



Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

2023 Request for Proposal

General Information

Proposal ID: 2023-172

Proposal Title: St. Louis River Re-Connect Phase II

Project Manager Information

Name: Cliff Knettel

Organization: City of Duluth

Office Telephone: (218) 730-4312

Email: cknettel@DuluthMN.gov

Project Basic Information

Project Summary: Acquire, preserve and enhance strategic quality natural resources and expand outdoor recreational access to the St. Louis River through additions and connections to state, regional, and local parks and trails.

Funds Requested: \$1,469,000

Proposed Project Completion: June 30, 2025

LCCMR Funding Category: Land Acquisition, Habitat, and Recreation (G)

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.

The St. Louis River Estuary Area of Concern (AOC) is one of the most severely impacted areas in the Great Lakes Basin. Historical municipal and industrial waste disposal and unchecked land use practices, including dredging and filling habitat, resulted in AOC listing in 1987 for nine beneficial use impairments. These include fish consumption advisories, deformities, and tumors; excessive nutrient and sediment loading; degraded fish and wildlife populations and habitats; and beach closings and body contact. Residents recall being admonished by parents, "don't touch the water."

West Duluth neighborhoods that line the AOC once had vibrant commercial corridors linked to industry and maritime commerce. After mining collapsed, the retail areas were abandoned and housing and infrastructure fell into disrepair. Many nearby residents suffer high rates of poverty, un- and under-employment, poor educational attainment, and poor health. Adults and youth do not have access to quality outdoor environments and activities that research shows are so important to developing environmental values. This is especially true in low-income neighborhoods where quality green space is lacking and residents have limited access to transportation. Historically, low-income populations have not had access to waterfront opportunities that will exist when AOC work and this project are complete.

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

Waabizheshikana and the Water Trail expand access to the recovering river and promote education, interest, and support for AOC remediation and habitat restoration. Waabizheshikana adds 7 miles to the existing Western Waterfront trail, creating a 10-mile-long accessible trail from the 63rd Ave West to Jay Cooke State Park. The Trail is divided into seven segments built as resources allow. Interpretive elements will be implemented concurrently with trail construction, explaining the geography, ecology, history of human impacts and AOC reclamation efforts completed and forthcoming. Generous rest stops along the way invite learning and reflection and serve as outdoor classrooms.

Trail development includes Water Trail access to highlight the river's recovery from legacy contamination, and encourages visitors to get out on the water. The Water Trail covers 16.5 miles, over 12,000 acres, with 11 distinct routes that cover 73 miles. Enhanced river recreation and education opportunities improve quality of life and promote and enhance river restoration and preservation efforts for residents who have been disconnected from the river.

Connection to the estuary by nearby low-income residents is critical. Access to waterfronts is typically reserved for the wealthy, while this project provides access to all incomes, ethnicity or disabilities.

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?

Long-term results

Outcome: Increased visibility and visits increase resources to achieve the vision for the AOC restoration.

Outcome: Further the awareness of the many recreational uses, environmental, and conservation steps completed and underway.

Measurable results

Outcome: Number of west Duluth residents reconnected to river by outreach and events, mobile app, marketing plan.

Outcome: Outdoor classroom/rest stop with interpretive elements.

Outcome: Accessibility improvements on .27 miles of trail.

Outcome: Three new or improved trailheads.

Activities and Milestones

Activity 1: Access and Accessibility Improvements

Activity Budget: \$903,000

Activity Description:

Three new trailheads at Munger Landing, Blackmer Park, and Strykker Bay. Improvements at Munger and Blackmer include directional signage, parking with ABA access, accessible vault toilets and picnic areas, with an accessible paddle launch at Munger with power chair lockers. At Munger, there will be a staging area for outfitting and group education outdoor classroom. Strykker Bay slopes will be regraded and Indian Point Pier will be improved for accessibility. Strykker and Blackmer will have storm water improvements, green infrastructure, and culvert replacement. The entire project area will be completed with invasive species removal and native landscape restoration plantings.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Completion Date
Indian Point Pier accessibility improvements	August 31, 2023
Strykker slope regrade	October 31, 2023
Accessible parking (Munger/Blackmer)	October 31, 2024
Signage and wayfinding (Munger/Blackmer)	October 31, 2024
Outdoor classroom (Munger)	October 31, 2024
Benches/picnic tables/trash (Munger/Blackmer)	October 31, 2024
Accessible Kayak Launch and power chair lockers (Munger)	October 31, 2024
Vault Toilets (Munger/Blackmer)	October 31, 2024

Activity 2: Interpretive Trail Elements

Activity Budget: \$280,000

Activity Description:

Interpretation will create a historical trail experience for a range of audience interests and backgrounds. Everything visitors see along the trail has a history and holds a story. Interpretation will present past, present, and future perspectives of the river, including its diverse occupants (including Native and African American) and its descent into an AOC and the ongoing recovery process. Integrating artworks, historical accounts, and the natural materials cultivates new ways of seeing the landscape from diverse and sometimes unexpected perspectives.

