



Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

2026 Request for Proposal

General Information

Proposal ID: 2026-110

Proposal Title: Trail Restoration at Carpenter Nature Center

Project Manager Information

Name: Jennifer Vieth

Organization: Carpenter St. Croix Valley Nature Center

Office Telephone: (651) 437-4359

Email: jennifer@carpenternaturecenter.org

Project Basic Information

Project Summary: Carpenter Nature Center is seeking funding to re-pave 1.9 miles of walking trails.

ENRTF Funds Requested: \$761,000

Proposed Project Completion: December 31, 2027

LCCMR Funding Category: Education and Outdoor Recreation (C)

Project Location

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

Region(s): Metro

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

Region(s): Metro

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.

Located a short drive from the twin cities metro, and with free admission 361 days per year, Carpenter Nature Center is an ideal spot for visitors to get outside, active and learning about the natural world. 50 years ago, CNC's Board of Directors paved two trails, encompassing 1.9 miles of it's extensive trail system. These two loops start at the Visitor Center and pass through the oak savannah, deciduous forest, pine plantation and sugarbush. These trails access the ravine overlook, an educational observation station where many of CNC's 7,000 annual student visitors learn about forest canopies, tree species, bird life and natural habitats. They also access a river overlook, a popular destination is ideal for weddings and programs due to it's multistory seating and spectacular view of the Wild and Scenic St. Croix River. The nature center maintains golf carts for seniors and those unable to walk the trails to experience them. Families enjoy the trail due to it's flat nature and accessibility for strollers. Snow removal takes place on these trails in the winter for year round recreation. The trail surface is past end of life and has become very hard to maintain for safety and accessibility.

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.

Carpenter Nature Center needs to remove the crumbling, 50 year old asphalt trail and replace it with a smooth, long lasting and accessible concrete. Funding will be used to hire a contractor to do this work. Repaving the trails with concrete will ensure that the trails stay accessible and safe for the nature center's 65,000 annual visitors, including 7,000 k-12 students, for many years to come.

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?

Annually 65,000 people will have access to safe trails for outdoor recreation, exploring and learning about science and their environment. The group using these trails will include students, families, individuals and seniors. Use of the trails will remain free of charge, ensuring access for people of all means and income levels. Increased development pressures on the area today means CNC will continue to be even more critical to the local quality of life in the future.

Activities and Milestones

Activity 1: Trail Construction and Project Completion

Activity Budget: \$761,000

Activity Description:

During this activity Carpenter Nature Center contractors will remove the old trail and install new pavement. Work will be overseen by both Jennifer Vieth, executive director and the CNC maintenance department. Care will be taken to ensure that only sections of the trail are impassable at a time and alternate routes are available. At the completion of construction, notice of funding restriction will be filed, signage will be installed and the full trail will open for use.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Trail Construction	November 30, 2027
Notice of Funding Restriction Recorded and Signage Installation with ENRTF language	November 30, 2027
Full Trail Open for Use	November 30, 2027

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?

Carpenter Nature Center currently funds and will continue to fund trail maintenance, visitor services and environmental education through the Thomas and Edna Carpenter Foundation, private donations and grants.

Project Manager and Organization Qualifications

Project Manager Name: Jennifer Vieth

Job Title: Executive Director, Carpenter Nature Center

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

Jennifer Vieth has 20 years experience with project management, fundraising, and habitat restoration and preservation. Jennifer Vieth has worked on many similar projects, including a \$4.3 million expansion at the nature center's Wisconsin Campus. For this project she oversaw the fundraising, the site prep and building of a visitor center, and trail system updates. She has also worked on government funded grant projects, including a 2 year Conservation Partners Legacy grant to do habitat restoration at Carpenter Nature Center's Minnesota campus.

Organization: Carpenter St. Croix Valley Nature Center

Organization Description:

Carpenter St. Croix Valley Nature Center (CNC) is a nonprofit environmental education facility with 725 acres of prairie, forest, and riparian habitat in the St. Croix Valley, open to the public for nature exploration and learning. Founded by the Carpenter family, who established the Thomas E. & Edna D. Carpenter Foundation in 1969, Carpenter Nature Center officially opened to the public in 1981 to promote environmental education and habitat conservation.

CNC's Minnesota campus in Washington County spans 435 acres with over 15 miles of trails, a Visitor Center, an Interpretive Center, and an apple orchard. CNC's Wisconsin campus, established in 1989, encompasses 300 acres with 10 miles of trails and the Al & Laurie Hein Visitor Center.

