



Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

2023 Request for Proposal

General Information

Proposal ID: 2023-201

Proposal Title: North Shore Private Forestry Outreach and Implementation

Project Manager Information

Name: Molly Thompson

Organization: Sugarloaf The North Shore Stewardship Association

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Project Basic Information

Project Summary: The North Shore Forest Collaborative (via Sugarloaf) seeks to contract foresters to perform a concerted private land forestry outreach to restore ecological health to Minnesota's North Shore forest landscape.

Funds Requested: \$375,000

Proposed Project Completion: June 30, 2026

LCCMR Funding Category: Environmental Education (C)

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

Narrative

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

Given the magnitude of private landownership's influence on the Lake Superior North Shore ecological landscape it is imperative the NSFC build capacity to reach and engage landowners in forest restoration on their private properties.

Minnesota's Lake Superior North Shore forest landscape health has drastically declined in the last 140 years which adversely affects forest health, wildlife habitat, sense of place, climate resiliency, brook trout streams, and Lake Superior's water quality. The forest is in a state of poor health due to past practice, a unique North Shore microclimate, significant winter deer browsing conditions, and is further threatened due to the effects of climate change. Restoration, as guided by the North Shore Forest Collaborative (NSFC), is a critical need, and serves to restore iconic North Shore landscape aesthetics, enhance wildlife habitat, protect cold water trout streams, and provide long-term climate resiliency.

NSFC natural resource agencies and some private landowners have begun restoration work, but the scope of private land ownership is significant, and requires a shared-stewardship, "all-lands" approach. The geographic scope of this project includes approximately 105,558 acres of private land holdings (39% of the total NSFC focus area), with an estimated 6,000 individual private parcels of various acreages.

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.

Funding would allow for the contracting of private lands foresters to perform a concerted outreach forestry project with up to 1500 private landowners on the North Shore of Lake Superior, with the goal of engagement and implementation of biodiverse forest restoration on their private lands. We intend this proposal to be a catalyst to grow additional community-based capacity using other funding sources to ensure the project is sustainable over time.

Dynamics of landowner interests and site conditions require foresters to remain flexible in their outreach to catalyze and expand landowner engagement. For example, outreach may occur on a given small parcel where the landowner has expressed interest in a modest Outreach Forester-led walk on their land. In this case the final outcome may lead to a small site plan and a limited tree planting regime.

Or, for example, a group of private landowners may be joined together within a given watershed that requires a more comprehensive project along with multi-agency program integration. The Outreach Forester, therefore, must be knowledgeable of the spectrum of available agency incentive programs, community resources, and be able to effectively articulate these opportunities to the landowners.

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 primary outcomes will include:

- Seek, connect and educate landowners on methods and NSFC resources to ecologically restore their private North Shore properties.
- Evaluate the viability of biodiverse plantings and longer-lived trees based on site conditions.
- Form a simple site plan for tree planting and protection.
- Connect landowners with trees and fencing/protection materials and planting options.
- Discuss options and make connections to agencies' forestry incentive programs, contractor planting assistance, and follow-up to assure fulfillment of the planting plan.
- Measure, evaluate, and communicate effectiveness of outreach interactions using a North Shore Forest Collaborative geospatial database to seek additional outreach opportunities.

Activities and Milestones

Activity 1: Outreach Forestry Program Formation, Administration and Forester Orientation

Activity Budget: \$51,000

Activity Description:

The North Shore Forest Collaborative will formulate a list of prospective private landowner contacts via solicitation of interest in the project using various marketing efforts, such as existing NSFC email lists, social media and direct mailing efforts.

In addition, the collaborative will formulate orientation materials for the Outreach Foresters to use during landowner interactions.

