ To Be Applied To Project During Project Period:</b>			
5% FTE Executive Director X 2 years (benefits=10.65% of wages)		\$ 6,900	Secured
<b>Other State \$ To Be Applied To Project During Project Period:</b>		0	
<b>In-kind Services To Be Applied To Project During Project Period:</b>		\$ 25,000	
(\$24.14/hr hourly rate for volunteer time, per independensector.org)			
a) Volunteer trail adopters to help with trail evaluation	14,500		
b) Best practices workshops (20 volunteers X 8 hrs)	7,700		
c) Volunteer reviewers for new written materials (4 docs X 4 hrs )	400		
d) Board of dir. oversight - this project only (14 members X 1.5 hrs/yr X2 yrs)	1,000		
e) BOD Trails Committee - this project only (5 members X 6 hrs/yr X 2 yrs)	1,400		
<b>Past and Current ENRTF Appropriation:</b>		\$ 1,014,000	
1991 - 1993	400,000		Spent
1989 - 1991	380,000		Spent
1987 - 1989	234,000		Spent



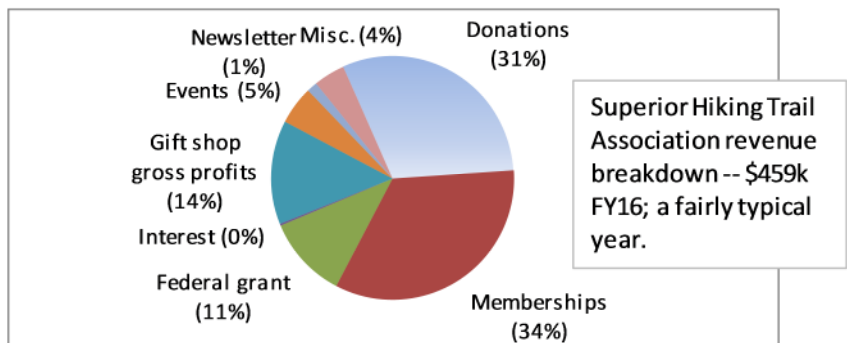
**Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund (ENRTF)**  
**2018 Main Proposal**  
**Project Title: Superior Hiking Trail Enhancement Plan**



Photos above and right courtesy of people posting on April 27-28, 2017 to the SHT Facebook page responding to request for photos for this grant proposal (out of 100+ responses in one day)



Volunteer trail maintenance crew



PROJECT MANAGER: The project will be managed by the SHTA Executive Director, who will oversee securing project resources, grant reporting, monitoring performance and communications. Newly hired and starting June 1, 2017, he brings many years of experience as an Executive Director for a conservation-oriented non-profit.

SUPERIOR HIKING TRAIL ASSOCIATION (SHTA) : Founded in 1986, the SHTA manages the construction, planning, and day-to-day care of the Superior Hiking Trail (“the Trail”). A Minnesota 501c3 non-profit, member-supported, volunteer-driven organization, the SHTA builds, promotes and maintains the Trail with the contributions of 5,000 plus members and the cooperation and support of 21 governmental and non-governmental organizations as well as over 25 private landowners. The organization has a modest but growing endowment and no debt, and relies mainly on non-governmental support for its day-to-day operations.

The SHTA coordinates the efforts of more than 350 volunteers who contribute 6,000-8,000 hours each year (depending on storm damage events) to assist with trail and campground construction and maintenance. Some volunteers have chosen to adopt a section of the trail, a campsite or trailhead to maintain, while others participate in scheduled maintenance and trail building days and hikes. Partner organizations include three county governments; the cities of Duluth, Two Harbors, Silver Bay, Lutsen, and Grand Marais; the Minnesota DNR; Minnesota State Parks; the U.S. Forest Service; the Wolf Ridge Environmental Learning Center; the Cathedral of the Pines camp; Hartley Nature Center and others.

The Trail itself is a 310-mile long footpath in northeastern Minnesota that follows the ridgeline overlooking Lake Superior, starting within a mile of the Wisconsin border and ending just before reaching Canada. This 18-inch-wide unpaved footpath connects eight Minnesota State Parks and the Superior National Forest, each of which has its own network of trails. Furthermore, the Trail connects and is affiliated with the North Country Trail that runs from North Dakota to New York. In addition to enjoying Lake Superior vistas, hikers enjoy the boreal forest, the North Shore’s Sawtooth Mountains, big and powerful waterfalls and abundant flora and fauna.

Many people use the footpath: day hikers, snowshoers, trail runners and long-distance hikers. Overnight hikers are supported by 94 backcountry, fee-free campsites. The constituency is largely from the state of Minnesota; however, the popularity of the Trail and its proximity to Lake Superior has drawn hikers and visitors from all over the country. This has created greater national awareness for this region and an enviable reputation for our trail work. It’s estimated that more than 50,000 people, from scout troops to solo adventurers, hike on some portion of the Trail each year.

The SHTA’s greatest accomplishment in its first 30 years has been to complete the Trail through the support of a dynamic and active volunteer program. Our proudest accomplishment has been the thousands of people who have been encouraged to take up hiking as part of a healthy lifestyle; and by doing so attract them to spend time outdoors in this special region of the state.

Now in its fourth decade and with the Trail complete, the organization is pivoting its focus and beginning to develop a vision for the future by first implementing a new three-year strategic plan. The highlights include shifting from *building* to *maintaining and improving* the Trail; permanently securing and protecting the Trail; increasing our visibility in regional planning; and addressing the big issues of water management and bridge repair due to the increase in weather-related events. We will continue to engage our members to provide financial resources and volunteers to support these efforts. And we will involve businesses, communities, and other partners to build awareness of the Trail and the health and economic contributions it makes to this area of Minnesota.