



# Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

2027 Request for Proposal

## General Information

**Proposal ID:** 2027-166

**Proposal Title:** Improving Access to Recreational Trails at Eagle Bluff

## Project Manager Information

**Name:** Colleen Foehrenbacher

**Organization:** Eagle Bluff Environmental Learning Center

**Office Telephone:** (507) 467-2714

**Email:** colleenf@eaglebluffmn.org

## Project Basic Information

**Project Summary:** Improve and increase the use, safety and educational value of Eagle Bluff's campus trail system through accessible design and trail/trailhead improvements.

**ENRTF Funds Requested:** \$32,000

**Proposed Project Completion:** June 30, 2029

**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): 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.**

Each year, over 10,000 students, families, educators, and public visitors utilize the 14 miles of trails in and around Eagle Bluff for environmental education, recreation, and personal enjoyment. These trails extend across Eagle Bluff property as well as adjacent state forest land leased by Eagle Bluff from the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, creating an impressive network of trails in SE Minnesota known as the "Driftless." This creates a unique opportunity to provide high-quality outdoor access on both private nonprofit and public lands. In addition, a 2-mile section of Eagle Bluff has been designated as a part of the Minnesota Driftless Hiking Trail, a 100 mile backpacking trail being developed in SE Minnesota. Through surveys and informal feedback, visitors to our campus have shared that trail navigation is challenging and that there are missed opportunities to educate the public about the land and ecosystems the trails pass through.

### **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.**

To address these challenges, Eagle Bluff will implement a comprehensive set of improvements focused on navigation, education, and accessibility across its trail system. Clear, user-friendly signage and updated trail map designs will help visitors orient themselves more easily and confidently explore the trail network. Way-finding signs will be installed at key junctions, while interpretive signage along trails on the Eagle Bluff campus and the surrounding Brightsdale Forestry Unit that Eagle Bluff leases will highlight local landscapes, habitats, and ecological processes, transforming the trails into outdoor learning experiences. A trail head Kiosk will be installed adding a third, central point of access to the trail system in an area of high foot-traffic.

In addition, trail infrastructure will be enhanced to better serve visitors with a broader range of physical abilities. These improvements include adding Class 5 gravel at trail heads and limited-mobility trails to create firmer, more navigable surfaces; adding safety railings at buildings and viewing areas; and placing seating at natural resting points along the trails. Together, these solutions will create a safer, more accessible, and more educational trail system that better meets the needs of all 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?**

This project will protect and enhance Minnesota's natural resources by improving how people access and use the trail system. Clear signage and trail maps will help visitors stay on designated routes, reducing erosion and damage to sensitive areas. Interpretive signage will provide practical education about local ecosystems, encouraging responsible use and stewardship. Improved trail surfaces, seating, and safety features will expand access for people with a wider range of physical abilities. Overall, the project increases safe, inclusive recreation while highlighting and reinforcing the value of conservation, preservation, and long-term care of Minnesota's natural resources.

## Activities and Milestones

### Activity 1: Add wayfinding and interpretive signage to trails on the Eagle Bluff campus and surrounding Brightsdale Forestry Unit.

**Activity Budget:** \$20,000

**Activity Description:**

This project will install a new Trailhead Kiosk, approximately 50 wayfinding maps/signs, and seven interpretive signs across roughly 14 miles of trails on the Eagle Bluff campus and the surrounding Brightsdale Forestry Unit that Eagle Bluff leases from the MN DNR for education and recreation. The Trailhead Kiosk will establish a third, formal access point to the trail system, located in a high-visibility area with substantial foot traffic. This location provides direct access to existing accessible parking and elevator, connecting visitors to lower-trail features, including a captive wildlife viewing area.

**Activity Milestones:**

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Construct Trailhead Kiosk to match two existing Trailhead Kiosks.	June 30, 2028
Order and install wayfinding signs.	June 30, 2028
Order and install interpretive signs.	October 31, 2028

### Activity 2: Improve trail infrastructure to improve access and aid in navigation for a broader range of physical abilities.

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

**Activity Description:**

Eagle Bluff will improve trail infrastructure to expand access and enhance navigation for visitors with a broader range of physical abilities. This activity focuses on reducing physical barriers at key entry points and along select trail segments to support safer, more inclusive outdoor experiences. Approximately 160 cubic yards of Class Five crushed limestone will be added at trailheads and along limited-mobility trails to create firmer, more stable surfaces that improve traction and ease of movement for wheelchairs and walkers.

Seating will be added at overlooks and natural rest points along the trail system, providing opportunities for rest, reflection, and extended participation in outdoor activities. Where needed, ADA-compliant handrails will be installed outside key buildings and outdoor viewing areas to enhance safety and confidence.

**Activity Milestones:**

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Add 160 c.y of Class Five crushed limestone at trailheads and limited mobility trail.	July 31, 2028
Add seating to overlooks and natural rest points.	October 31, 2028
Add ADA compliant handrails at trailhead building and other trail areas as needed.	May 31, 2029

## Project Partners and Collaborators

Name	Organization	Role	Receiving Funds
Alexa Shapiro	Minnesota Driftless Hiking Trail	Trail Director	No

## Dissemination

**Describe your plans for dissemination, presentation, documentation, or sharing of data, results, samples, physical collections, and other products and how they will follow ENRTF Acknowledgement Requirements and Guidelines.**

Project information and outcomes will be disseminated through on-site interpretive signage, on our three trailheads (including the new one) and Eagle Bluff's print and digital communications, including our website, newsletters, and social media. These materials will share information about the trail improvements, responsible trail use, and the ecological significance of the surrounding landscape to help visitors better understand and care for the area. All project signage, publications, and outreach materials will acknowledge support from the Minnesota Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund in accordance with ENRTF acknowledgment guidelines, including use of the Trust Fund logo.

