



Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

2027 Request for Proposal

General Information

Proposal ID: 2027-333

Proposal Title: Restoring Generational Connections to the St. Louis River

Project Manager Information

Name: Kris Eilers

Organization: St. Louis River Alliance

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Project Basic Information

Project Summary: Through community-tailored outreach, education and river-based activities we will connect generations of Duluth's underserved neighborhoods to the St. Louis River while fostering integration of indigenous traditional knowledge through collaboration.

ENRTF Funds Requested: \$404,000

Proposed Project Completion: June 30, 2030

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): NE

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.

The St. Louis River is the largest tributary to Lake Superior and has special significance to the region. The St. Louis River Estuary has been inhabited by Indigenous people for nearly 14,000 years and the river continues to be a significant cultural and natural resource. Unfortunately, unregulated polluting and neglect caused severe degradation and resulted in the St. Louis River Estuary Area of Concern (SLRAOC) designation in 1987. West Duluth river-adjacent neighborhoods have suffered disproportionately and several generations of river connections were lost due to limited access and legacy pollution. Though SLRAOC work has improved water quality, many residents still suffer poor health, economic disparities, and still have limited access and resources to experience quality outdoor activities. The St. Louis River Alliance has been building relationships with residents in these neighborhoods and is addressing the barriers and harm that still exist, including connecting people to Indigenous-led stories and teachings of traditional knowledge to transform the existing extractivism mindset into a deeper, reciprocal relationship with the land and water. This project advances equity and access and inspires stewardship by empowering residents to connect to the river in meaningful ways while being safe, strengthening community, and improving quality of life.

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 St. Louis River Estuary Area of Concern (SLRAOC) process has facilitated notable recovery of the river, eventually inspiring the process of, and official designation of the St. Louis River Estuary National Water Trail (NWT) in 2020 led by the City of Duluth and partners. The St. Louis River Alliance (SLRA) has been an official SLRAOC partner since 1989, providing community engagement and connection to the river. SLRA is managing the NWT as one of its core programs and is responsible for the implementation of the City of Duluth's National Water Trail Master Plan. A solid history of building relationships and strong partnerships along with recent insights will inform this project.

SLRA is seeking funding to strengthen the NWT program by facilitating the NWT Advisory Council, create a 5 year action plan, create and implement a communications plan to expand reach to 45,000 people locally and nationally, print and distribute 15,000 NWT maps, and promote a volunteer force to clean up 5 boat launches. This project will also increase access and equity by providing outreach and education, address ongoing barriers, provide meaningful river-based activities and gatherings that include indigenous-led storytelling and teachings and will directly impact 6000 people.

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?

Strengthening NWT program: Enhance natural resource-based recreation and increase awareness for St. Louis River habitat preservation. Action plan development will identify strategies to support improved access and understanding of outdoor recreation opportunities.

Increased access and equity: Building relationships and addressing barriers while incorporating Traditional Indigenous Knowledge and the Ojibwe language to enhance inclusivity and integrate cultural perspectives. Together this builds stronger communities, increases quality of life, fosters lifelong stewardship, and greater protection for the river.

Activities and Milestones

Activity 1: Strengthening the National Water Trail program to expand reach to 60,000 people regionally and nationally.

Activity Budget: \$180,000

Activity Description:

SLRA will facilitate the NWT advisory council bi-monthly (17 times). The council is made up of representatives from the City of Duluth, City of Superior, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Spirit Lake Marina, Isaak Walton League, University of Minnesota Duluth Recreational Sports Outdoor Program, Minnesota Land Trust, Duluth Power Squadron, Minnesota Seagrant, Wisconsin Seagrant, Lake Superior Reserve, and Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa. Meeting minutes will be stored digitally. This council has been in operation since 2018 to act as a working group to advise and implement the City of Duluth National Water Trail Master Plan. Under the guidance of the council, SLRA will create a 5-year action plan, create and implement a communications plan to expand reach to 45,000 people locally and nationally using social media, website updates, e-newsletter. Outcomes will be tracked using online analytics. We will design, print and distribute 15,000 NWT maps add the digital maps to website, and promote and manage a volunteer force of 15 people per year to empty monofilament recycling bins and clean up trash at 5 boat launches from May-September each year.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Create and Implement a Communications plan	December 31, 2027
Create a 5 Year Action Plan	June 30, 2028
Design, print 15000 NWT Maps and include Ojibwe place names	June 30, 2029
Manage volunteer force of 15 per year to clean up trash and empty monofilament bins	June 30, 2030
Convene NWT Advisory Council bi monthly through grant period. (17 times)	June 30, 2030

Activity 2: Increase access and equity by providing education, resources, river-based experiences to impact 6000 people directly.

