



## Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

### 2026 Request for Proposal

#### General Information

**Proposal ID:** 2026-475

**Proposal Title:** Demystifying the Mississippi through Equitable Recreation Education

#### Project Manager Information

**Name:** Alexander Keilty

**Organization:** Broken Paddle Guiding

**Office Telephone:** (650) 676-9252

**Email:** aekeilty@gmail.com

#### Project Basic Information

**Project Summary:** Help Minnesotans unfamiliar and unaccustomed to being on the water gain knowledge, experience, and comfort paddling on the Mississippi River, which can help open doors to outdoor recreation and employment.

**ENRTF Funds Requested:** \$210,000

**Proposed Project Completion:** October 31, 2027

**LCCMR Funding Category:** Small Projects (G)

**Secondary Category:** Education and Outdoor Recreation (C)

#### Project Location

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

Region(s): Metro, SE,

**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.**

Many Minnesotans love to canoe and kayak, but almost all avoid paddling on the Mississippi River, especially south of the Twin Cities. Because the Mississippi River has a reputation of being scary and polluted and many paddlers are wary of sharing the water with barges and other motorized vessels. Our team of professional guides knows how to safely paddle in this cherished waterway, and we believe it is in the best interest of the State of Minnesota to encourage more people to have a relationship with the Mississippi River. Our goal is to make paddling on the Mississippi River more approachable and accessible for everyone, even those that have never dipped a paddle in the water.

We will accomplish this goal by offering a series of trainings and paddle excursions led by some of the most experienced and capable outdoor water professionals in the state. At the beginning level, participants will learn water safety and basic paddle techniques. At the highest level, participants will learn how to plan and lead overnight paddle trips, and they will receive first aid and other certifications that are needed for employment in the outdoor industry.

**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 Mississippi River is extremely under utilized which leaves the responsibility of the health of the Mississippi River to a chosen "few". Through education and opportunity striving create opportunity for people to feel empowered to paddle on the Mississippi River. Providing learning opportunities for people to form a relationship and to develop the needed technical and safety skills for people to feel at ease on the Mississippi.

We will offer introductory paddle lessons, classes geared for people wanting to ease their hesitation, create life time memories or lead their own group trip on the Mississippi River. We hope to show people that the BWCA is not their only place for first-class canoeing and kayaking in the state, but there is a world-class paddling experience to be had on the Mississippi River, as well.

**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?**

By strengthening peoples relationships and bonds to the Mississippi River we ensure that the next 100 years will be an even more bio diverse river since the recovery when 1926 survey declared the Mississippi River dead.

By providing comprehensive, diverse and detailed water safety opportunities through 106 miles of the River by enhancing someone's connection to the natural world you shift their perspectives on water use, recycling and other ways to be mindful in a climate crisis.

## Activities and Milestones

### Activity 1: Staff training, Mississippi River Knowledge, and Team Cohesion

**Activity Budget:** \$21,000

**Activity Description:**

Each guide of the collective has varied life, work, educational and paddling experiences. It is important that the educators of this program have congruent knowledge as well as consistency in mission, vision and messaging to ensure every participant experiences continuity to appropriately equip them for the next level.

By the end of the training each guide will have at a minimum a American Canoe Association (ACA) Level 2 certification, which will ensure that each guide is certified to lead kayak/canoe trips, is proficient in all safety gear, rescue, etc. Identify Trip and River safety concerns so we can educate participants about them clearly.

All guides will also learn from NPS Park Ranger Stephen Walker to increase collective knowledge of the Mississippi River, and how to interpret it professionally.

Certifying that all leaders of this program are comfortable on the waters of the Mississippi River. Learn how to comfortably navigate the size and scope of the waters, read flow rate charts, and all U.S. Coast Guard policies, including appropriate radio use, right of way, etc. For this portion of the training we will consult Broken Paddle Guide Company.

**Activity Milestones:**

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Identify Pillars of the curriculum	June 30, 2026
Trip to the Lower Mississippi River to Train at Quapaw Canoe company.	July 31, 2026

### Activity 2: Deliver fifteen "Level 0 - Minnow" Building Relationships

**Activity Budget:** \$22,000

**Activity Description:**

Adapting proven practices by Paddle Bridge Guiding Collective's unique approach to helping new paddlers feel comfortable on the water by identifying and connecting to partner groups to build customized classroom visits that educate around not only the general concerns people have with the Mississippi River, but by also addressing the individual concerns of prospective participants, ages 14 - 99. Each Classroom visit is an opportunity to introduce ourselves and build foundational trust with participants through the sharing of knowledge about the Mississippi River's ecology and history, to learn more about the program and hopefully empower prospects to have a heart of adventure and soulful stewardship.

