

**Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund  
2019 Request for Proposals (RFP)**

---

**Project Title:**

**ENRTF ID: 272-GH**

Making the SHTs Big Bad Five Beautiful Again

---

**Category:** H. Proposals seeking \$200,000 or less in funding

**Sub-Category:** G. Land Acquisition for Habitat and Recreation

---

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

**Proposed Project Time Period for the Funding Requested:** June 30, 2022 (3 yrs)

**Summary:**

To renew the most damaged parts of five sections of the Superior Hiking Trail, and to return the Trail to an abandoned route.

---

**Name:** Denny Caneff

**Sponsoring Organization:** Superior Hiking Trail Association

**Title:** Executive Director

**Department:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address:** 731 7th Avenue, Suite 2

Two Harbors MN 55616

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

**Email** dcaneff@superiorhiking.org

**Web Address** www.superiorhiking.org

---

**Location**

**Region:** Northeast

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

**City / Township:** Duluth

---

**Alternate Text for Visual:**

Map shows the entire Superior Hiking Trail, with areas targeted for renewal highlighted.

_____ Funding Priorities	_____ Multiple Benefits	_____ Outcomes	_____ Knowledge Base
_____ Extent of Impact	_____ Innovation	_____ Scientific/Tech Basis	_____ Urgency
_____ Capacity	_____ Readiness	_____ Leverage	_____ TOTAL _____%
_____ If under \$200,000, waive presentation?			



**PROJECT TITLE: Making the Superior Hiking Trail's "Big Bad Five" Beautiful Again**

**I. PROJECT STATEMENT**

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 about 25 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 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 to run from Grand Marais to Two Harbors. As the Trail grew in popularity, ambitions for its final shape grew as well. Just 9 months 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.

But the SHT 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.

A 2018 LCCMR grant (pending legislative approval) will allow 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 could 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.

**II. PROJECT ACTIVITIES AND OUTCOMES**

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

The "Big Bad Five" includes 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.

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

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



**Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund (ENRTF)  
2019 Main Proposal**

**Activity 2: Bring Back to Life a “Lost” Section of the SHT Near Grand Marais**

In the SHT’s early days, the Trail followed a high ridge that took it to Sawtooth Bluff and its fetching Lake Superior overlook. For reasons lost to time, that section was abandoned in the early 1990s and the Trail was routed 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 and improve trail users’ experience in that area -- a natural footpath, intended solely for hiking, with stunning vistas and towering pines.

**ENRTF BUDGET: \$21,000**

<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Completion Date</b>
<i>1. Approval for the restored route and any permits needed will be acquired from public landowners.</i>	<i>June 2020</i>
<i>2. The restored route (about 4 miles long) will be marked (“flagged”) and mapped</i>	<i>June 2021</i>
<i>3. Preliminary tread building will be completed on up to 25% of the new trail</i>	<i>November 2021</i>

**III. PROJECT PARTNERS:**

**B. Partners NOT receiving ENRTF funding**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>	<b>Role</b>
MN DNR		Land owner	Land management
U.S. Forest Service		Landowner	Land management
City of Grand Marais		Landowner	Land planning and mgnt

**IV. 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 and will get the trail work done by optimizing staff and volunteer talents.

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.

**V. TIME LINE REQUIREMENTS:**

Trail experts’ evaluations will be completed by October of 2018 (current LCCMR grant, pending legislative approval). These evaluations will help us determine individual high-priority projects for Activity 1 of a 2019 grant. We can start work on those projects in the “trail season” (mid-May to mid-November) of 2019, ’20 and ’21. Activity 2 – we are allowing for a fairly lengthy permitting and review process with the Forest Service, MN DNR and the City of Grand Marais, which has not yet completed its master plan for the Sawtooth Bluff land. The outcomes spelled out here can be completed by the fall of 2021.