Interpretation is organized around a series of River Places; trailheads, overlooks, and rest stops—that will host outdoor classrooms, community and cultural gathering spaces, or nature play areas. Classrooms will be utilized by the St. Louis River Alliance as well as neighbor youth serving agencies and cultural organizations. Interpretive elements—story poles, cairns, freestanding signs, and concrete inlays—are designed from materials drawn from the estuary and from products of the local industries. By telling stories with materials from the location, the interpretive elements are true to their place and durable. The combination of materials, fabrication techniques, and cultural content promises to enrich educational opportunities.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Completion Date
Munger Landing Outdoor Classroom	July 31, 2024
Granite cairns	July 31, 2024
Indian Point Seven Fires Pause Area	October 31, 2024
Turtle mound sculpture	October 31, 2024
Thunderbird Sculpture	October 31, 2024

Activity 3: Water Trail Implementation

Activity Budget: \$286,000

Activity Description:

Phase I (complete) focused on obtaining National designation (2020), formalizing a leadership board, creating public information avenues (website, social media, news releases, kick-off event) and creating a route map. Phase II will hire a St. Louis River Alliance 1FTE. Coordinator to coordinate the implementation of the Water Trail with the development of Waabizheshikana. Tasks: Begin public outreach/marketing about the Trail, especially to west Duluth residents, but regionally and nationally as well. Explore low-cost capital investments such as creating paddling launches at existing public access points and new landing sites such as rest stops, and portages developed in conjunction with the expansion of Waabizheshikana.

Ambassadors recruited from west Duluth neighborhoods will inform residents and facilitate access to the river including day trips to and on the river as well as community events that bring together residents, stakeholders, and partners for feedback and planning on implementation. Ambassadors are modeled on a successful model for engaging marginalized communities in new experiences. The Alliance will facilitate a national marketing plan, update the paper maps and develop a mobile app that includes the water routes, landings, access to Wassbizheshikana and connections to other trails and parks.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Completion Date
Retain qualified staff (coordinator)	June 30, 2025
Recruit Ambassadors	June 30, 2025
int paper map	June 30, 2025
Day trip events (6/year) stakeholder meetings – bi-monthly	June 30, 2025
Marketing	June 30, 2025
Mobile app development	June 30, 2025

Project Partners and Collaborators

Name	Organization	Role	Receiving Funds
Kris Eilers	St. Louis River Alliance	Executive Director. The Alliance is charged with implementing the St. Louis River Estuary National Water Trail.	Yes

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 work be funded?

Implementation will be executed in segments, with facilities/amenities particular to each trail constructed concurrently. Long-term development and sustainability of the Trails depends heavily on strong partnerships. Planning efforts identified over 60 partners in the St. Louis River Watershed alone, all with the capacity to assist in continued planning and implementation, marketing and promotional aspects, and on-going maintenance and stewardship. Funding likely will be from a combination of government partners, leveraging grant dollars, on-going operations of partners like the County and DNR, in-kind dollars from voluntary efforts of supporting nonprofits, and private donations.

Project Manager and Organization Qualifications

Project Manager Name: Cliff Knettel

Job Title: Senior Parks Planner

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

Cliff Kuettel: 1997 UMD BS Geography and minor in Geology. 1997: Mid-Minnesota Development Commission and Arrowhead Regional Development Commission focused on comprehensive planning, housing studies and grant writing/administration. 1999: City of Superior, WI Planner and later as the Planning and Port Director. Headed the City's planning and zoning, economic development, land resource management and housing programs. 2003: Development Director, St. Cloud Housing and Redevelopment Authority, leading economic and housing development programs. 2009: Executive Director of Neighborhood Housing Services (NHS), and later Deputy Director of One Roof Community Housing. Led the agencies' neighborhood revitalization planning, residential lending, housing development and homeownership promotion programs. 2018 Community Development specialist with MSA Professional Services, specializing in grant writing and administration for parks and infrastructure projects. 2020: City of Duluth Parks and Recreation division as a Senior Park Planner, where he leads park planning processes and citizen engagement in park development projects.

Organization: City of Duluth

Organization Description:

Duluth has 11,000 acres of green space and 129 parks alongside Lake Superior and the St. Louis River that provide multiple outdoor experiences including myriad trails: 10 miles of horseback, 30 miles paved, and 16 miles gravel accessible; 38 miles (61k) of cross-country ski; 85 miles of bike-optimized; and 150 miles of hiking! Parks vary from small neighborhood playgrounds to extensive wildlands. Parks & Recreation offers a range of programs for youth to adults. Duluth's history and future are tied to the health, sustainability, and stewardship of the St. Louis River and Lake Superior. The St. Louis River Corridor Initiative (Initiative) invests in park and trail improvements from Lincoln Park to the Fond du Lac neighborhood to reconnect residents and visitors to the river, support restoration, enrich neighborhood quality of life, establish new visitor destinations, and stimulate appropriate development. Three interconnected master plans for the St. Louis River Corridor: St. Louis River Estuary National Water Trail Master Plan (Water Trail), the Heritage Interpretation Master Plan (Heritage Trail), and Waabizheshikana - The Marten Trail Mini-master Plan (Waabizheshikana), provide an opportunity to expand the Initiative and realize its goals.

