



Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

2027 Request for Proposal

General Information

Proposal ID: 2027-552

Proposal Title: Blue Ox Connection ATV Trail

Project Manager Information

Name: Tom Dougherty

Organization: Voyageur Country ATV

Office Telephone: (218) 244-5606

Email: rlhtom.63@gmail.com

Project Basic Information

Project Summary: Planning and preliminary engineering for an approximately 4.6-mile ATV trail connecting Ericsburg to the Blue Ox State Trail, building on a completed EAW and including studies, borings, and coordination.

ENRTF Funds Requested: \$100,000

Proposed Project Completion: October 31, 2028

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): NE

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

Region(s): NE

When will the work impact occur?

During the Project

Narrative

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

The area surrounding Ericsburg in Koochiching County currently lacks a designated ATV trail connection to the Blue Ox State Trail, creating a gap in the region's motorized recreation network. While the Blue Ox State Trail serves as an important recreational corridor, ATV riders in the Ericsburg area do not have a safe or direct route to access the system. This limits the usability of existing trail infrastructure and reduces the effectiveness of prior state investments in regional trail development.

The need for improved connectivity has been identified by the Voyageur Country ATV Club through its Koochiching County ATV Trail Plan. The club's mission is to build safe, sustainable ATV trails that connect communities while protecting natural resources. The plan outlines priority trail segments intended to link communities such as International Falls, Ranier, Littlefork, and Big Falls while expanding access to Minnesota's Arrowhead Region trail system.

Without a planned trail connection, riders often rely on indirect routes or road shoulders to move between trail segments, creating safety concerns and limiting recreational access. Addressing this gap provides an opportunity to strengthen regional trail connectivity while ensuring any future trail development is carefully planned to avoid sensitive resources and minimize environmental impacts.

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 is to complete the planning and preliminary engineering needed to establish a new approximately 4.6-mile ATV trail connecting the Ericsburg area to the Blue Ox State Trail in Koochiching County. This work builds upon a completed Environmental Assessment Worksheet (EAW), which took approximately 1.5 years to complete, and will further refine a feasible and environmentally responsible route while preparing the project for final design and construction.

Funding is requested to support a comprehensive set of technical studies and coordination efforts required before trail development can move forward, including wetland delineations, archaeological review, geotechnical borings, route coordination with state and local agencies, pre-permitting, and preliminary engineering. These activities will identify environmental constraints, evaluate soil and drainage conditions, and confirm regulatory requirements that could affect trail construction.

Completing this work will produce a preferred trail alignment, preliminary design information, and cost estimates that reduce uncertainty and guide future investment decisions. It will also ensure the trail avoids sensitive natural resources and meets state development standards.

This effort will position the project to move efficiently into final design and construction, improving safe access to the regional trail network and supporting long-term recreational opportunities in northern Minnesota.

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 conserve Minnesota's natural resources by completing early environmental review and planning before trail construction. Wetland delineations, archaeological review, geotechnical borings, and agency coordination will identify and avoid sensitive resources, minimize impacts, and ensure regulatory compliance. Pre-permitting and preliminary engineering will allow the trail to be designed within appropriate corridors, reducing habitat disturbance and erosion risks. By addressing environmental constraints upfront, the project preserves natural landscapes while enabling a sustainable, well-planned trail connection that enhances public access to outdoor recreation without compromising ecological integrity.

Activities and Milestones

Activity 1: Environmental and Archaeological Review, Resource Evaluation

Activity Budget: \$25,000

Activity Description:

The objective of this activity is to identify environmental constraints and protect sensitive natural and cultural resources along the proposed 4.6-mile trail corridor. Tasks include wetland delineations, archaeological review, and agency coordination. Work will be completed through field investigations and consultation with state and federal agencies. Outputs include environmental documentation and avoidance recommendations, which will guide alignment decisions and minimize impacts to wetlands, habitat, and cultural resources. Outcomes will be evaluated through agency concurrence and regulatory acceptance.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Environmental field investigations completed	October 31, 2027
Agency coordination and route concurrence	October 31, 2027