## 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?**

Any future maintenance or replacement costs will be incurred by Eagle Bluff.

## Other ENRTF Appropriations Awarded in the Last Six Years

Name	Appropriation	Amount Awarded
Root River Habitat Restoration at Eagle Bluff	M.L. 2023, , Chp. 60, Art. 2, Sec. 2, Subd. 08c	\$866,000

## Project Manager and Organization Qualifications

**Project Manager Name:** Colleen Foehrenbacher

**Job Title:** Executive Director

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

Colleen Foehrenbacher has served as Executive Director for Eagle Bluff Environmental Learning Center since April of 2020. Before this, she served as Eagle Bluff's Deputy and Education Director for 3 years. While at Eagle Bluff Colleen has managed over 3 million dollars in grant projects including \$1,684,800 ENRTF funds with the following projects: "Expanding Raptor Center Online Education (sub-grantee)," "Root River Habitat Restoration Project," "Minnesota Driftless Hiking Trail (fiscal agent)," and "Outdoor School for Minnesota K-12 Students (sub-grantee)".

**Organization:** Eagle Bluff Environmental Learning Center

**Organization Description:**

Founded in 1978, Eagle Bluff is a private, non-profit overnight environmental learning center providing accredited outdoor education and recreation programs in the scenic bluff country near Lanesboro, Minnesota. Our mission is to empower people to care for the earth and each other. To accomplish our mission we offer these programs: K-12 Outdoor School Program, Environmental Education Fellowship, Nature Preschool, Summer Camps, and public recreation

opportunities. Our program objectives include:

- Fostering a sense of respect, stewardship and community,
- Imparting life skills such as teamwork and problem-solving,
- Increasing environmental awareness & academic literacy,
- Promoting positive outdoor experiences,
- Sparking curiosity and appreciation for the natural world

## Budget Summary

Category / Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Purpose	Gen. Ineligible	% Benefits	# FTE	Classified Staff?	\$ Amount
<b>Personnel</b>								
Eagle Bluff Maintenance Team		Sign Installation (125 hours at \$32/hour)			0%	0.03		\$4,000
Eagle Bluff Maintenance Team		Kiosk Construction and Installation (31 Hours @ \$32)			0%	0.02		\$1,000
							<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>\$5,000</b>
<b>Contracts and Services</b>								
							<b>Sub Total</b>	-
<b>Equipment, Tools, and Supplies</b>								
	Equipment	Sixty Trail Wayfinding Signs, including frames, posts and fasteners.	Improved trail access and navigation.					\$11,000
	Equipment	Seven Interpretive Signs, including frames, posts and fasteners.	Interpretation and education of unique natural features of the region and trail system.					\$3,000
	Equipment	160 cubic yards of Class Five Crushed Gravel	Create a firm and stable surface improving and expanding usability.					\$5,000
	Equipment	Five ADA-compliant trail seating	Provide opportunities for rest reflection and extended participation.					\$5,000
	Equipment	Three ADA-compliant handrails at trailhead and scenic areas.	Improve safety and access to nature-viewing experiences.					\$2,000
	Equipment	Trailhead Kiosk	Establishes a third, central point of access to the trail system.					\$1,000
							<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>\$27,000</b>
<b>Capital Equipment</b>								
							<b>Sub Total</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>\$32,000</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
<b>State</b>				
			<b>State Sub Total</b>	-
<b>Non-State</b>				
In-Kind	Eagle Bluff Environmental Learning Center	Map and Sign Design by Eagle Bluff staff	Secured	\$7,000
In-Kind	Eagle Bluff Environmental Learning Center	Application of gravel by maintenance team or volunteers	Secured	\$5,000
			<b>Non State Sub Total</b>	<b>\$12,000</b>
			<b>Funds Total</b>	<b>\$12,000</b>

**Total Project Cost: \$44,000**

**This amount accurately reflects total project cost?**

Yes

## Attachments

### Required Attachments

#### *Visual Component*

File: [7385d3c2-1c8.pdf](#)

#### *Alternate Text for Visual Component*

Current Campus Map with Proposed Grant Components...

#### *Financial Capacity*

Title	File
2024 990	<a href="#">fd60d69f-7e2.pdf</a>

#### *Board Resolution or Letter*

Title	File
Board Resolution	<a href="#">bdf87111-da8.pdf</a>
Board Letter of Support	<a href="#">f75b4649-cee.pdf</a>

### Supplemental Attachments

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

Title	File
Letter of Support: Lanesboro Area Chamber of Commerce	<a href="#">0beec438-cf0.pdf</a>
Letter of Support: Minnesota Driftless Hiking Trail	<a href="#">380712e4-3e4.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?**

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?**

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")?**

No

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

Colleen Foehrenbacher, Eagle Bluff ELC & Sara Sturgis, Eagle Bluff ELC

**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**

N/A