**PROJECT TITLE: Crane Lake Voyageurs National Park Campground and Visitors Center**

1. **PROJECT STATEMENT**

Crane Lake Township is requesting $3,600,000 from the ENRTF for the design and construction of the new Crane Lake Voyageurs National Park Campground and for site preparation/permitting/engineering/design for the new Crane Lake Voyageurs National Park Visitor’s Center. The Campground and Visitor Center will be constructed on a recently purchased a 29 acre parcel of land that was the site of the former Borderland Resort. Crane Lake Township received $950,000 from the ENRTF to purchase this property. The Campground will include RV sites, tent sites, restroom and shower facilities, RV pump out facilities at either the Campground, DNR or the Visitor Center sites, parking lot and kiosk. In addition to the campground amenities, Handberg Road and Bayside Drive will be paved to provide access to the campground and to meet ADA requirements at the campground. The Visitor Center and site will include an outside gathering area, Township offices, a large meeting room, restrooms and a visitor retail and display area.

Voyageurs National Park is Minnesota’s only national park and the nation’s only water-based national park, consisting of more than 84,000 acres of water and 134,000 acres of land. The interconnected waterways of the park provide an unparalleled opportunity for citizens to explore the Northwood’s lake and border country. You must leave your car and take to the water to fully explore and experience the lakes, islands, and shorelines of the park. Nearly 200 years ago, voyageurs paddled birch bark canoes full of animal pelts and trade goods through the park on their way to Canada. Today, people explore the park by canoes, kayaks, houseboats, and motorboats.

Water is the defining feature of Voyageurs National Park. Access and tourism expansion was the long-term promise of the park—increasing economic opportunities for local residents while preserving a national treasure and developing recreational and educational opportunities for our citizens.

The overall goal is to create a Visitor Center operated by the Department of Interior’s National Park Service and coordinated with the DNR’s new boat ramp and entrance point while combining all with a new NPS campground and public space. The purchase of this key property is a one-time opportunity to fully develop the final entrance point of the original four entrance points to the park.

The campground and visitor center would be owned and built by Crane Lake Township to NPS specifications and will be leased back to the NPS under a long term lease. The NPS, the DNR, and the Township of Crane Lake have worked cooperatively to complete a master plan and will work together to complete the federal NEPA process to determine the number of sites, specifications of the sites, and camping fee rate schedule along with the size, scope and design of the Visitors Center and additional development which will be determined by these partners. The net revenues generated through these fees will be used to support the campground and the Visitor Center. The plan will include RV pump out facilities at either the DNR or the Visitor Center sites, or both. It is not anticipated that there will be any excess fees or profits generated from the campground beyond paying operational costs and a portion of the debt service/lease payments.

The facilities and the campground are designed to enhance the guest experiences for folks visiting the VNP. It is clear that not enough revenue will be generated from the campground to pay for its operation and to retire the long-term capital costs to build the adjacent Visitors Center and the campground. It is not anticipated that there

will be any excess revenue from the campground and all income will be directed to support the campground and the project.

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources will be an important partner in the planning, development, and operations of these facilities because of their adjacent development of a new boat ramp, restroom facilities, parking, and other recreational uses at Crane Lake. It is planned to have both a walking and vehicle connection to the two parcels, integrating their uses for a seamless, quality guest experience for visitors.

The Township of Crane Lake is in discussions with the private owners of a site on the attached core development proposal map. This connection between the DNR boat ramp site (seven acres) and the 29 acre acquisition proposed in this document will be used as a future road connector and pedestrian access between the DNR site and the NPS Visitor Center/campground site.

**II. PROJECT ACTIVITIES AND OUTCOMES**

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| **Activity 1 Title: National Park Campground**  **Description:** *Design and Construction of the Campground and necessary amenities.*  **ENRTF BUDGET: $2,400,000** |  |

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| **Outcome** | **Completion Date** |
| *1. Completion of plans and specifications/design review/bidding documents* | *May 2021* |
| *2. Construction Start* | *July 2021* |
| *3. Construction Completed* | *November2022* |

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| **Activity 2 Title: National Park Visitors Center**  **Description:**Site preparation/permitting/engineering/design*.*  **ENRTF BUDGET: $1,200,000** |  |

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| **Outcome** | **Completion Date** |
| *1. Completion of design and permitting* | *May 2021* |
| *2. Site Preparation Construction Start* | *July 2021* |
| *3. Site Preparation Construction Completed* | *November2022* |

1. **PROJECT PARTNERS AND COLLABORATORS:**

Partners and collaborators include: MN DNR, Federal Department of Interior, National Park Service, Members of Congress, U.S Forest Service, Township of Crane Lake Board and Crane Lake Community Members

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

It is anticipated that additional funding will be sought to complete this project including from these potential sources: United State Department of Agriculture (USDA), United State Forest Service (USFS), NPS, State Bonding, municipal bonding, and other sources. The NPS has the ability to lease facilities over the long-term where there is a potential income stream and pay off the facilities over the long-term, even if the income stream is only a partial source for the lease payments and operational costs. Thus the campground is an important component of the large scale Visitor Center project from the NPS viewpoint. A similar structure was developed by the City of International Falls, which built the VNP Headquarters and leased it to the NPS under a long-term agreement.