Up to 20 Classroom visits will include a brief, engaging and interactive educational element (Interpretation, games, and river trivia).

Leveraging our already existing relationships with non-profits who serve populations that have been historically underrepresented in outdoor recreation and paddle sports communities to ensure this program is accessible and inclusive.

Outcome: Create excitement for the water day and build trust with our guides.

Capacity: Event attendance 20-30.

Evaluation: Success is verified when 55% of the participants in attendance register for Levels 1/2. Surveys to gather information about what deeper reasons may be hindering participation.

### Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Identify partner organizations that want to offer this to their respective communities.	July 31, 2026
Schedule Early Fall and Late Spring classroom Visits	September 30, 2026
Deliver five, "Level 1 - Minnow" Classroom sessions in 2026	September 30, 2026
Provide sign up dates to Level 2 Lake or Pool sessions.	September 30, 2027
Deliver ten, "Level 1 - Minnow" Classroom sessions in 2027	September 30, 2027

### Activity 3: Deliver nine "Level 1 - Lake Trout" Introduction to Water (& equipment)

**Activity Budget:** \$25,000

#### Activity Description:

Three options to meet needs of partner groups.

Introduction to Paddling. Lake, River or Indoor Pool

Using either Paddle Share or Paddle Bridge equipment. Building from classroom visit, continuing the themes of water safety practices through a detailed paddle and safety demonstrations. Getting acquainted with gear; proper PDF and watercraft fitting while learning to trust the equipment in the water. Testing the boundaries of the watercraft, learning how to get back into the vessel assisted and independently.

For groups who need a smaller step towards building confidence. Paddle Share Pool to River Course: Healing intergenerational trauma in around water and remedial pool kayaking partnership with Sankofa Swim Institute. Underwater breathing techniques, trusting the equipment, Rescue Rodeo.

This trip sets up participants to build the confidence and skill sets to participate in Levels 3 & 4.

Participants per event 20-40

Events will all follow a ratio of 4-1 kayak/canoe to guide.

#### Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Deliver three "Level 1 - Lake Trout" water safety courses in 2026	September 30, 2026
Deliver six "Level 1 - Lake Trout" water safety courses in 2027	September 30, 2027

### Activity 4: Deliver six "Level 2 - Freshwater Mussels" Water Safety Courses

**Activity Budget:** \$35,000

#### Activity Description:

A 2-4 hour canoe and kayak course on the Mississippi River. The content of this course involves around graduating from lake paddling to river paddling.

Course will begin with a refresher of the Level 1 "Lake Trout" Course. With an emphasis on water safety.

Then course will move into a map reading component, where route and logistics planning will be discussed.

Then we will discuss specific considerations of paddling on a moving body of water. How to judge distances, and

approaches. How to read the surface of the water, gauging the wind and other hazards. How to share the water with

motorboats, including barges.

And lastly, discuss communications, safety, and tripping protocols while on the water.

Students will then enter their boats, and have 2-3 hours of practice, while adhering to those protocols, and being closely monitored and coached by staff.

At the end of the day, a closing will be led by staff, with the focus on participants doing a trip like this themselves.

Closing will debrief the trip, and answer any participant questions.

**Activity Milestones:**

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Deliver two "Level 2 - Freshwater Mussel" water safety courses in 2026	September 30, 2026
Deliver four "Level 2 - Freshwater Mussel" water safety courses in 2027	September 30, 2027

### Activity 5: Deliver three "Level 3 - Channel Catfish" Water Safety & Leadership Courses

**Activity Budget:** \$80,000

**Activity Description:**

This is the final and most advanced class we will offer. Participants will become intimately familiar with the Mississippi River, and feel comfortable leading their own groups on paddling trips. Participants graduating from the "Level 3 - Channel Catfish" leadership course will become ACA level 2 certified, will be familiar with how to plan a trip for their group (e.g. scout groups, summer camp groups, school groups, or church groups).

Graduates of this 'capstone' course should be well prepared to canoe and kayak anywhere in the state, and be well equipped and competitive candidates for outdoor jobs anywhere from the boundary waters to the Iowa border.