## 2019 Proposal Budget Spreadsheet

**Project Title: Making the Superior Hiking Trail's "Big Bad Five" Beautiful Again**

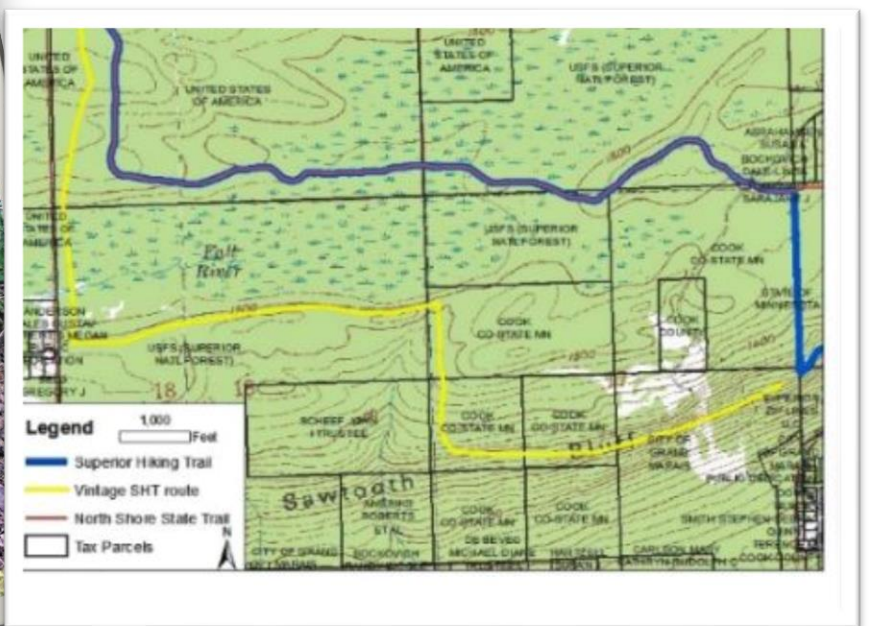