Activity Budget: \$224,000

Activity Description:

SLRA will increase access and equity by building relationships, providing education, resources, and river-based experiences while integrating Indigenous storytelling and teachings with Indigenous partners. The St. Louis River Alliance will focus on the Duluth underserved river-adjacent neighborhoods. We will plan and hold river-based activities such as kayaking, canoeing, birding, plant identification, storytelling, safety and navigation to directly connect 1200 people to the river, provide resources and address barriers. We will conduct gatherings in Duluth river neighborhoods to create a safe space for personal connections to share stories, educate about river access, estuary ecology, and safety to build closer relationships with 300 people. We will table at local outreach events such as Harvest Fest, Lake Superior Days, Lester Park Elementary Science night, Ganawenjigewin Maawanji'idiwin at Fond du Lac to bring awareness to the National Water Trail, and create and disseminate 600 brochures and 600 rack cards to reach 4500 people. Attendance and reach will be documented on spreadsheets using registration and attendance records, and face to face counts at outreach events using a clicker and sign-up sheets.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
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Plan and hold river-based activities integrating indigenous-led teachings	June 30, 2030
Conduct gatherings to create a safe space for building personal connections within focus communities.	June 30, 2030
Table at local outreach events to bring awareness to NWT and disseminate educational materials.	June 30, 2030

Project Partners and Collaborators

Name	Organization	Role	Receiving Funds
Allison Brooks	City of Duluth	The City of Duluth manages physical infrastructure associated with the National Water Trail in collaboration with the St. Louis River Alliance. The City will support implementation of the proposed project including providing restoration or facility enhancement details, sharing outreach materials, publicizing events and activities, and participating in the Advisory Council.	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.

Resources created such as the NWT map, printed brochures and rack cards will be disseminated during the grant period state-wide and some nationally at outreach events and activities, stores, outfitters, and organizations for free to the public. These same materials will be digitally uploaded and available on SLRA NWT website in the future for ease of use and access to the public.

Training materials created, planning tools created will be stored physically and digitally to be used by the SLRA and NWT Advisory Council into the future and shared with partners freely. SLRA will follow acknowledgement guidelines in presentations, printed materials, and other communications and outreach as required.

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 program will be fully implemented within the grant term. Resources, planning tools, website, and materials from the grant will continue to be used by SLRA and partners for to engage and connect people to the river, to strengthen the National Water Trail and will help build financial sustainability of the NWT program. Private funds have been invested are currently being investigated for the future. The partnerships and relationships built, as well as skills and knowledge gained by community members will provide a foundation for ongoing volunteer support of environmental education and watershed conservation.

Project Manager and Organization Qualifications

Project Manager Name: Kris Eilers

Job Title: Executive Director

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

Kris Eilers has over 30 years of management, including specific project management experience and has been the Executive Director of the St. Louis River Alliance (SLRA) for 13 years.

In this capacity she has secured funding, managed grant budgets, hired and managed staff, and project plans and deliverables.

Kris has secured, managed, and successfully completed more than 40 grants totaling over \$1.6 million. The focus of these grants has been to connect people to the St. Louis River through education, outreach, and recreation. Several of the grants were habitat projects, including planting wild rice, managing invasive species, habitat maintenance for the Great Lakes Piping Plover, and providing citizen input into the Area of Concern Process.

Most recently, the SLRA has been working with the City of Duluth and Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) and Minnesota Land Trust to provide education, awareness of the St. Louis River Estuary while building relationships in the

underserved neighborhoods of Western Duluth. This project has helped connect more than 2500 people directly to the river through meaningful activities while addressing many of the barriers they said they were experiencing. The project has helped SLRA facilitate the National Water Trail Council to implement the City of Duluth National Water Trail Master Plan and manage the St. Louis River Estuary National Water Trail.

Kris has been working with Duluth and Superior partnerships for 14 years in collaboration to expand education and outreach, provide community engagement for Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, and the Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa, as well as for the City of Duluth and the City of Superior.

Organization: St. Louis River Alliance

Organization Description:

The St. Louis River Alliance (SLRA) is a membership, non-profit organization in operation since 1996. As river stewards we are a voice of the river, working together to protect, restore and enhance the St. Louis River.

As the original Citizens Action Committee for the Area of Concern (AOC) , we provide hands-on experiences and resources to inspire stewardship. Because of the success of the AOC work, the river is slowly recovering and the recreational opportunities are expanding. The SLRA manages the St. Louis River Estuary National Water Trail as one of it's programs and that has become the recent avenue by which we have provided thousands of people meaningful river-based experiences, all while providing the education and resources to reduce barriers that folks who have been historically cut off from the river are experiencing. In addition to being an AOC partner for over 3 decades, the SLRA collaborates with over 50 partners within the region and is known as the oldest, most sought after and respected resource for community engagement. In the last 5 years the SLRA has re-imagined community engagement through more authentic listening, resulting in increased equity and inclusion. Our work increases quality of life and fosters environmental stewardship.