Outdoor Leadership and Job Skills covered:

American Canoe Association Level 2 certification

Trip planning

Trip logistics

Group management

Mississippi Rivers-specific safety skills

Radio communications

Barge/motorboat safety

Canoe/kayak rescue skills

Emergency management

Food packing and proper storage

**Activity Milestones:**

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Deliver one "Level 3 - Channel Catfish" Water Safety & Leadership Courses in 2026	October 31, 2026
Deliver two "Level 3 - Channel Catfish" Water Safety & Leadership Courses	October 31, 2027

## Activity 6: Curriculum, and course planning

**Activity Budget:** \$12,000

### Activity Description:

Develop curriculum for the four levels, and plan each individual offering (33 total)

This will be an ongoing activity throughout the life of the project.

### Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Develop a curriculum and plan for each of the four levels	July 31, 2026

## Activity 7: Marketing, communication, follow-up correspondence, surveys, etc.

**Activity Budget:** \$15,000

### Activity Description:

This activity involves marketing our course offerings, and tracking enrollment throughout. Additionally, this activity will send follow-up surveys, throughout the two year lifespan of this project.

### Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Advertise the course types and dates to a wide audience	July 31, 2026
Track enrollment as each course gets delivered, and create running totals throughout project.	September 30, 2027
Send out 1-year follow up surveys to all participants	October 31, 2027

## Project Partners and Collaborators

Name	Organization	Role	Receiving Funds
Stephen Walker	Quapaw Canoe Company	Lead Canoe Instructor	Yes
Devin Brown	Paddle Share LLC/ Mississippi Park Connection	Community Programs Director	Yes
Theo Byrnes	Paddle Bridge	Owner Operator	Yes
Amber Lynum	Paddle Bridge	Lead River Guide/ Marketing	Yes
Kalen Keir	Paddle Bridge	Manager/ Lead River Guide	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?**

These trainings and their results will produce a replicable and data driven model to create an ambitious lasting impact on outdoor recreation in Minnesota. The Communications manager will track participation during the program. At the one year mark, after the program the survey results will be tracked.

## Project Manager and Organization Qualifications

**Project Manager Name:** Alexander Keilty

**Job Title:** Owner/Operator

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

Growing up in the BWCA, I have guided canoe and kayak trips in midwest and Canada, commercial guiding sea kayak tours in Alaska and the Pacific Northwest. I've has guided since the beginning with Broken Paddle going back to 2012. Part of the founding ownership group of Broken Paddle Guiding company I've trained dozens of guides in paddling, guiding, being an naturalist of the Mississippi River and other waterways of SE Minnesota.

More recently, I have worked for environmental advocacy organizations centered on aquatic health. Much of my work at the Lake Pepin Legacy Alliance was funded by federal and state grants, and the work I performed had to adhere to scoping and timing parameters depicted in the grant.

Certifications: First Aid/CPR, WFR, ACA Level 3, Swift Water Safety Tech,

**Organization:** Broken Paddle Guiding

**Organization Description:**

Broken Paddle Guiding is an eco-tourism company located on the Mississippi River in Wabasha, Minnesota. Broken Paddle Guiding offers guided scenic canoe, kayak, and paddleboard tours in the gentle backwaters of the Mississippi River. We believe that the Mississippi River is a cherished and valuable resource, and we pride ourselves on our deep understanding of the unique flora and fauna the river supports. Our goal is for our guests to leave with a newfound appreciation for the Mississippi River and with increased knowledge about the plants, birds, turtles, snakes, and other living creatures that call the backwaters home.