Once the outreach foresters are selected for the project, the North Shore Forest Collaborative Executive Committee and the NSFC Coordinator will provide a workshop to instill project objectives, technical guidance and project procedures to assure common goals are achieved. Much of these aspects has been previously developed, but will require coalescing materials for project purposes.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Completion Date
Form list of prospective landowner contacts	August 31, 2023
Compile forester orientation materials	August 31, 2023
Perform forester orientation workshop	August 31, 2023

Activity 2: Outreach Forestry Activities

Activity Budget: \$284,000

Activity Description:

Foresters will use the NSFC's contact list to reach landowners. In each interaction with a prospective private landowner, the Outreach Foresters will evaluate the site viability for longer-lived tree species plantings and other ecological restoration efforts that may be recommended. Restoration may be performed entirely by the landowner, but an added incentive may be established by offering a yet to be determined number of trees per site be planted by the Outreach Foresters, or other NSFC (in-kind) contractor, based on other in-kind funding and seedling availability.

Multiple tree seedling sources on the North Shore are available via generous seedling donations as part of community-led initiatives. Trees to be recommended for restoration will most often be White Pine, White Cedar, White Spruce, and Yellow Birch (there will be other species planted less frequently), and other native shrub plantings opportunities will also be determined. The Outreach Foresters will work toward agreement with the landowner on types and numbers of prescribed trees, native shrubs, and protection methods based on site conditions.

Outreach Foresters will complete a simple site plan for the landowner post-visit, which will identify planned plantings, and include eligible natural resource/forestry incentive programs that may be further pursued.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Completion Date
Outreach foresters begin site visits	October 31, 2023
Outreach Foresters coordinate and visit with landowners on-site	April 30, 2026
Outreach Foresters complete site plans and communicate forestry incentive programs, as appropriate.	May 31, 2026

Activity 3: Outreach Forester Activity Reporting

Activity Budget: \$40,000

Activity Description:

Outreach Foresters will enter the landowner contact/site data they visit into the NSFC geospatial database and communicate outcomes to the NSFC Coordinator. The NSFC will continue to tabulate results and make adjustments to outreach efforts/approaches and seek new landowner engagement opportunities.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Completion Date
Outreach Forester enters site visit plan/data into NSFC Geospatial database and communicate to NSFC.	June 30, 2026
NSFC Coordinator tabulates results and reports to NSFC Executive Committee results of outreach efforts.	June 30, 2026

Project Partners and Collaborators

Name	Organization	Role	Receiving Funds
Molly Thompson	Sugarloaf: The North Shore Stewardship Association	Project Manager	Yes
TBD - Various Upon Selection	Contract Foresters	Outreach Forestry	Yes
Jim Manolis/Chris Dunham	The Nature Conservancy	Consulting role with potential to expand to assist with project management/and or provide outreach forestry services.	Yes
Thor Pakosz (DNR)	DNR - Private Land Forestry	Consulting role	No
Tara Solem	SWCD - Lake County	Consulting role	No
Ilena Hansel	SWCD - Cook County	Consulting role	No
Mike Hup	NRCS Forester	Consulting role	No
Myra Theimer	USFS - Superior National Forest	Consulting role	No
Brian Huberty	MN Forestry Association	Consulting role	No
Steve Weekes	Weekes Family Foundation	Provides a leveraging fund source for tree-protection fencing program.	No
Various	Private landowner participants	Critical grassroots, community members support on NSFC Executive Committee, and those directly working with Outreach Foresters.	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 work be funded?

Results of this project are noted above, and will inform ongoing outreach engagement analysis based on real-time activities, in order to continue to grow capacity and landowner involvement in forest restoration. Actual landowner engagements will be leveraged with larger landscape-scale grant solicitations on public and private lands, using an “all-lands” shared-stewardship approach. It is further understood that a percentage of landowners with larger acreages will be eligible for other natural resource agency program support funding (e.g., via DNR private land forestry, SWCD/NRCS programs), which will strengthen program sustainability over time.