Budget Summary

Category / Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Purpose	Gen. Ineligible	% Benefits	# FTE	Classified Staff?	\$ Amount
Personnel								
							Sub Total	-
Contracts and Services								
St. Louis River Alliance	Sub award	Project coordinator: 1fte (\$22/hr + 20% fringe). Manage Phase II Water Trail implementation: Convene Steering Committee, lead public events and day trips, manage Ambassadors, oversee development of mobile app and marketing plan. Coordinate all facility development with City of Duluth Waabizheshikana extension and interpretation.		X		3		\$169,727
St. Louis River Alliance	Sub award	Executive Director: Administration and Oversight		X		0.3		\$30,000
St. Louis River Alliance	Sub award	Ambassadors (2 @ \$18/hr x 8 hr/week) no benefits. Ambassadors are from the community and work to engage marginalized communities in River events and activities.		X		1.8		\$45,000
St. Louis River Alliance	Sub award	Annually update and print Water Trail Route Maps.		X		0		\$10,500
St. Louis River Alliance	Sub award	Outreach events, daytrip events on the river, public/Water Trail Steering Committee meetings to guide Trail implementation.		X		0		\$30,000
TBD	Professional or Technical Service Contract	Strykker Bay trail reconstruction - Existing trail ABA compliant slope modifications, .27 miles. Reroute the existing trail away from the collapsing shoreline.				1		\$190,000
TBD	Professional or Technical Service Contract	Strykker Bay stormwater improvements - Existing trail drainage improvements and culvert replacement.				0.5		\$85,000
TBD	Professional or Technical Service Contract	Indian Point Pier accessibility modifications				0.5		\$100,000

TBD	Professional or Technical Service Contract	Interpretive installations: Indian Point rest stop/outdoor classroom @ \$80,000k 1 Thunderbird sculpture @ \$36,000, 1 granite cairn @ \$4,000; 1 Turtle mound sculpture @ \$80,000.				0.5		\$240,000
TBD	Professional or Technical Service Contract	Munger Landing Outdoor Classroom - Outdoor education, recreation classes. Community gathering place.				0		\$40,773
TBD	Professional or Technical Service Contract	Munger Landing Trailhead - Accessible Kayak Launch + installation, Power Chair Storage Boxes, Accessible Vault Toilet/Changing Room, New Trailhead Parking Lot (10 ABA spaces), Picnic area - Tables, Grills, waste disposal				1		\$250,000
TBD	Professional or Technical Service Contract	Blackmer Park Trailhead - New Parking Lot Incl. Curb and Gutter, Green stormwater infrastructure, Accessible Vault Toilet, Waste management, Signage and Wayfinding, Accessible Picnic Area.				1		\$278,000
							Sub Total	\$1,469,000
Equipment, Tools, and Supplies								
							Sub Total	-
Capital Expenditures								
							Sub Total	-
Acquisitions and Stewardship								
							Sub Total	-
Travel In Minnesota								
							Sub Total	-
Travel Outside Minnesota								
							Sub Total	-

Printing and Publication								
							Sub Total	-
Other Expenses								
							Sub Total	-
							Grand Total	\$1,469,000

Classified Staff or Generally Ineligible Expenses

Category/Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Justification Ineligible Expense or Classified Staff Request
Contracts and Services - St. Louis River Alliance	Sub award	Project coordinator: 1fte (\$22/hr + 20% fringe). Manage Phase II Water Trail implementation: Convene Steering Committee, lead public events and day trips, manage Ambassadors, oversee development of mobile app and marketing plan. Coordinate all facility development with City of Duluth Waabizheshikana extension and interpretation.	<p>. The Alliance was selected by the Water Trail Steering Committee to implement the Water Trail Plan as well as manage the trail ongoing. The Alliance's longevity, experience, knowledge of the river, and relationships with local, state, and federal agencies are unique and ensure proper management and sustainability. The Alliance began as a Citizen Advisory Committee in 1987 to assist Minnesota and Wisconsin state agencies to develop a Remedial Action Plan (RAP) for the AOC. Members include individuals, families, businesses, organizations, local and tribal governments.</p> <p>The Alliance has:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helped develop the RAP that identified the BUIs and their removal targets and actions. • Prepared the Lower St. Louis River Habitat Plan for inclusion in the RAP. • Led annual activities that connect people to the river. • Monitors the endangered Piping Plover population. • Assists with wild rice establishment and education efforts • Participates in monthly AOC meetings and on BUI technical teams • Advocates for BUI removals • Helped secure \$25.4 million in Bond Funds to leverage \$47.2 million in Great Lakes Restoration Initiative Funds to remediate contaminated sediment. • Implemented Phase I of the Water Trail
Contracts and Services - St. Louis River Alliance	Sub award	Executive Director: Administration and Oversight	<p>Kris Eilers, Alliance Executive Director: Engaged in policy and program delivery in environmental protection, water quality, remediation and habitat restoration, intergovernmental affairs and community engagement/outreach in the Duluth area for a decade. Strong business and administrative skills, combined with 20+ years in the private corporate sector, set her and the Alliance up for many successes. Secured and managed an array of federal, state and local programs, including the bonding effort to fund the AOC clean-up.</p> <p>Kris has been instrumental to attracting thousands of people to the river through boat tours, volunteer opportunities, canoe/kayak trips and winter hikes. She has also dramatically grown the membership of the organization by over 500 percent over the past 5 years. Kris is driven by her life-long passion for water, and a child-hood dream of helping to restore the polluted waters of the St. Louis River that runs into Lake Superior.</p>
Contracts and Services - St. Louis River Alliance	Sub award	Ambassadors (2 @ \$18/hr x 8 hr/week) no benefits. Ambassadors are from the community and work to engage marginalized communities in River events and activities.	One of the foundational goals of the St. Louis River Alliance is to build connections between community members and the St. Louis River through multiple, annual, education, outreach and stewardship events. These events lead to actions and behaviors that contribute to a sustainable, healthy and resilient environment.

