



## Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

### 2022 Request for Proposal

#### General Information

**Proposal ID:** 2022-181

**Proposal Title:** Mitigating the Effects of Visitor Use Patterns

#### Project Manager Information

**Name:** Lisa Luukkala

**Organization:** Superior Hiking Trail Association

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

**Email:** lluukkala@superiorhiking.org

#### Project Basic Information

**Project Summary:** Rehabilitate and renew the Trail for a more resilient future in the midst of unprecedented use. Employ modern-day sustainable trail maintenance and design strategies to address an aged trail system.

**Funds Requested:** \$485,000

**Proposed Project Completion:** November 30 2024

**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?**

Statewide

**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.**

Deferred maintenance on the Superior Hiking Trail is a daunting issue for our Association. With LCCMR's previous support, we have been able to make strides to access these issues and begin to replace and renew aging trail infrastructure. Unfortunately, we lost ground in 2020 due to the pandemic-related setbacks, and we must now act with urgency to address these problems. Throughout the pandemic, the Trail has played an instrumental role in providing a safe space for people to recreate. It also experienced unprecedented increase in use at time while we were unable to conduct annual maintenance at our usual level because of COVID-safety concerns. Popular areas -- such as those in or adjacent to state parks, waysides, overlooks and loops -- have shown the greatest impacts.

Over the years it has become apparent that volunteers alone cannot tackle the challenging topography and soils and aging infrastructure that makes up Minnesota's premier hiking trail. With compounded issues such as erosion due to climate change and increase use, SHTA must rely on staff, volunteers and seasonal contractors to tackle the enormous challenge of maintaining the SHT to modern sustainable trail standards and that protect the land and water along the Trail.

### **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.**

We will renew, rebuild and reinforce the sections of trail 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.

## Activities and Milestones

### Activity 1: Rehabilitate and renew supporting amenities of the SHT

**Activity Budget:** \$11,000

**Activity Description:**

The Superior Hiking Trail is not just the trail corridor itself, but a series of 94 campsites and over 60 trailheads that the Association maintains and manages. Our focus in this activity is to rehabilitate and enhance the campsites and trailheads that are in the greatest needs of attention. The Association's staff who have been trained in campsite assessments will identify sites, prescribe solutions and implement them with the support of volunteers. Trailhead rehabilitation will be assessed by our Trail Operations Director and will primarily address erosion and sprawl.

**Activity Milestones:**

Description	Completion Date
2 trailheads will be rehabilitated and enhanced	November 30 2023
5 campsites will be rehabilitated and enhanced	November 30 2024

### Activity 2: Renew the Most Popular Looped Experiences Along the Trail Corridor

**Activity Budget:** \$365,000

**Activity Description:**

The SHT's looped trail experiences are of 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.

**Activity Milestones:**

Description	Completion Date
One 1-mile wayside spur trail renewed	November 30 2023
One .8 mile trail section overlook renewed	November 30 2023
9 to 13 miles of trail loops will be renewed (tread, armoring, drainage)	November 30 2024
2,000 to 3,000 linear feet of boardwalk, puncheon or steps replaced	November 30 2024

### Activity 3: Replace Aged Boardwalk to Accommodate Increase Use

**Activity Budget:** \$109,000

**Activity Description:**

Due to old age, poor design, and heavy use, boardwalks on popular sections on the Trail are in need of renewal. The existing minimalistic boardwalk does not meet modern design standards. Keeping people on built infrastructure is important to the ecological health of adjacent water and land in these sensitive areas. Safety concerns for users also need to be addressed, as aged boardwalk can pose user safety concerns. Complex structures in remote locations can be difficult to construct with volunteer support, this activity will be led by professional trail building contractors under the supervision of the Association's Trail Operations Director. Similar replacement projects have allowed SHTA to update boardwalk constructed from more resilient materials, such as galvanized steel, which has a significantly longer lifespan and will require less ongoing maintenance, which equates to less environmental disturbance.

**Activity Milestones:**

Description	Completion Date
175 linear feet of boardwalk and 100 feet of steps -- Site 1	November 30 2023
260 linear feet of boardwalk -- Site 2	November 30 2024
300 linear feet of puncheon -- Site 2	November 30 2024

## Project Partners and Collaborators

Name	Organization	Role	Receiving Funds
Jim Shoberg	City of Duluth Parks & Recreation	Liaison to SHTA from Duluth Parks to assist in planning and executing trail projects within the limits of the City of Duluth	No
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
Derrick Passe	Lake County Soil and Water Conservation District	Advises on environmental regulatory matters in Lake County	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

## 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?**

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

## Project Manager and Organization Qualifications

**Project Manager Name:** Lisa Luokkala

**Job Title:** Executive Director

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

Superior Hiking Trail Association's Executive Director, Lisa Luokkala has over a decade of experience overseeing large-

scale recreational infrastructure projects. Luukkala led in the planning, designing, funding and construction of multi-million dollars recreation improvements during her time as the City of Duluth Parks & Recreation. In addition, she holds over 15 years of managing state and federal grants in the nonprofit sector as well as the public sector. Luukkala is attuned to state environmental and outdoor recreational trends and associated policies. Her expertise has been used, as steering committee member, to help craft the Minnesota Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan 2020-2024.

