



Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

2021 Request for Proposal

General Information

Proposal ID: 2021-441

Proposal Title: Minnesota Hunter Walking Trails, Public Land Recreational Access

Project Manager Information

Name: Gary Drotts

Organization: Ruffed Grouse Society

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Project Basic Information

Project Summary: Sustain, enhance public land forest recreation and management access supported by a system of hunter walking trails through the improvement of trail infrastructure needs (gate, signs, parking lots, maps, etc.)

Funds Requested: \$300,000

Proposed Project Completion: 2024-06-30

LCCMR Funding Category: Methods to Protect, Restore, and Enhance Land, Water, and Habitat (F)

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?

Region(s): NE

When will the work impact occur?

During the Project and In the Future

Narrative

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

(***this is re-submission of an FY21 work plan for consideration in the FY22 process***) Approximately 1,000 miles of hunter walking trails (HWTs) exist on ~250 sites within Minnesota's public forest lands. They were designed to provide a non-motorized recreational opportunity for that segment of the public that desires a quieter, foot-travel experience. Currently this statewide system of HWTs is located on State Wildlife Management Area (40%), State Forest (30%), County Forest (20%), and National Forest lands (10%). A majority of these trails were developed through efforts funded by MNDNR Wildlife and NGO/conservation organizations like the Ruffed Grouse Society (RGS). This HWT system was primarily developed in the 1970's-90's as a means to allow hunters to access public land and to improve forest habitats through dispersed timber sales. HWTs are typically funded by annual operating funds of the controlling land administrator, they do not have a dedicated funding source like other trail users (e.g. grant-in-aid ATV trail fund). This lack of a long-term, dedicated funded source over time has led to a generally degraded system that is overdue for upgrades and improvements.

What is your proposed solution to the problem or opportunity discussed above? i.e. What are you seeking funding to do? You will be asked to expand on this in Activities and Milestones.

Overall enhancement, upgrade to the states' 1,000+ hunter walking trail system through: 1) restore, upgrade existing hunter walking trail infrastructure at ~120 trailheads, ~50 miles of trail, 2) develop, construct ~12 miles of new hunter walking trails and related trailhead needs, and 3) update, improve hunter walking trail information necessary for management and public recreational users (~100 trails).

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?

The broad purpose of this request is to ensure that recreational trail opportunities in Minnesota include non-motorized hunter walking trails. These trails will promote the ongoing participation of current hunters, birders and hikers that seek this type of trail experience and also encourage the introduction of new users to upland hunting traditions while also facilitating forest habitat enhancements through access for forest management (e.g. timber harvest) on these trails.

Activities and Milestones

Activity 1: Restore, upgrade existing hunter walking trail infrastructure at ~120 trailheads and ~50 miles of trail.

Activity Budget: \$210,000

Activity Description:

Based on needs and priorities identified in an upcoming 2020 Assessment of Hunter Walking Trails in Minnesota, Project Manager will coordinate bid, contract, and supply efforts necessary for trailhead (i.e. parking lots, gates, signs, etc.) and trail (i.e. reshape, widen, culverts, etc.) infrastructure needs based on controlling land administrator’s environmental, construction and contracting requirements; document and certify successful accomplishments.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Completion Date
Restore, upgrade ~25 miles of existing trails	2022-06-30
Restore, upgrade ~60 HWT trailheads	2022-06-30
Restore, upgrade ~25 miles of existing trails	2023-06-30
Restore, upgrade ~60 HWT trailheads	2023-06-30

Activity 2: Develop, construct ~12 miles of new hunter walking trails and related trailheads.

Activity Budget: \$50,000

Activity Description:

Based on needs and priorities identified in and upcoming 2020 Assessment of Hunter Walking Trails in Minnesota, Project Manager will coordinate bid, contract, and supply efforts necessary for development of new hunter walking trails and related trailheads based on controlling land administrator’s environmental, construction and contracting requirements; document and certify successful accomplishments.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Completion Date
Construct ~6 miles of new hunter walking trails segments, loops, systems.	2022-06-30
Construct ~6 miles of new hunter walking trail segments, loops, or systems.	2023-06-30

Activity 3: Update, improve hunter walking trail information necessary for management and public recreation users (~100 trails).

Activity Budget: \$40,000

Activity Description:

Work with public land administrators to update HWT information, data, and related maps as to their specific requirements; link to MNDNR’s hunter walking trail webpage.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Completion Date
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Ongoing field assessments, information/data gathering, map updates with respective public land administrators.
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2024-06-30

Project Partners and Collaborators

Name	Organization	Role	Receiving Funds
Staff	Chippewa, Superior National Forests	Public land administrator, review of assessment information, approval of sites, methods, etc.	No
Staff	County Land Departments	Public land administrator, review of assessment information, approval of sites, methods, etc.	No
Staff	MNDNR - Wildlife and Forestry	Public land administrator, review of assessment information, approval of sites, methods, etc.	No

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 be funded?

Results from this effort will serve to greatly update and revitalize the current statewide HWT system that exists on Minnesota public forestlands, hopefully also serve as a catalyst that forms long-term solutions for the management and funding of this system by MNDNR Wildlife and public forest land administrators.

Project Manager and Organization Qualifications

Project Manager Name: Gary Drotts

Job Title: Ruffed Grouse Society - MN Grant Consultant

Provide description of the project manager's qualifications to manage the proposed project.

