

**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

**Office Telephone:** (218) 525-0001

**Email:** molly@sugarloafnorthshore.org

## **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. Ineli gible** | **% Bene fits** | **# FTE** | **Class ified 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** |

### **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](https://lccmrprojectmgmt.leg.mn/media/map/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](https://lccmrprojectmgmt.leg.mn/media/financial_capacity/95132b7e-0ca.pdf)

#### ***Board Resolution or Letter***

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Title** | **File** |
| Board resolution | [2df1a734-c20.pdf](https://lccmrprojectmgmt.leg.mn/media/attachments/2df1a734-c20.pdf) |
| Sugarloaf 2020 990 | [366d84d3-83b.pdf](https://lccmrprojectmgmt.leg.mn/media/attachments/366d84d3-83b.pdf) |

### **Optional Attachments**

#### ***Support Letter or Other***

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Title** | **File** |
| North Shore Forest Collaborative LOS | [1312ee33-820.pdf](https://lccmrprojectmgmt.leg.mn/media/attachments/1312ee33-820.pdf) |
| The Nature Conservancy LOS | [d865fe54-ebf.pdf](https://lccmrprojectmgmt.leg.mn/media/attachments/d865fe54-ebf.pdf) |
| Lake County SWCD LOS | [65ef593b-1ea.pdf](https://lccmrprojectmgmt.leg.mn/media/attachments/65ef593b-1ea.pdf) |
| Cook County SWCD LOS | [e018e602-112.pdf](https://lccmrprojectmgmt.leg.mn/media/attachments/e018e602-112.pdf) |
| Rob Wight North Shore Private Landowner LOS | [6f331375-e4d.pdf](https://lccmrprojectmgmt.leg.mn/media/attachments/6f331375-e4d.pdf) |
| Dana Dickson North Shore Private Landowner LOS | [0b8fc85e-76d.docx](https://lccmrprojectmgmt.leg.mn/media/attachments/0b8fc85e-76d.docx) |
| Jeff Gniffke North Shore Private Landowner LOS | [12fc5b9f-2cb.pdf](https://lccmrprojectmgmt.leg.mn/media/attachments/12fc5b9f-2cb.pdf) |
| Becky Bartol North Shore Private Landowner LOS | [d78a5619-9de.pdf](https://lccmrprojectmgmt.leg.mn/media/attachments/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