Contracts and Services - St. Louis River Alliance	Sub award	Annually update and print Water Trail Route Maps.	The Alliance developed and houses the Route Maps
Contracts and Services - St. Louis River Alliance	Sub award	Outreach events, daytrip events on the river, public/Water Trail Steering Committee meetings to guide Trail implementation.	The Alliance was selected by the Water Trail Steering Committee to implement the Water Trail Plan as well as manage the trail ongoing. The Alliance provides multiple annual education, outreach and stewardship events about the river.

Non ENRTF Funds

Category	Specific Source	Use	Status	Amount
State				
Cash	MN Historical Society	Interpretive elements	Secured	\$130,000
Cash	MPCA/EPA	Munger Landing improvements and remediation	Secured	\$785,000
Cash	LCCMR 2022 Award	Waabizheshikana extension Spring 2023 construction.	Secured	\$500,000
			State Sub Total	\$1,415,000
Non-State				
Cash	FEMA	Spirit Cove shoreline mitigation	Secured	\$600,000
Cash	City of Duluth	Segment 1 extension construction Fall/Spring 2022/2023 Const Segment 0 (Spring Street Re-route) Fall 2022 Construction	Secured	\$550,000
Cash	US Steel	Interpretive elements (Segment 3) Spring 2023 Installation Segment 3 Trail Construction – Fall 2022 construction start	Secured	\$605,000
			Non State Sub Total	\$1,755,000
			Funds Total	\$3,170,000

Attachments

Required Attachments

Visual Component

File: [5e82e266-998.pdf](#)

Alternate Text for Visual Component

Maps include the overall scope of Waabizheshikana and the Water Trail, and close ups of Trailhead improvements...

Board Resolution or Letter

Title	File
City of Duluth Resolution	a3c414eb-5c7.pdf

Optional Attachments

Support Letter or Other

Title	File
Letters of Support	bef377b5-d2b.pdf
Rest stop graphics	9945c4df-d7c.pdf

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

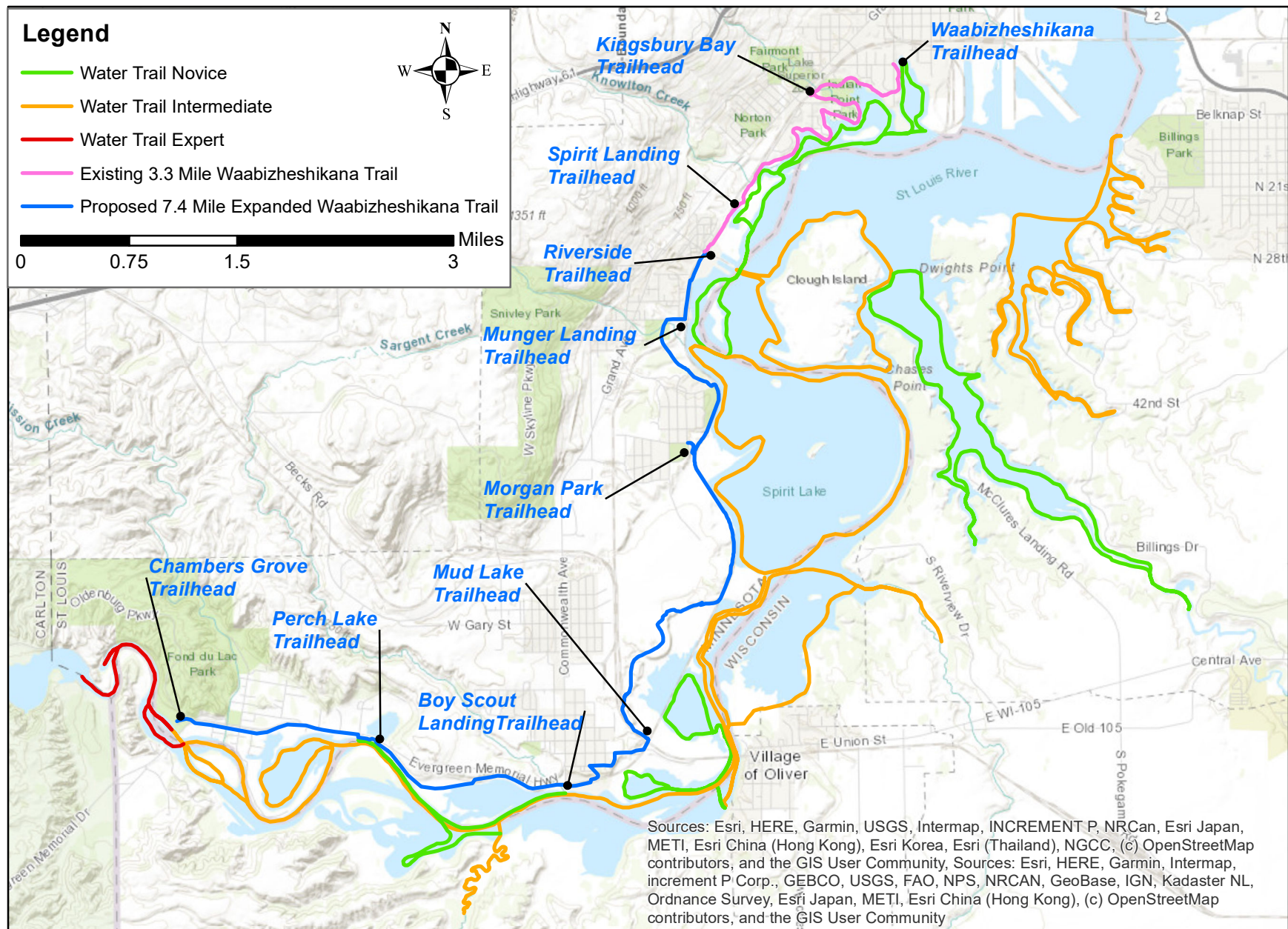
Does your project include original, hypothesis-driven research?