**Organization:** Superior Hiking Trail Association

**Organization Description:**

Superior Hiking Trail Association is a member-based organization, headquartered in Two Harbors, that manages, renews, promotes and supports the Superior Hiking Trail. The SHT is a 300-mile long natural footpath running from the Ontario border to the Wisconsin border, passing through Duluth. Started in 1986, The SHT features 94 backcountry campsites and several loops and spurs. A beloved and popular Minnesota recreational amenity, the Trail is enjoyed by people age 6 to 86 -- long-distance hikers and backpackers, trail runners, church youth groups, and adventure travel enterprises all enjoy the stunning scenic beauty and the physical challenge that the SHT affords.

## Budget Summary

Category / Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Purpose	Gen. Ineligible	% Benefits	# FTE	Classified Staff?	\$ Amount
<b>Personnel</b>								
Trail Operations Director		Oversees all trail construction work (planning, design, implementation)			25%	1.75		\$35,000
Volunteer Coordinator		Oversee volunteer coordination for construction projects			25%	0.25		\$15,000
							<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>\$50,000</b>
<b>Contracts and Services</b>								
Professional Trail Building Contractor -- TBD	Professional or Technical 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.				1.5		\$162,500
							<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>\$162,500</b>
<b>Equipment, Tools, and Supplies</b>								
	Tools and Supplies	Construction materials and tools	This includes lumber, cement, hardware, gravel, metal bog pans and related hardware.					\$270,800
							<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>\$270,800</b>
<b>Capital Expenditures</b>								
							<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Acquisitions and Stewardship</b>								
							<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>-</b>

<b>Travel In Minnesota</b>								
	Miles/ Meals/ Lodging	Travel to work sites by SHTA staff	Staff supervision and expertise needed on site					\$1,700
							<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>\$1,700</b>
<b>Travel Outside Minnesota</b>								
							<b>Sub Total</b>	-
<b>Printing and Publication</b>								
							<b>Sub Total</b>	-
<b>Other Expenses</b>								
							<b>Sub Total</b>	-
							<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>\$485,000</b>



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
<b>State</b>				
			<b>State Sub Total</b>	-
<b>Non-State</b>				
In-Kind	SHTA Volunteer Hours	2,700 volunteer hours valued at \$20/hour	Secured	\$54,000
Cash	Donations and memberships	Various related expenses, including: materials, tools, volunteer support, lodging, travel, and other professional services to support this project.	Secured	\$50,000
			<b>Non State Sub Total</b>	<b>\$104,000</b>
			<b>Funds Total</b>	<b>\$104,000</b>

## Attachments

### Required Attachments

#### *Visual Component*

File: [6ae6f227-b22.pdf](#)

#### *Alternate Text for Visual Component*

Photos of existing conditions of deteriorated, poorly design Trail infrastructure and photos of the Association's solutions, including examples of enhancement and renewal recently implemented on other sections of Trail that have successfully addressed comparable problems....

#### *Financial Capacity*

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

#### *Board Resolution or Letter*

Title	File
SHTA Board Resolution	<a href="#">baaf7544-bad.pdf</a>

## Administrative Use

**Does your project include restoration or acquisition of land rights?**

No

**Does your project have potential for royalties, copyrights, patents, or sale of products and assets?**

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

**The Problem:** Aged infrastructure combined with heavy visitor use on popular sections of the Trail threaten the adjacent land and water, along with creating an unsafe user experience.



### Trailheads & Campsites

Due to compounded deferred maintenance, trailheads and campsites have experienced degradation along with the Trail tread itself. This includes problems such as rutting, widening and pooling as shown here.



### Aging Boardwalk

Dated design with “homegrown” remedies, like chicken wire to help with traction, have led to unsafe boardwalks that need replacement that align with nationally accepted trail structure designs.



### Deteriorated Staircases

Deteriorating staircases with exposed rebar, an old design that has caused erosion of slopes and hillsides when water is not shed properly, as well as safety concerns. Requires an updated design, such as a C-Step.



# **Solution:** Renew and armor the most popular sections of the Trail and its infrastructure to better protect the adjacent land and water and also the users.



*Example: Sawmill Creek, 2020.*

## **Replace Boardwalk**

Replace failing infrastructure and design to modern day standards, using resilient materials like galvanized steel to increase the lifespan and decrease environmental disturbances.



*Example: Crow Creek, 2019.*

## **Armor and Renew Trail**

Renewed tread and stairs will keep people on the Trail and water off to help control erosion. As seen here, updated C-Step design and shoulder armoring.



*Example: Red River Campsite, 2017.*

## **Campsite Rehabilitation & Enhancement**

Conduct assessments and prescribe solutions based on site. Implement rehabilitation using volunteers. These may include solutions like improved campsite furniture, improved tent pads, relocation of a latrines and associated spur trails.