Activity 2: Preliminary Engineering and Feasibility Analysis

Activity Budget: \$75,000

Activity Description:

The objective is to determine a buildable, environmentally responsible trail alignment. Tasks include geotechnical borings, route evaluation, pre-permitting, and preliminary engineering. These tasks will be completed using field data, engineering analysis, and coordination with regulatory agencies. Outputs include preliminary plans, cost estimates, and feasibility documentation. These products will reduce construction risk, support future funding applications, and ensure the project is ready for final design. Evaluation will be based on completeness of deliverables and readiness for next-phase implementation.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Geotechnical borings and preliminary engineering	July 31, 2028
Pre-permitting documentation completed	August 31, 2028
Final planning and engineering deliverables completed	October 31, 2028

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.

Results from this project will be shared with project partners, land managers, and state agencies to ensure the information is used to support responsible trail development and natural resource protection. Project findings, including environmental review documentation, route evaluation materials, and preliminary engineering products, will be shared with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Voyageur Country ATV Club members, local governments, and regulatory agencies involved in trail planning and management.

Project results will be used to inform future design, permitting, and construction decisions, helping agencies and partners avoid sensitive resources, minimize environmental impacts, and manage the trail corridor sustainably. Final documentation will be retained by the Voyageur Country ATV Club and project partners for long-term use in future funding applications and project implementation.

Public awareness will be supported through updates shared by the Voyageur Country ATV Club via meetings, digital communications, and outreach to trail users and local communities. All applicable project materials, including digital content and future trail signage if applicable, will acknowledge the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund in accordance with ENRTF Acknowledgment Guidelines. These efforts ensure transparency, accessibility, and long-term value of ENRTF-supported planning work for Minnesotans.

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?

Project results will be implemented by using the completed environmental review, preliminary engineering, and permitting documentation to advance the trail into final design and construction. Findings will guide alignment decisions, resource avoidance measures, and cost estimates, ensuring a buildable, environmentally responsible project. The Voyageur Country ATV Club and project partners will use these products to pursue construction funding through future state, local, and grant programs, including ATV Dedicated Account funds. Any additional work, including final design and construction, will be funded through subsequent funding requests and partner contributions.

Project Manager and Organization Qualifications

Project Manager Name: Tom Dougherty

Job Title: Tom Dougherty

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

Tom Dougherty will serve as Project Manager for the Blue Ox Connection ATV Trail on behalf of the Voyageur County ATV Club. Tom has a long history of involvement with the Club and extensive hands on experience supporting the planning, development, and maintenance of ATV trail systems in northern Minnesota.

Through his work with the Voyageur County ATV Club, Tom has been directly involved in trail system coordination, including identifying priority trail connections, assisting with trail layout and improvements, coordinating volunteer efforts, and supporting ongoing trail stewardship activities. He has a strong working knowledge of the Blue Ox ATV Trail system and its role within the broader regional trail network, giving him practical insight into how this connection

functions for users and how improvements can be implemented effectively on the ground.

Tom's experience working closely with landowners, local partners, and agency staff has prepared him to manage the collaborative nature of this project. He understands the importance of clear communication, adherence to approved project scopes, and careful coordination to ensure trail work is completed safely and responsibly while protecting surrounding natural resources.

As Project Manager, Tom will oversee day to day project coordination, scheduling, and implementation; coordinate volunteer and contractor efforts as needed; and ensure work is completed consistent with approved plans and applicable standards. He will also be responsible for tracking project progress, documenting outcomes, and supporting required LCCMR reporting and reimbursement documentation.

Tom's deep familiarity with the Blue Ox Trail system, combined with his hands on trail management experience and commitment to responsible recreation, make him well qualified to successfully manage and deliver the Blue Ox Connection ATV Trail project.

Organization: Voyageur Country ATV

Organization Description:

The Voyageur County ATV Club is a local, volunteer-based organization dedicated to the development, maintenance, and responsible use of ATV trail systems in northern Minnesota. The Club works to expand high-quality recreational opportunities while promoting safe riding practices, environmental stewardship, and cooperation among trail users, landowners, and public partners.