No

Does the organization have a fiscal agent for this project?

No

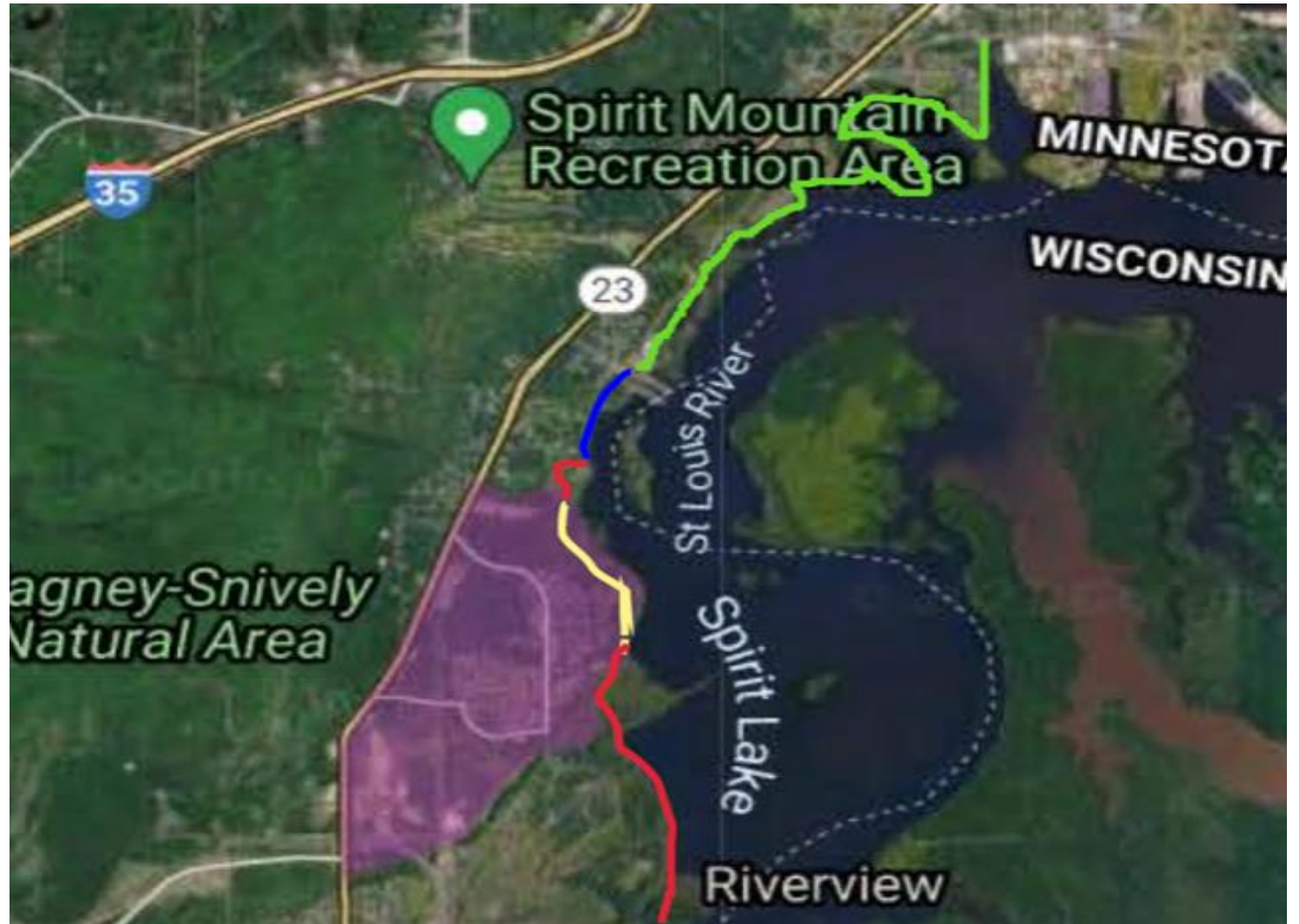
St. Louis River Estuary Water Trail and Waabizheshikana: the Marten Trail