Budget Summary

Category / Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Purpose	Gen. Ineligible	% Benefits	# FTE	Classified Staff?	\$ Amount
Personnel								
Project Coordinator		Responsible for planning and coordinating events, managing part time neighborhood leader, plan and conduct outreach, carry out communications plan, facilitating advisory council meetings and successfully implement outcomes. Create and manage volunteer force. Reports, staff communications.			36%	3		\$206,720
Grant Administer		Track budget and finance, purchase supplies, invoices and reports, hiring oversight, human resources.			36%	0.24		\$23,120
Program Manager		Hire, train, oversight of project coordinator and program, monitor outcome, oversee and support outreach and events, oversight of communications plan and development of 5-year action plan, help instruct and direct website and social media.			36%	0.42		\$34,000
Neighborhood Leader		Work to build relationships within river-adjacent communities and one on one conversations, support and attend outreach events and activities, recommend ways to reach community members and best serve them. Information and map dissemination.			19%	1.68		\$91,630
							Sub Total	\$355,470
Contracts and Services								
TBD	Service Contract	Equipment Rental and delivery for outdoor sports events and activities				0.3		\$9,000
TBD	Service Contract	Professional instruction for outdoor sports activities and events				0.06		\$5,000
TBD	Service Contract	Safety Training for staff for outdoor sports				0.15		\$2,000
							Sub Total	\$16,000
Equipment, Tools, and Supplies								

	Tools and Supplies	Hand tools and clean-up supplies, outreach supplies	boat launch clean-ups, monofilament recycling bin maintenance, safety items, outreach supplies for events					\$3,555
	Tools and Supplies	Healthy Snacks	Healthy snacks for outreach events and outdoor activities that are not generally available for participants and in outdoor spaces					\$2,000
							Sub Total	\$5,555
Capital Equipment								
							Sub Total	-
Acquisitions and Stewardship								
							Sub Total	-
Travel In Minnesota								
	Miles/ Meals/ Lodging	Year 1: 1500 miles for 3 people at projected rate of .73=\$1095, Year 2: 2000 miles for 3 people at .735=\$1470, Year 3: 1500 miles for 3 people at .74=\$1110.	Travel to plan events and activities, travel to hold events and activities and outreach, travel to meet with community members, travel to disseminate information and distribute maps.					\$3,675
	Conference Registration Miles/ Meals/ Lodging	2 conference registrations per year for 2 people and meals	attend and present at conferences, meals					\$1,000
							Sub Total	\$4,675
Travel Outside Minnesota								
							Sub Total	-
Printing and Publication								
	Printing	15000 National Water Trail Maps in year 2	National Water trail maps provide navigation route information, safety and other resources, and access points.					\$11,000

			They include important historical and cultural information about the St. Louis River Estuary. They are intended for wide distribution locally and statewide as well as some national.					
	Printing	600 Brochures and 600 rack cards	resources and safety information about the National Water Trail to disseminate to the public at events					\$1,000
							Sub Total	\$12,000
Other Expenses								
		Stipends	Stipends for Indigenous partners/storytellers and other teachers for activities and events.					\$6,000
		Venue Rental and Permits, and fees for 30 outreach events and activities	Outdoor activities on city property require permits. Rental for park pavilions and community centers, venues for community engagement, and fees for participating in outreach events.					\$3,000
		Professional Design	Design NWT Map					\$1,300
							Sub Total	\$10,300
							Grand Total	\$404,000

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	Volunteer in-kind	Volunteers: NWT advisory council (10 people x 54 hrs@\$38.16)	Pending	\$20,606
In-Kind	Volunteers in kind	Volunteer labor hours to clean up boat landings and support events and activities. (450 hours @ \$38.16)	Potential	\$17,172
			Non State Sub Total	\$37,778
			Funds Total	\$37,778

Total Project Cost: \$441,778

This amount accurately reflects total project cost?

Yes

Attachments

Required Attachments

Visual Component

File: [6550b601-4f2.pdf](#)

Alternate Text for Visual Component

Photo of Full Moon Event with Ojibwe Story-telling, Photo of Wild rice planting with volunteers, Map Graphic to show project area in Duluth...

Financial Capacity

Title	File
SLRA Assumed Name Business Registration	3883f977-b76.pdf
CAC Business Registration	608fa26f-dfa.pdf
2024 990 St. Louis River Alliance	4cfc96f3-0c6.pdf

Board Resolution or Letter

Title	File
SLRA board resolution signed	e2f177a1-ae8.pdf

Supplemental Attachments

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

Title	File
UMD RSOP letter of support 2026	289f71a6-871.pdf
Mn Seagrant letter of support 2026	f88061dd-6fa.pdf
City of Duluth letter of support 2026	6ab410eb-678.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?

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")?

No

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

Allison Brooks, City of Duluth

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