Project Manager and Organization Qualifications

Project Manager Name: Molly Thompson

Job Title: Executive Director

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

Molly Thompson has been the Executive Director of Sugarloaf: The North Shore Stewardship Association for the past 16 years. Molly has been involved in the interpretive field for over 25 years as a naturalist, Extension educator, nature center assistant manager and executive director. She is originally from Michigan and has lived and worked in NY,

Missouri, Wisconsin, Alabama and now Minnesota for the past 15 years. Molly has a M.S. in Wildlife Science from Auburn University and a B.S. in Zoology/Biology from Michigan State University.

As Executive Director, Molly has managed many grants from Federal, State, and private funders. Molly has been integral to the ongoing administration of site-level implementation of forest restoration projects upon private and public lands within the North Shore Forest Collaborative focus area and adjacent landscapes.

Organization: Sugarloaf The North Shore Stewardship Association

Organization Description:

Sugarloaf: The North Shore Stewardship Association is a non-profit organization dedicated to the preservation and restoration of Minnesota's North Shore of Lake Superior. We operate Sugarloaf Cove Nature Center, near Schroeder, Minnesota and we offer forest stewardship learning opportunities for residents – seasonal and year round – and visitors of the North Shore. Website: <https://sugarloafnorthshore.org>

Our Mission: To inspire the preservation and restoration of the North Shore's unique environment through education and exemplary stewardship, especially at Sugarloaf Cove.

Our Vision: Sugarloaf values and believes in a healthy Minnesota North Shore of Lake Superior where an informed citizenry takes personal and group responsibility to ensure that natural and ecological systems and human economic and social systems coexist in a fashion sustainable into the future.

Our goals are:

Preservation and restoration of the Sugarloaf Cove site and Scientific and Natural Area for public enjoyment and understanding.

Interpretation and education throughout and about the North Shore, especially its natural and cultural heritage.

As a founding member of the North Shore Forest Collaborative (NSFC) Sugarloaf has secured and managed numerous grants for NSFC work over the last 11 years, thus supporting the vision of our founder, Governor Elmer Anderson.

Budget Summary

Category / Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Purpose	Gen. Ineligible	% Benefits	# FTE	Classified Staff?	\$ Amount
Personnel								
Sugarloaf: The North Shore Stewardship Association		Project Manager			0%	3		\$25,000
The Nature Conservancy		Note: TNC is evaluating expanding its role, which may include aspects of project management, outreach forestry and GIS analysis.			0%	3		-
							Sub Total	\$25,000
Contracts and Services								
NSFC Coordinator	Professional or Technical Service Contract	NSFC coordination of outreach forestry project.				1.05		\$25,000
Various Outreach Foresters - to be determined	Professional or Technical Service Contract	A three (3) year program using private land forester contractors to perform private land forestry outreach.				12		\$240,000
							Sub Total	\$265,000
Equipment, Tools, and Supplies								
							Sub Total	-
Capital Expenditures								
							Sub Total	-
Acquisitions and Stewardship								

							Sub Total	-
Travel In Minnesota								
	Miles/ Meals/ Lodging	Outreach Forester Mileage on the North Shore.	A three-year program using private land forester contractors to perform private land forestry outreach.					\$84,000
							Sub Total	\$84,000
Travel Outside Minnesota								
							Sub Total	-
Printing and Publication								
	Printing	Printing materials as needed. Up to 1500 aerial photography maps.	Parcel and other printed forestry materials needed to give to landowners.					\$1,000
							Sub Total	\$1,000
Other Expenses								
							Sub Total	-
							Grand Total	\$375,000