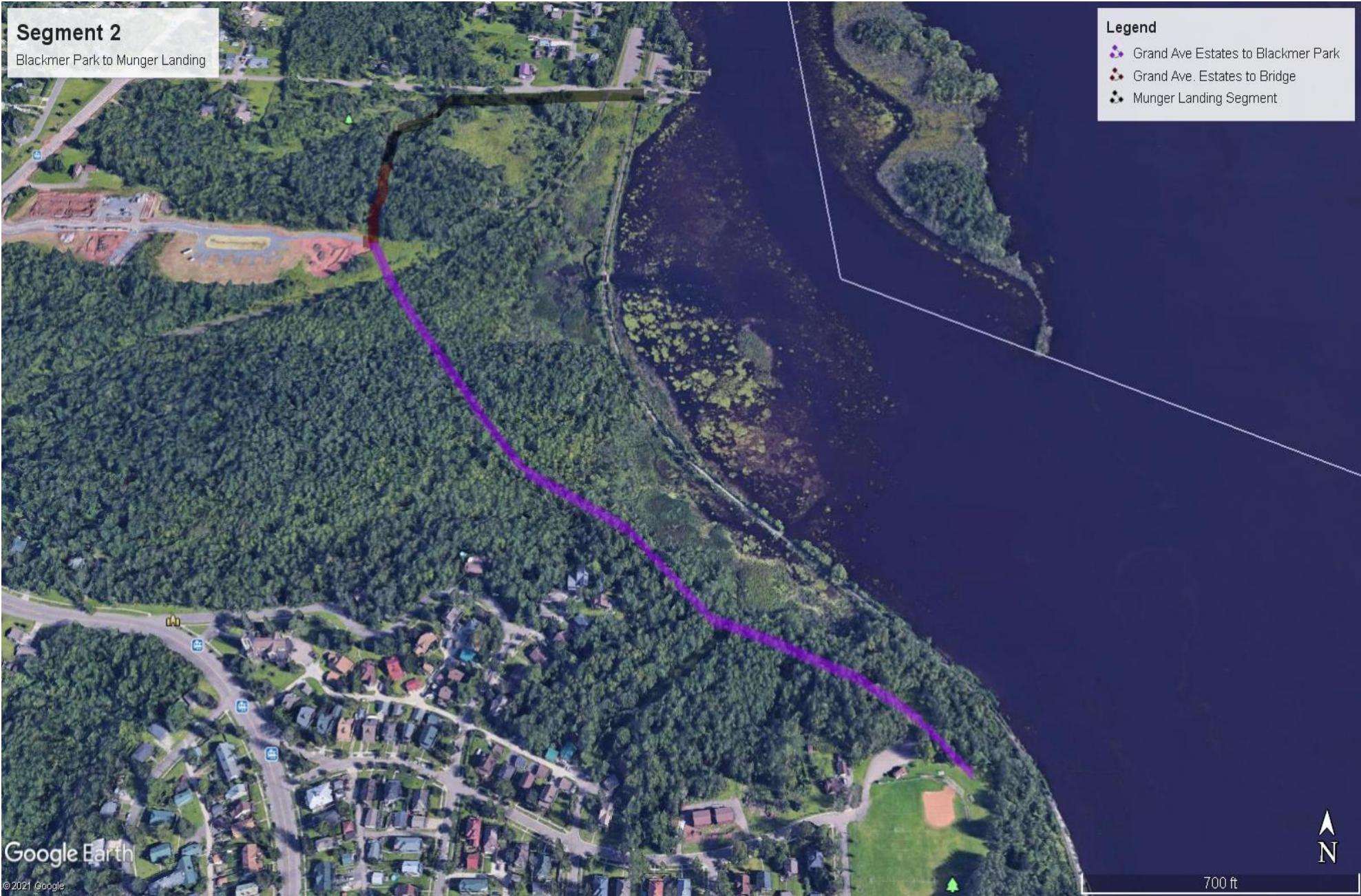
MORGAN PARK CONNECTIONS

Morgan Park Census Tract

This graphic identifies the Census tract (purple) that includes the Morgan Park Neighborhood. This tract is considered economically distressed, due to concentrations of low-income households.



This graphic depicts the approximate alignment of Waabizheshikana Segment 2 (to be constructed with 2022 LCCMR award) from the Munger Landing trailhead south to the Blackmer Park trailhead in the Morgan Park Neighborhood. The trail also passes by a new mixed income housing development, also located in the same distressed Census tract.