The Ruffed Grouse Society has utilized the expertise and talents of Gary Drotts (Gone Wildlife Enterprises, LLC) over the last two+ years to manage RGS grant needs in Minnesota through an ongoing professional services contract to draft, coordinate, and administer several of their MN grants efforts. To date this has included six MNCPL grants totaling ~\$500,000, this proposed ~\$300,000 LCCMR proposal, and the upcoming submission of a LSOHC FY22 grant proposal to sponsor and administer a \$6,000,000 Phase IV Moose Habitat Collaborative LSOHC grant proposal. Gary retired from the MNDNR in 2013 after 39 years as a wildlife manager/biologist, in retirement he has worked part-time as a NR grant consultant with the National Wild Turkey Federation for three years (\$600,000 in grants) and has now tagged on with RGS to handle their needs. His knowledge, expertise, and understanding of field project needs, contractor needs, contracting process, budgets, and field connections has been and will continue to be a valuable asset to RGS and grant accounting needs.

Organization: Ruffed Grouse Society

Organization Description:

Established in 1961, the Ruffed Grouse Society is North America's foremost conservation organization dedicated to preserving our sporting traditions by creating healthy forest habitat for ruffed grouse, American woodcock and other wildlife. RGS works with landowners and government agencies to develop critical habitat utilizing scientific management practices.

Our members are mainly grouse and woodcock hunters who support national scientific conservation and management efforts to ensure the future of the species. Our organization headquartered in Coraopolis, PA, employs a team of forest wildlife conservation professionals to work with private landowners, and government, including local, state and federal,

land managers who are interested in improving their land for Ruffed Grouse, American Woodcock and the other songbirds and wildlife that have similar requirements.

We do this with individualized attention with specific programs to help landowners and by working with local state and federal governments to develop land management assistance programs.

Budget Summary

Category / Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Purpose	Gen. Ineligible	% Benefits	# FTE	Classified Staff?	\$ Amount
Personnel								
							Sub Total	-
Contracts and Services								
Gone Wild Enterprises, LLC	Professional or Technical Service Contract	A project/grant manager will be contracted by the grant sponsor (RGS) to implement, administer, and see to successful completion of this grant.				0.4		\$24,000
Various private contractors	Professional or Technical Service Contract	based on priorities identified in the 2020 Assessment of Minnesota Hunter Walking Trails, service contracts for infrastructure work will be bid (RFP) and secured/contracted by the grants Project Manager as per respective contracting, environmental, and permitting standards of the controlling land administrator.				-		\$200,000
GIS support	Professional or Technical Service Contract	Update GIS management information relating to MNDNR's Hunter Walking Trails and Ruffed Grouse Management Areas webpages, also various County and U.S. Forest Service GIS/web information; update and create maps and related public use support needs. It is expected that some of this need will be covered as in-kind.				-		\$20,000
							Sub Total	\$244,000
Equipment, Tools, and Supplies								
	Tools and Supplies	Supplies: gates (50), entrance signs (50), information signs (150), gravel (500 yards), etc.	Some hand tools, but primarily supplies to support site work; including gates, signs, gravel and less than \$5,000 in hand/small power tools (wrenches, brushsaw, chainsaw, etc.) for Project Manager's site work needs.					\$50,000
							Sub Total	\$50,000

Capital Expenditures								
							Sub Total	-
Acquisitions and Stewardship								
							Sub Total	-
Travel In Minnesota								
	Miles/ Meals/ Lodging	xxx	Due to broad scale of this project over northern MN, there will be some level of travel (mileage) and related meal/lodging expenses incurred by the grant project manager to assess, administer and see to successful completion of the numerous HWT sites that will be worked on.					\$6,000
							Sub Total	\$6,000
Travel Outside Minnesota								
							Sub Total	-
Printing and Publication								
							Sub Total	-
Other Expenses								
							Sub Total	-
							Grand Total	\$300,000

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
State				
In-Kind	MNDNR Wildlife and Forestry, County Land Departments, and National Forest field staff	Public land administrator field staff time spent providing assessment, site needs, recommendations, and project completion information.	Pending	\$15,000
			State Sub Total	\$15,000
Non-State				
In-Kind	Ruffed Grouse Society in-kind	Staff support by RGS to facilitate the grant, funding up front of a MN Hunter Walking Trail Assessment report that will be used to work on priorities for field work.	Pending	\$10,000
			Non State Sub Total	\$10,000
			Funds Total	\$25,000

Attachments

Required Attachments

Visual Component

File: [d196e6cb-eef.pdf](#)

Alternate Text for Visual Component

Visual/map notes a map of a current hunter walking trail on the Chippewa National Forest. Bulleted text information needs data/information that is going to be gathered on HWTs on all public lands through an up front HWT Assessment Report that will serve to set work priorities and sites if this grant is funded. This data/information will also be used to track and report ongoing grant status, and final report needs.

Financial Capacity

File: [237ee6bb-4d1.pdf](#)

Board Resolution or Letter

Title	File
RGS and County support letters	91f9cbf7-e9c.pdf

Administrative Use

Does your project include restoration or acquisition of land rights?

No

Does your project have patent, royalties, or revenue potential?

No

Does your project include research?

No

Does the organization have a fiscal agent for this project?

Yes, Sponsored Projects Administration