The Club plays an active role in supporting the Blue Ox ATV Trail system and its regional connections by assisting with trail planning, maintenance coordination, signage, and long-term stewardship. Through volunteer efforts and partnerships with local governments, land managers, and state agencies, the Voyageur County ATV Club helps ensure that ATV trails are well-maintained, clearly marked, and sustainably managed for public use.

The Club's mission is to enhance outdoor recreation access while protecting natural resources and supporting local communities through trail-based tourism and economic activity. Its work emphasizes responsible recreation, user education, and collaboration to balance recreational demand with environmental protection.

By leveraging local knowledge, volunteer capacity, and strong partnerships, the Voyageur County ATV Club serves as an effective steward of ATV trail infrastructure and a committed partner in delivering projects that provide lasting public recreational benefits.

Budget Summary

Category / Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Purpose	Gen. Ineligible	% Benefits	# FTE	Classified Staff?	\$ Amount
Personnel								
							Sub Total	-
Contracts and Services								
Engineer hired through a competitive process	Service Contract	The engineering firm will complete preliminary engineering, pre-permitting, and agency coordination, including wetland delineations, archaeological review, and geotechnical investigations, to support feasibility, refine the trail alignment, and prepare the project for final design and construction.				12		\$100,000
							Sub Total	\$100,000
Equipment, Tools, and Supplies								
							Sub Total	-
Capital Equipment								
							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	\$100,000

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				
Cash	Other Local Funds	Voyageur Country ATV Club is committed to providing the full required match, demonstrating strong local support and investment in the project. The required 25% match will support project planning and engineering activities, including wetland delineations, archaeological review, geotechnical investigations, agency coordination, pre-permitting, and preliminary engineering, building upon the previously completed Environmental Assessment Worksheet (EAW).	Secured	\$33,350
			Non State Sub Total	\$33,350
			Funds Total	\$33,350

Total Project Cost: \$133,350

This amount accurately reflects total project cost?

Yes

Attachments

Required Attachments

Visual Component

File: [5b2d1f83-7e5.pdf](#)

Alternate Text for Visual Component

The graphic presents a map of the proposed approximately 4.6-mile Blue Ox Connection ATV Trail in Koochiching County, illustrating the planned alignment linking the Ericsburg area to the Blue Ox State Trail, along with nearby roadways and existing trail corridors....

Financial Capacity

Title	File
St. Louis County - 2024 Audit	2a528d37-870.pdf
St. Louis County - 2024 Annual Financial Report	746ea0e4-056.pdf
Voyageur Country ATV - Evidence of Good Standing	a40aacc3-1e2.pdf
Voyageur Country ATV - IRS Form 990	c03a0c51-8e5.pdf

Board Resolution or Letter

Title	File
2027-552 St Louis County fiscal agent resolution_received 04-01-26	e29d89c9-c5b.pdf
Resolution - Note	02dc5605-1b3.pdf
VCATV Applicant Letter	8b756582-321.pdf
St. Louis County Board Letter_Resolution - Pending	c76d1ab7-661.pdf
ATVJPB Resolution	7a087fc5-bca.pdf

Supplemental Attachments

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

Title	File
Capital Construction Project Questionnaire	19d37768-842.pdf
Capital Construction Project Budget Addendum	f55df519-23d.pdf
Voyageur Country ATV 2025 Trail Plan	38403162-970.pdf
Letter of Support - Koochiching EDA	1df4bc41-2c8.pdf
Letter of Support - Convention and Visitors Bureau	8cc516a5-83b.pdf
Letter of Support - City of Northome	0017e7ba-029.pdf
Letter of Support - City of International Falls	5b94738f-5f2.pdf
Letter of Support - Koochiching County	23ff12ce-79f.pdf
Letter of Support - City of Ranier	879c396d-7dc.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?

Yes, St. Louis County

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")?

No

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

Jason Chopp, PE - Short Elliott Hendrickson, Inc. (SEH)

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