## Budget Summary

Category / Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Purpose	Gen. Ineligible	% Benefits	# FTE	Classified Staff?	\$ Amount
<b>Personnel</b>								
Lead Canoe Instructor		Leads canoe water safety courses			0%	0.4		\$20,000
Lead Kayak Instructor		Leads Kayak water safety courses			0%	0.4		\$20,000
Assistant Canoe Instructor		Assists in canoe water safety courses			0%	0.4		\$15,000
Assistant Kayak Instructor		Assists in kayak water safety courses			0%	0.4		\$15,000
Lead Kayak Instructor 2		Leads kayak water safety courses			0%	0.4		\$20,000
Assistant Kayak Instructor 2		Assists in kayak water safety courses			0%	0.4		\$15,000
Program Manager		Oversee program administration and grant management			29.5%	0.5		\$20,000
Operations manager		Oversee curriculum development, program implementation, evaluation			25%	0.5		\$15,000
Communication Manager		Develop and manage outreach materials, manage media campaigns, collaborate with participating partners, deliver surveys to participants, tracks participation			25%	0.5		\$15,000
Youth Assistant Kayak Instructor		Assists in kayak water safety courses			0%	0.4		\$12,000
							<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>\$167,000</b>
<b>Contracts and Services</b>								
Paddle Bridge	Subaward	Use of Kayaks, Paddles, Lifejackets, and other safety equipment for training				0.1		\$3,000
Paddle Bridge	Service Contract	ACA Level 2 Certifications for Staff Training				0.1		\$2,000
Paddle Bridge	Service Contract	Run 5 "Level 0 - Minnow" classes in 2026 (Classroom days, intro to paddling)				1		\$2,500
Paddle Bridge	Service Contract	Run 10 "Level 0 - Minnow" classes in 2027 (Classroom days, intro to paddling)				1		\$5,000



Paddle Bridge	Service Contract	ACA Level 1 Certifications for Ambassadors. Certification given during Level 3 classes.				0.1		\$2,000
Paddle Bridge	Service Contract	Run 3 "Level 1 - Lake Trout" Lake paddling classes in 2026				0.1		\$5,000
Paddle Bridge	Service Contract	Run 6 "Level 1 - Lake Trout" Lake paddling classes in 2027				0.1		\$10,000
							<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>\$29,500</b>
<b>Equipment, Tools, and Supplies</b>								
							<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Capital Expenditures</b>								
							<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Acquisitions and Stewardship</b>								
							<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Travel In Minnesota</b>								
	Conference Registration Miles/ Meals/ Lodging	Broken Paddle Guiding Company - 3 day Mississippi River Training	Become experts of Mississippi River navigation. Reading water, safety equipment, barge safety, radio, Locks & Dams.					\$8,000
	Miles/ Meals/ Lodging	Travel to get to the trainings						\$1,000
							<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>\$9,000</b>
<b>Travel Outside Minnesota</b>								
	Conference Registration Miles/ Meals/ Lodging	American Canoe Association - Level 2 Certifications for instructors	Train 6-10 instructors to become ACA level 2 certified.					\$3,000
							<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>\$3,000</b>
<b>Printing and Publication</b>								

	Printing	Course Calendar / Pamphlet	Create a handout with all of our class listings and dates. To post online, and hand out to participants.					\$1,500
							<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>\$1,500</b>
<b>Other Expenses</b>								
							<b>Sub Total</b>	-
							<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>\$210,000</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	-

Total Project Cost: \$210,000

This amount accurately reflects total project cost?

Yes

## Attachments

### Required Attachments

#### *Visual Component*

File: [0265a6d5-857.pdf](#)

#### *Alternate Text for Visual Component*

Course Pamphlet, and Instructor and Partnership Descriptions...

#### *Financial Capacity*

Title	File
2023 State Tax Return	<a href="#">1e2934e4-b95.pdf</a>
2023 Federal Tax Return	<a href="#">f7e92207-301.pdf</a>
Lien Disclosure	<a href="#">3bb37c0c-04d.pdf</a>
Evidence of Good Standing with the Secretary of State	<a href="#">5d3eec12-b4e.pdf</a>

#### *Board Resolution or Letter*

Title	File
Board Resolution	<a href="#">9b84acae-0cd.docx</a>

### Supplemental Attachments

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

Title	File
Mississippi River Network Letter of Support	<a href="#">22172866-dbe.pdf</a>
Support Letter from Migizi Communications and Angie Tillges	<a href="#">264253c4-621.pdf</a>
Support Letter from Friends of The Mississippi River	<a href="#">ecd4b7b3-6a4.pdf</a>
Support Letter from Mississippi Watershed Management Org	<a href="#">f9fd1315-83e.pdf</a>

## 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?**

Yes, I understand the Commissioner's Plan applies.

**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?**

No

**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?**

Yes

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

Jay Eidsness and Alex Keilty from Broken Paddle Guiding, Stephen Walker of Quapaw Canoe Company, Devin Brown of Paddle Share LLC, Theo Byrnes, Kalen Keir and Amber Lynum from Paddle Bridge,

**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