MUNGER LANDING PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS

This is an excerpt from the Waabizheshikana: The Marten Trail Master Plan and identifies improvements to be made to Munger Landing.



Figure 1.52 Munger Landing site plan

Recommendations

(Improved Public Access site)

Munger Landing will be enhanced to include a separate non-motorized boat launch, a new trailhead with directional signage, and an additional twenty parking spaces to serve trailhead users. The waterfront will have a natural sand paddle sport launch as well as an accessible boat launch added to the existing fishing pier. Near the accessible launch, there will be an outfitting staging area and a picnic area adjacent to the natural sand beach and launch area.

- New trailhead with directional signage
- Natural sand beach for paddle sport launch
- Accessible kayak launch
- Staging area for outfitting
- Picnic area
- Additional parking (20), specific for trailhead users
- City will work with the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) as they begin aquatic clean-up efforts

Trends and Best Practices: Accessible Boat Launch for Water Access

Design Considerations*

Provide Access Route

- Surface, grade, width and cross slope need to be accessible (not to exceed 5% for ADA, not to exceed 8.33% for ABA), and as even and level as possible without gaps or interruptions
- Route clearly marked
- 5' minimum width

Level and stable landing/loading area

- There should be an area adjacent to the loading area that is stable, at least 60"x60"
- Can be anywhere adjacent to loading area, including in water up to 12" deep

