



# Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

2024 Request for Proposal

## General Information

**Proposal ID:** 2024-188

**Proposal Title:** Increasing Accessibility of Environmental Education at Deep Portage

## Project Manager Information

**Name:** Lindsay Bjorklund

**Organization:** Deep Portage Learning Center

**Office Telephone:** (218) 682-2325

**Email:** lindsay@deepportage.org

## Project Basic Information

**Project Summary:** To enhance the accessibility of environmental education and outdoor recreation at Deep Portage Learning Center through projects that provide opportunities and support independence for physically disabled students visiting the campus.

**Funds Requested:** \$228,000

**Proposed Project Completion:** November 30, 2025

**LCCMR Funding Category:** Environmental Education (C)

## Project Location

**What is the best scale for describing where your work will take place?**

Region(s): NW

**What is the best scale to describe the area impacted by your work?**

Statewide

**When will the work impact occur?**

In the Future

## Narrative

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

Deep Portage Learning Center hosts approximately 5000 students from around the state of Minnesota every year. Students participate in experiential lessons focused on environmental science, natural resources, and outdoor recreation. Currently, students with physical disabilities are encouraged to attend trips along with their peers. Many classes and activities are accessible, and accommodations and adaptations are available, however there are certain barriers to meaningful participation that require specific, adaptive equipment.

Additionally, some current adaptations, such as transporting students in an electric UTV on challenging terrain, do not always promote student independence and exploration.

Deep Portage's land is also open to the public and receives 2000-3000 visitors year-round who enjoy its many habitats, scenic views, and abundant wildlife. The project would increase access for enjoying some of the most beautiful parts of Deep Portage. Some of the best birding, especially spring warbler migration, could be made more universally accessible for those with mobility limitations, elderly individuals, and families using strollers.

### **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.**

The proposed solution includes ADA upgrades to existing trails, the purchase of adaptive equipment and tools for school program use, and staff research and training for best practices, policies, and procedures for implementing these tools into our regular programming. Our intention is to make the campus and our educational and recreational offerings more accessible for visiting school groups and public visitors.

### **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?**

These projects will increase access to environmental education and outdoor recreation for many Minnesotan students. Being able to offer activities, access, and exposure to different parts of the state's natural resources or ways to enjoy them can create a trajectory of change or newfound passion that shapes their future role as a responsible outdoor recreator, natural resources scientist, or environmentally-conscious citizen. Deep Portage experiences are all about creating a "spark," so increasing ways to offer sparks for our students is vital. With over 70 school groups coming per year, there are many opportunities to improve the educational experience for all.

## Activities and Milestones

### Activity 1: Improve Accessibility on Existing Trails

**Activity Budget:** \$74,000

**Activity Description:**

1. There is a 0.25 mile trail leading from the main building/parking lot along the west side of Bass Pond, to an end point with views of both Bass Pond and Big Deep Lake. This trail is already paved, however it is in need of asphalt overlay to improve the trail quality as it was originally paved 30 years ago. This trail meanders through mixed forest, holds towering pines, and passes by vernal ponds that come alive with amphibians every spring. It has amazing views of Bass Pond and finally ends at a peaceful resting spot where one can relax and take in the beauty of Bass Pond and Big Deep Lake. Birds abound in this location; one can sometimes observe 15 different species of warblers in one day, making it a premier location to recommend as a spot for its "Birdability."
2. Pave a trail to allow individuals with limited mobility easy access to Bass Pond. A trail currently exists, however it's not accessible. Bass Pond is commonly used with students for paddle-sports, aquatic ecology, fishing, and wildlife viewing. Access to this location would open up a multitude of programmatic opportunities those with limited mobility.

**Activity Milestones:**

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Seek bids for paving project	September 30, 2024
Complete Big Deep Lake Trail Overlay	August 31, 2025
Complete Bass Pond Trail Paving	August 31, 2025

### Activity 2: Obtain Adaptive Equipment for School Program Use

**Activity Budget:** \$105,000

**Activity Description:**

Several pieces of adaptive equipment would substantially increase access for students to meaningfully participate in environmental education lessons and outdoor recreation activities. These include:

1. An all-terrain tracked power wheelchair capable of traversing Deep Portage's hilly, rugged terrain.
2. A cross-country sit-ski that would allow students a different way to experience cross country skiing and provide a more inclusive method of transportation along winter trails for many winter classes.
3. Adaptive kayaks and a kayak launching dock to provide access to the water for paddle sports, fishing, wildlife viewing, and aquatic ecology education.

**Activity Milestones:**

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Purchase track chair	October 31, 2024
Purchase nordic sit ski	November 30, 2024
Purchase adaptive kayaks	May 31, 2025
Install adaptive kayak launch	June 30, 2025

### Activity 3: Expand Birding/Wildlife Observation Access of the Big Deep Lake Trail

**Activity Budget:** \$45,000

**Activity Description:**

To enhance the accessibility of the Big Deep Lake paved trail and take advantage of its exceptional birding potential, this activity is to construct an ADA compliant bird observation shelter for comfortable observation of birds for all. Such a shelter is also beneficial to wildlife as it reduces disturbances.

"Birdability" (see [www.birdability.org](http://www.birdability.org)) is an organization and movement working to make birding inclusive and accessible for all. Paving the trail from the building to Big Deep Lake (Activity 1) as well as adding a bird observation shelter would allow all students a comfortable place out of the elements to listen or watch for birds. It would also make this public trail a premier destination for wildlife observers of all abilities to come bird, as well as participate in public Big Day or BioBlitz events that contribute to the scientific understanding of phenology, migration patterns, and ecology.