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				
			State Sub Total	-
Non-State				
In-Kind	Donation of over 50,000 tree seedlings from Minnesota Power's Rajala Woods Initiative; Hedstrom's Lumber; and Castle Danger Brewery.	Donation of approx. 50,000+ tree seedlings/annually made available to the public on the North Shore for forest restoration work.	Pending	\$30,000
In-Kind	Private landowners, TBD, on case-by-case basis.	Acquisition of trees and fencing (required for deer browse protection). Time landowners spend with foresters.	Potential	\$100,000
In-Kind	The Nature Conservancy and private donors.	Contracted field crews, seedlings and other supplies for landowners reached through TNC Forest Program. Ongoing effort with emphasis on public lands, planning to allocate more to private lands in the North Shore Forest Collaborative landscape.	Pending	\$100,000
In-Kind	Weekes Family Foundation	Annual donation for discount fencing. Ongoing since 2016.	Pending	\$135,000
			Non State Sub Total	\$365,000
			Funds Total	\$365,000

Attachments

Required Attachments

Visual Component

File: [4e4d8250-d4f.pdf](#)

Alternate Text for Visual Component

The attachment is the single-page project work plan and decision-making work flow for the outreach forestry project proposal....

Financial Capacity

File: [95132b7e-0ca.pdf](#)

Board Resolution or Letter

Title	File
Board resolution	2df1a734-c20.pdf
Sugarloaf 2020 990	366d84d3-83b.pdf

Optional Attachments

Support Letter or Other

Title	File
North Shore Forest Collaborative LOS	1312ee33-820.pdf
The Nature Conservancy LOS	d865fe54-ebf.pdf
Lake County SWCD LOS	65ef593b-1ea.pdf
Cook County SWCD LOS	e018e602-112.pdf
Rob Wight North Shore Private Landowner LOS	6f331375-e4d.pdf
Dana Dickson North Shore Private Landowner LOS	0b8fc85e-76d.docx
Jeff Gniffke North Shore Private Landowner LOS	12fc5b9f-2cb.pdf
Becky Bartol North Shore Private Landowner LOS	d78a5619-9de.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

NSFC Outreach Forestry Work Plan

Preliminary Steps:

1. The NSFC Technical Committee and its Coordinator will work together with participating NSFC agencies and individuals in developing a list of private property owners that are interested in working with an Outreach Forester on their properties.
2. Interested landowners will be required to execute a landowner/contractor liability/hold harmless contract. This could be built into the marketing/responses process.
3. The NSFC Technical Committee and its Coordinator will also develop the private landowner site plan template, and provide to Outreach Foresters guidance documents, and printed material or digital resources that explains various natural resource conservation programs, as it may apply to each site and property owner's interest.

Outreach Forester(s) Orientation:

1. Forester(s) Meet with NSFC Technical Committee
2. Learn Technical Principles, Focus and Guidance
3. Learn Site Plan Template and Method
4. Understand Process for Accountability/Reporting Back to Technical Committee
5. Receive Data and Property Owner Contact Information to Enact Outreach

Daily Work Flow:

1. Forester contacts interested landowners and sets up meeting time.
2. Forester then forms property map and draft plan from template.
3. Forester discusses landowner's interests in restoration of their property
4. Forester determines best options for the property, educates the landowner on potential property restoration, and alternate
5. Landowner agrees, and signs the site plan
6. Forester enters site plan into NSFC Database (Spreadsheet and/or GIS)
7. Forester reports results to NSFC Technical Committee & Coordinator

NSFC Forestry Outreach Work Flow

NSFC Working Committee identifies/develops contacts for Outreach Foresters and forwards these to the foresters.

- Forester creates property map.
- Sets-up visit time
- Meets landowner onsite
- Discusses interests & potential
- Option: Provide seedlings?

Is the landowner interested in (and/or is their property eligible for) agency incentive programs?

YES: Formulate Moderate Level Plan, discuss incentive

NO: Offer "Woods Walk Plan"

- Execute Simple Plan
- Plant 5 White Pine
- Provide Resources for

Forester files landowner plans with NSFC and updates spreadsheet/GIS, and communicates with SWCD, DNR or NRCS, as applicable.

Landowner is inspired and expresses interest to do more, and property is eligible for agency incentive programs.

Forester files landowner plan with NSFC updates spreadsheet/GIS.

Timely Communication back to the NSFC Technical Committee/Coordinator.