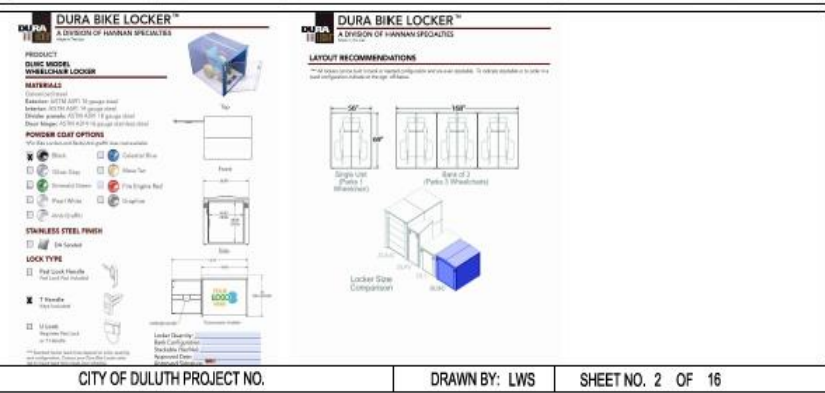
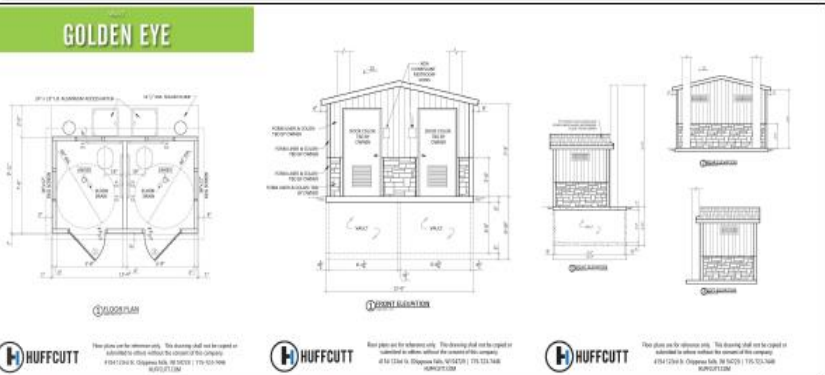
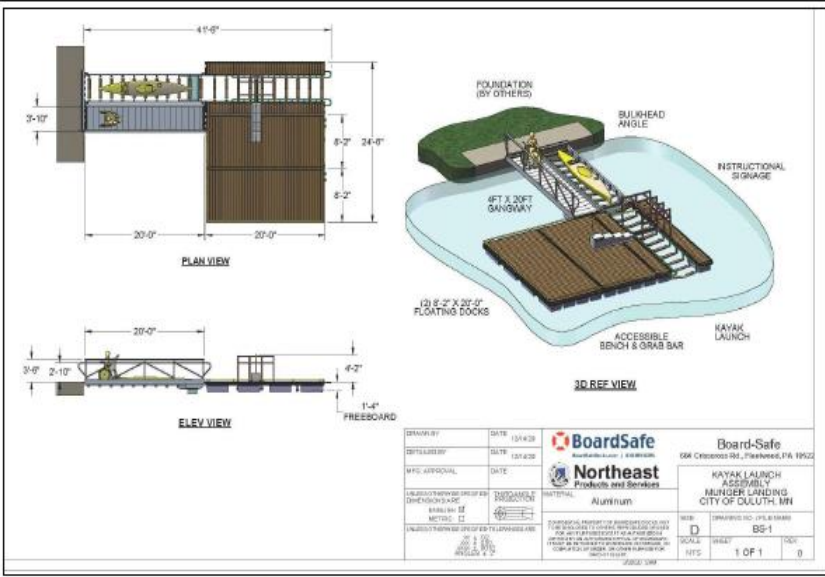
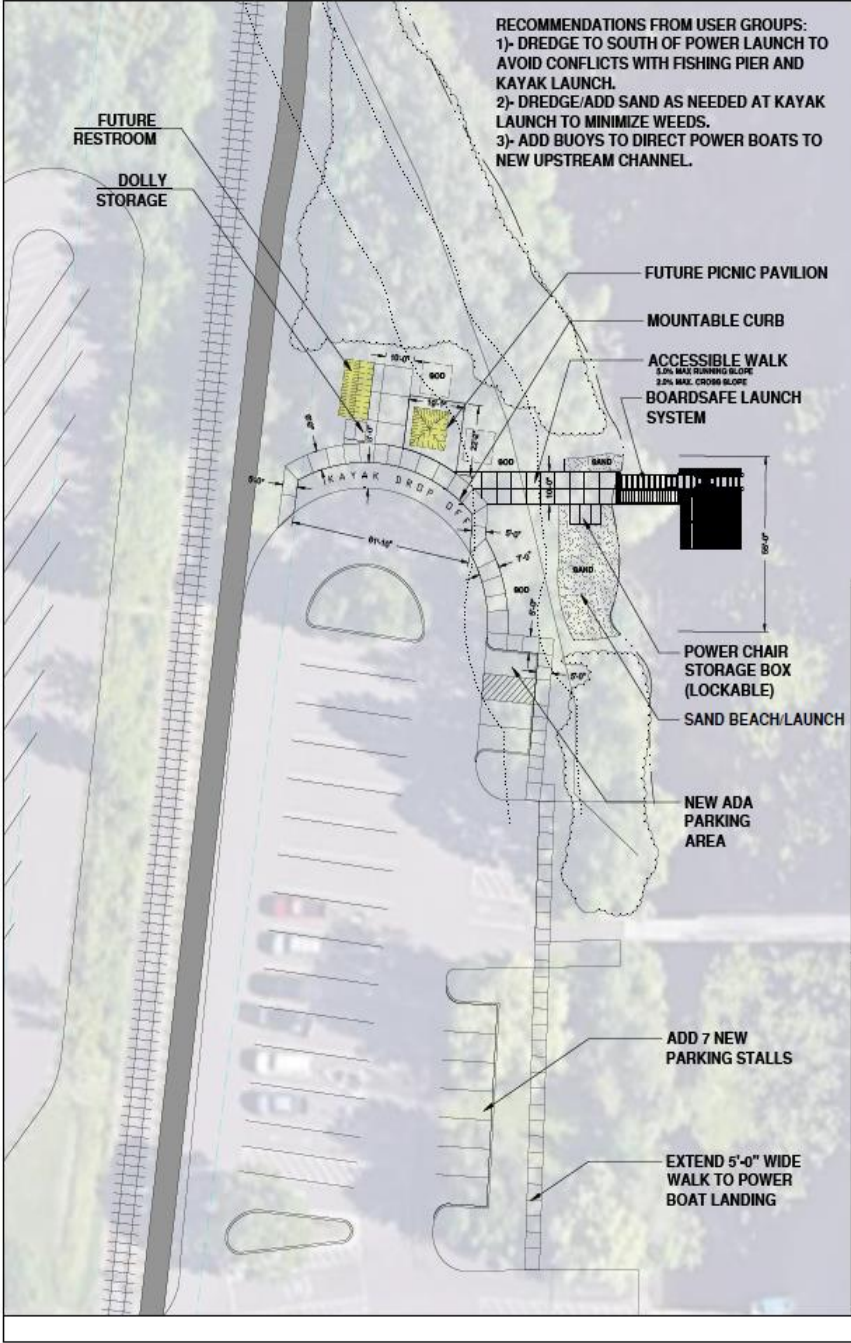
Transfer assistance

- Transfer step
- Transfer board
- Overhead handles/grab bars
- Non-slip surface textures



*National Park Service Report, 'Long Lasting Launches,' 2004

This is a more detailed design that shows site improvements, circulation and accessibility improvements to accommodate use of the fishing pier, accessible paddle launch and other proposed and future site amenities.



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ISSUE RECORD/VERSION

NUMBER	DATE

**MUNGER LANDING
ADAPTIVE LAUNCH
AREA**

CITY OF DULUTH, MINNESOTA

SHEET TITLE
TITLE SHEET AND
INDEX MAP

DATE: 08/15/2019

DESIGN BY: LWS

CHECKED BY: LWS

PROJECT NUMBER: 20190

SHEET NUMBER: L-1

This is an excerpt from the Blackmer Park Mini-Master Plan, which shows accessible connections from the Morgan Park neighborhood via Blackmer Park to Waabizheshikana and ultimately Munger Landing.

Since this plan was completed, the preferred Waabizheshikana route north to Munger Landing was determined to be the trail labeled as “Connect to Smithville Park”, rather than the route adjacent to the railroad tracks.

The parking lot at Blackmer would serve as a trailhead and the connection to Waabizheshikana Segment 2 to the north and Segment 3 to the south (Segment 3 to be constructed by US Steel in 2022/2023).