Each year, CNC serves more than 65,000 people with diverse programs, outdoor recreation, and habitat restoration efforts. The Nature Center has earned a stellar reputation as a leader in environmental education and conservation, and continues to foster connections to nature for all ages, abilities, and income levels.

Budget Summary

Category / Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Purpose	Gen. Ineligible	% Benefits	# FTE	Classified Staff?	\$ Amount
Personnel								
							Sub Total	-
Contracts and Services								
TBD	Service Contract	The contractor will obtain permits, remove existing bituminous trail, grind and reclaiming material and install 1.9 miles of 4' concrete trail.				0		\$761,000
							Sub Total	\$761,000
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	\$761,000

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	Carpenter Nature Center Operating Budget	The Carpenter Nature Center maintenance department will oversee construction of trail. They will keep staff and visitors aware of trail closures due to construction, through verbal communication and signage. They will serve as the liaison between the construction company and project manager.	Secured	\$2,500
In-Kind	Carpenter Nature Center Operating Budget	<p>The Executive Director will serve as the project manager. She will work directly with LCCMR to submit all necessary documentation and reports. She will work with the construction company and the CNC maintenance department to keep the project in compliance with LCCMR requirements. She will update the CNC Board of Directors and the public about status of the project.</p> <p>Activities and Milestones that this budget will cover include:</p> <p>1 Match Funds Secured Carpenter Nature Center will secure the match budget. We plan to do this through the 3M PFAS Settlement Grant Program. Notice of project selection for this grant is December of 2026. If funding isn't secured through the 3M grant program, CNC will work with current and prospective grantors and individual donors to raise the match funds. Having recently completed a \$4.4 million capital campaign, we have a proven track record of being able to raise these types of funds and are confident in our ability to secure a match. 2/28/2027</p> <p>2 Project Bidding and Selection of Contractor 2/28/2027</p> <p>3 Consultation with SHPO 2/28/2027</p> <p>4 Environmental Site Assessment 2/28/2027</p>	Secured	\$6,500
Cash	3M PFAS Settlement Grant Program, Hardenbergh Foundation, CNC Donors	CNC will raise the additional 25% cash required to pay the service contract to remove existing trail and repave. Carpenter Nature Center demonstrates a history of maintaining a steady balanced budget and the ability to fund raise for projects. The nature center has identified a number of long standing funders and new grant programs to cover 25% of the trail construction costs. CNC will raise the additional 25% required	Pending	\$252,000

		for the project prior to hiring a contractor and incurring any construction costs.		
			Non State Sub Total	\$261,000
			Funds Total	\$261,000

Total Project Cost: \$1,022,000

This amount accurately reflects total project cost?

Yes

Attachments

Required Attachments

Visual Component

File: [36cfееea-d0e.pdf](#)

Alternate Text for Visual Component

Photos of Carpenter Nature Center's Self Guided and North Loop trails in use....

Financial Capacity

Title	File
Thomas E. Edna D. Carpenter Foundation 990	4a36ee9b-dc4.pdf
Thomas E. Edna D. Carpenter Foundation Audit	df52fda1-1bc.pdf

Board Resolution or Letter

Title	File
Carpenter Nature Center Board Letter	8f608297-7cc.pdf

Supplemental Attachments

Capital Project Questionnaire, Budget Supplements, Support Letter, Photos, Media, Other

Title	File
Capital Budget	5b4f9fdc-178.xlsx
Capital Project Questionnaire	955c95c1-891.pdf
Markup of Project Area	ea9dff74-712.pdf
Carpenter Nature Center Trail Map	0e95ab80-bbb.pdf

Administrative Use

Does your project include restoration or acquisition of land rights?

No

Do you understand that travel expenses are only approved if they follow the "Commissioner's Plan" promulgated by the Commissioner of Management of Budget or, for University of Minnesota projects, the University of Minnesota plan?

N/A

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

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 pre-design, design, construction, or renovation of a building, trail, campground, or other fixed capital asset costing \$10,000 or more or large-scale stream or wetland restoration?

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 as "the provision of care, treatment, education, training, instruction, or recreation to children")?

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?

No

Provide the name(s) and organization(s) of additional individuals assisting in the completion of this proposal:

Clare Neenan, Carpenter Nature Center

Do you understand that a named service contract does not constitute a funder-designated subrecipient or approval of a sole-source contract? In other words, a service contract entity is only approved if it has been selected according to the contracting rules identified in state law and policy for organizations that receive ENRTF funds through direct appropriations, or in the DNR's reimbursement manual for non-state organizations. These rules may include competitive bidding and prevailing wage requirements

Yes, I understand