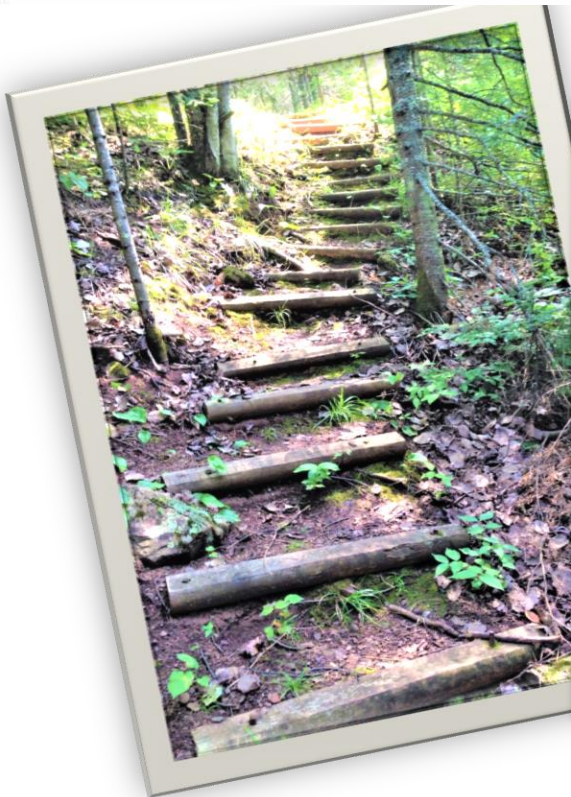
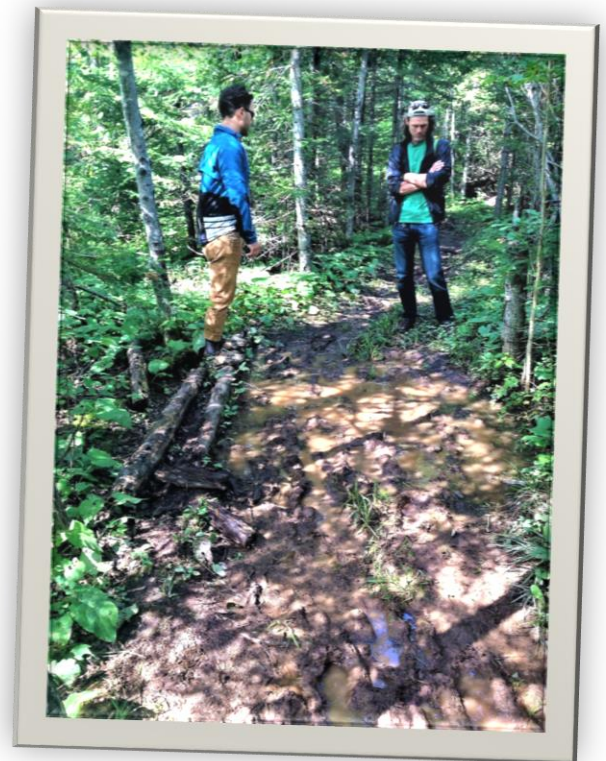
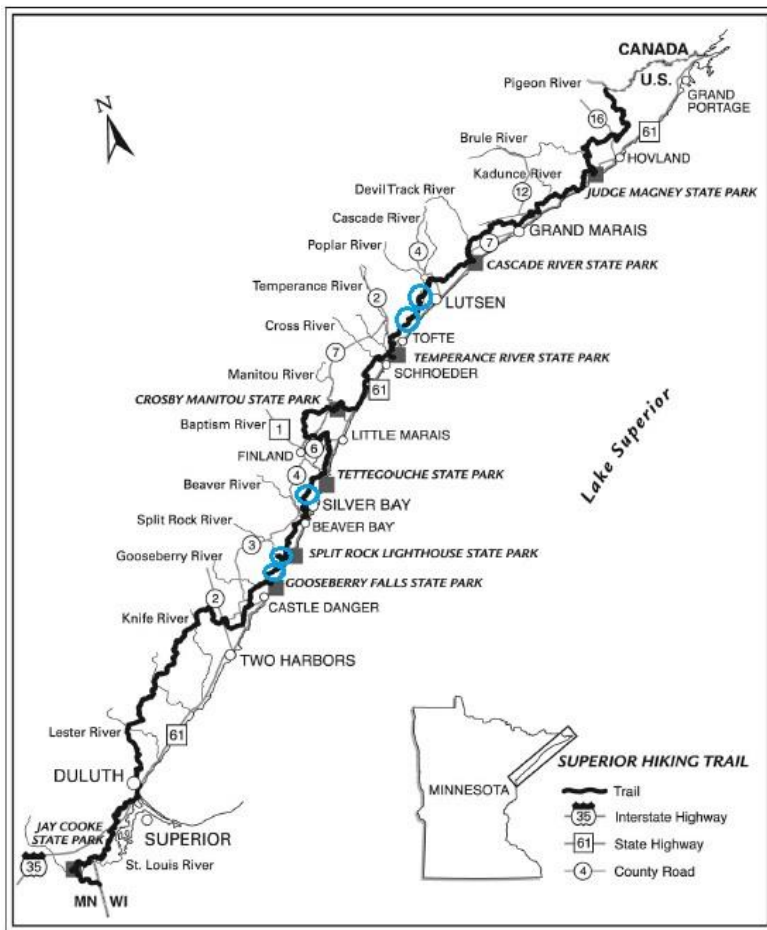
### IV. TOTAL ENRTF REQUEST BUDGET two years (July 2019-November 2021)