**Activity Milestones:**

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Construct ADA Accessible Bird Blind	October 31, 2025

**Activity 4: Implement Adaptive Equipment into Program**

**Activity Budget:** \$4,000

**Activity Description:**

One Deep Portage education staff member will be hired as a regular education team member with the special purpose of implementing the use of adaptive equipment into our programming. They will be responsible for researching and outlining best practices, policies and procedures. They will create documents for the Deep Portage website and provide resources to visiting schools so that visiting students and their families know what will be available to them. They will also gather basic information of what type of adaptive equipment is being used, where it can be acquired, where students may be able to rent it in Minnesota, and any potential financial support so that they may be able to continue these activities back home. This staff member will assist the rest of the education team with implementation.

Additionally, this staff member may also note other accessibility gaps at our center and help make a plan for continued improvement.

**Activity Milestones:**

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Identify education staff member responsible for implementation	September 30, 2024
Best practices/policies/procedures complete	August 31, 2025

## 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?**

The accessible trails would immediately expand access to several locations at Deep Portage. Deep Portage will be responsible for the maintenance and care of the trails and equipment. Adaptive equipment will be implemented into regular programming according to Activity 4 and integrated into any future curriculum. After project completion, Deep Portage will continue to fund for staff training to ensure safe, responsible, and inclusive use of equipment.

## Other ENRTF Appropriations Awarded in the Last Six Years

Name	Appropriation	Amount Awarded
Increasing K-12 Student Learning to Achieve ENRTF's Goals	M.L. 2022, , Chp. 94, Art. , Sec. 2, Subd. 05b	\$1,602,000

## Project Manager and Organization Qualifications

**Project Manager Name:** Lindsay Bjorklund

**Job Title:** Executive Director

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

Lindsay Bjorklund has 10 years of experience working in outdoor education and natural resources. She has worked at Deep Portage Learning Center since 2014, was the Assistant Director from 2019-2022, and recently started as the Executive Director. She is very familiar with all aspects of Deep Portage programming, grounds, and facilities.

**Organization:** Deep Portage Learning Center

**Organization Description:**

Deep Portage Learning Center is a residential environmental learning center, fully accredited by the NCA Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement. Thousands of students from more than seventy schools from all over Minnesota visit Deep Portage each year to take part in high-quality environmental education/outdoor recreation programs. In the summer, Deep Portage offers a variety of youth camps. Topics include firearms safety, hunting skills, fishing, science, conservation, and outdoor recreation. Additionally, Deep Portage serves groups, organizations, area residents, and visitors with interpretive programs, tours, and events. Our eleven miles of trails are open year-round for birding, hiking, and skiing, and our woods, lakes, bogs, and more.

## Budget Summary

Category / Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Purpose	Gen. Ineligible	% Benefits	# FTE	Classified Staff?	\$ Amount
<b>Personnel</b>								
1 Education Staff		To research adaptive equipment implementation and procedures			0%	0.2		\$4,000
							<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>\$4,000</b>
<b>Contracts and Services</b>								
							<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Equipment, Tools, and Supplies</b>								
	Equipment	Nordic Sit Ski - 1	To allow physically disabled students to try cross country skiing, and for easier and more comfortable movement on winter trails.					\$3,000
	Equipment	Adaptive kayaks - 2	To provide disabled students a chance to try out paddle sports, go fishing, and learn about aquatic ecology in a safe and comfortable mode of transportation.					\$3,000
							<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>\$6,000</b>
<b>Capital Expenditures</b>								
		All-terrain power track chair - 1	To allow physically disabled students access to more areas of the Deep Portage campus and more opportunities for independent participation and exploration in classes					\$24,000
		Paving 2 trails, approximately 0.40 miles in total	To increase access to some the areas most crucial for school programming and that provide excellent access to a variety of habitats and abundant wildlife.					\$74,000

		Construction of ADA Bird Observation Shelter	To provide an exceptional place to enjoy wildlife and birds for someone of any ability.					\$45,000
		Adaptive Kayak Launch	To allow for safe and independent access to Bass Pond via kayak.					\$75,000
							<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>\$218,000</b>
<b>Acquisitions and Stewardship</b>								
							<b>Sub Total</b>	-
<b>Travel In Minnesota</b>								
							<b>Sub Total</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>\$228,000</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
State				
			State Sub Total	-
Non-State				
			Non State Sub Total	-
			Funds Total	-

## Attachments

### Required Attachments

#### *Visual Component*

File: [8ca18771-873.pdf](#)

#### *Alternate Text for Visual Component*

Figure 1: A satellite map of the area of the proposed trail upgrades.

Figure 2: The entire trail map of the Deep Portage trail system, with a rectangle showing the area depicted in Fig 1

Figure 3: Photos of adaptive equipment including track chair, sit ski, and kayak launch....

#### *Financial Capacity*

File: [8ecf5b51-69c.pdf](#)

#### *Board Resolution or Letter*

Title	File
Resolution Letter	<a href="#">af073dd6-a5e.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

**Does your project include the design, construction, or renovation of a building, trail, campground, or other capital asset costing \$10,000 or more?**

Yes

**Do you propose using an appropriation from the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund to conduct a project that provides children's services, as defined in Minnesota Statutes section 299C.61 Subd.7?**

Yes

**Do you certify that background checks are performed for background check crimes, as defined in Minnesota Statutes, section 299C.61, Subd. 2, on all employees, contractors, and volunteers who have or may have access to a child to whom children's services are provided by your organization?**

Yes