<b>BUDGET ITEM</b> (See "Guidance on Allowable Expenses")	<b>AMOUNT</b>
<b>Personnel:</b> SHTA Trail operations director will manage and oversee this project. Estimated salary cost is \$1,000 per month x 7 months per year 2019-2021. Trail operation director's time devoted to this project will be backfilled by SHTA executive director and SHTA trail development director, with internal funds.	\$ 21,000
<b>Personnel:</b> Benefits for trail operations director (health and other insurance insurance, employer FICA contribution), calculated at 25% of salary cost of this project.	\$ 5,250
<b>Professional/Technical/Service Contracts:</b> SHTA will vet and engage competent and reputable trail contractors for trail construction and rehabilitation projects, and use a bid process for each discrete project.	\$ 121,000
<b>Equipment/Tools:</b> This will be safety equipment and tools for volunteers on those parts of the trail construction projects that can accommodate volunteers.	\$ 5,000
<b>Supplies:</b> This category is materials needed for trail construction: lumber, hardware, concrete, rented tools.	\$ 35,000
<b>Travel:</b> SHTA staff and volunteer transport and other travel expenses	\$ 3,750
<b>TOTAL ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES TRUST FUND \$ REQUEST =</b>	<b>\$ 191,000</b>

### V. OTHER FUNDS (This entire section must be filled out. Do not delete rows. Indicate "N/A" if row is not applicable.)

<b>SOURCE OF FUNDS</b>	<b>AMOUNT</b>	<b>Status</b>
<b>Other Non-State \$ To Be Applied To Project During Project Period:</b> SHTA funding (member dues, donations, private grants) to support SHTA staff and volunteers	\$ 30,000	Secured
<b>Other State \$ To Be Applied To Project During Project Period:</b>	N/A	
<b>In-kind Services To Be Applied To Project During Project Period:</b> Volunteer labor (800 hours x \$20/hr. = \$16,000) and donated lumber and other materials (\$3,000)	\$ 19,000	
<b>Past and Current ENRTF Appropriation:</b> 2018 ENRTF grant	\$ 100,000	Pending legislative approval
<b>Other Funding History:</b>	N/A	





**Top left:** Map of entire Superior Hiking Trail, with approximate locations of “Big Bad Five” indicated with blue circles. **Top right:** a typical mud hole on the SHT. **Bottom left:** an example of a damaged and dangerous built structure. **Bottom right:** The “vintage SHT route” shows where we would like to bring back this trail segment to a more scenic location and off the snowmobile trail.

# **Superior Hiking Trail Association**

## **LCCMR-ENRFT Submission (2019) April 2018**

### **Organization Description**

The mission of the Superior Hiking Trail Association is to build, maintain, renew and promote the Superior Hiking Trail – linking people with nature by footpath along Lake Superior’s North Shore.

The founder of the Superior Hiking Trail toiled quietly and steadily to build a hiking trail paralleling the North Shore. The original ambition was to build a hiking trail from Grand Marais to Two Harbors, but by the late 1990s the Association expanded its ambition and committed to stretch the trail border to border – from the Canadian border to the Minnesota-Wisconsin state line.

In July of 2017, the final link of this 310-mile long natural footpath – a bridge over the Red River near the southern terminus of the SHT, near Jay Cooke State Park – was completed. In addition to the main SHT, there are nearly 40 miles of loops and spurs (main trail offshoots) and 94 campsites operated by the SHTA.

Numbers of trail users are hard to verify, but we estimate nearly 100,000 people use the SHT annually, from all over the state and country: trail runners competing in nationally renowned trail races near Lutsen, Twin Citians enjoying the watery glory of the Split Rock River, grandmothers walking their grandchildren and dogs in Duluth. At the heart of the SHT are the hundreds of volunteers putting in tens of thousands of hours scratching out tread, whipping weeds, building bridges and board walks, and generally keeping the trail in shape.

Because the Trail is over 30 years old; built before modern trail-building standards; located in places that were more convenient than ecologically appropriate; and heavily used, it was clear the existing trail management system was not equal to the task and needed a reboot. In 2017, the Association initiated a Trail Renewal Program to better plan trail renewal and prioritize projects. The program includes better planning, improved volunteer training and engagement, and a full time position at SHTA devoted to trail operations.

### **Trail Operations Director**

The SHTA has just hired Tamer Ibrahim as its first trail operations director, who will be the primary project manager for this effort. He is a 20-year veteran of the U.S. Forest Service as a wilderness ranger, building trails and portages throughout the Superior National Forest. He has considerable experience in working with volunteers, working with contractors, handling large tools and equipment, and developing and executing trail-building projects, all of which will serve him well at SHTA. He will develop and lead our Volunteer Crew Leader program (a small cadre of highly skilled and experienced volunteers) and create a first-of-its-kind for the SHT a trail design and building manual.