



# Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

2027 Request for Proposal

## General Information

**Proposal ID:** 2027-565

**Proposal Title:** Connecting Minnesota Youth to the Lake Superior Watershed

## Project Manager Information

**Name:** Amy Demmer

**Organization:** Hartley Nature Center

**Office Telephone:** (218) 724-6735

**Email:** director@hartleynature.org

## Project Basic Information

**Project Summary:** Engage 8,400 Minnesota youth in hands-on watershed education, including co-designed programs specifically for underserved youth, and develop interpretive and inclusive materials supporting understanding of Lake Superior ecosystem and restoration.

**ENRTF Funds Requested:** \$486,000

**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, NW, Central,

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

Region(s): NE, NW, Central,

**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.**

Hartley Nature Center (HNC) began providing high-quality experiential programming in 1987 at Duluth's Hartley Park, a 660-acre park and designated natural area with the largest contiguous stretch of the Tischer Creek watershed, which is cold-water trout stream tributary to Lake Superior. Significant public investment at the federal, state, and local levels has supported watershed restoration and water quality improvement projects including culvert replacement to improve habitat connectivity and fish passage, extensive stormwater treatment infrastructure, and stream restoration. These projects provide highly visible examples of natural resources protection and enhancement. However, there is a missing link between restoration efforts and public engagement and understanding.

The extensive investments in natural resources at Hartley Park provide vital ecological and community benefits. Barriers to understanding and enjoying these benefits include program fees, appropriate supplies, and capacity constraints. Additionally, the current interpretive materials do not reflect these recent restoration efforts or the cultural or ecological importance of the watershed. Roughly 200,000 people visit Hartley Park each year, representing an important opportunity for expanding understanding and creating meaningful connections to restoration efforts. Expanding experiential education capacity and addressing prohibitive barriers will help Minnesotans better understand and steward these natural resources.

### **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.**

This project will support experiential environmental education and public learning focused on the Lake Superior watershed through three integrated strategies.

First, Hartley Nature Center (HNC) will provide immersive watershed education field trips for Minnesota students. Each year, approximately 70 field trips will bring students to Hartley Park for hands-on exploration of watershed science, including water quality testing, aquatic biodiversity studies, and investigations of forest and stream ecosystems.

Second, the project will deliver programming to underserved youth that have historically faced barriers to access outdoor spaces. HNC will partner with youth-serving agencies to co-design education tailored to the specific needs of their kids. Joy-based programming builds confidence and familiarity outdoors while introducing watershed science and natural resource stewardship.

Third, the project will create new environmental interpretation and interactive materials to highlight the Lake Superior ecosystem, Tischer Creek watershed restoration efforts, and the interconnectedness of forest and stream health. Content will include Ojibwemowin language and cultural context developed in consultation with cultural advisors. The project will also develop video lessons, with captioning for hearing impaired audiences, to augment experiential learning.

By connecting Minnesotans directly to the landscapes where restoration is occurring, the project builds understanding of how to protect local natural resources.

### **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 engage 8,400 Minnesota youth in hands-on environmental education focused on the Lake Superior watershed and trout stream ecosystems to expand understanding of watershed processes, aquatic biodiversity, and the importance of protecting clean water and healthy habitats. New interpretive materials about the protection and enhancement of natural resources will incorporate cultural history, Ojibwemowin language, and multi-media formats to expand educational opportunities for approximately 200,000 annual visitors to Hartley Park.

These outcomes strengthen environmental literacy, increase access to outdoor learning, and inspire long-term stewardship of Minnesota’s resources.

## Activities and Milestones

**Activity 1: Provide experiential watershed education field trips connecting Minnesota students to Lake Superior ecosystems and trout stream restoration sites.**

**Activity Budget:** \$268,310

**Activity Description:**

Hartley Nature Center will deliver place-based natural resource education field trips for Minnesota students focused on watershed science, biodiversity, and the Lake Superior ecosystem.

Each school year, approximately 70 field trips will bring students from schools across northeastern Minnesota to Hartley Park. Programs align with Minnesota science standards and engage students in hands-on scientific exploration including water quality monitoring, aquatic species identification, stream ecology, invasive species awareness, and forest ecosystem studies.

Hartley Park provides a unique outdoor classroom because it contains the largest contiguous stretch of the Tischer Creek, a designated cold-water trout stream, watershed and several recent restoration sites. Students will observe real-world conservation projects including stream restoration, stormwater management infrastructure, and habitat enhancement.

Through direct experience in the watershed, students gain understanding of how land use, water quality, and habitat health are interconnected. Programs emphasize observation, inquiry, and exploration to build environmental literacy and deepen understanding of Minnesota’s natural resources.

**Activity Milestones:**

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Deliver first year of Field Trip Programs, serving approximately 3,000 students	June 30, 2028
Deliver second year of Field Trip Programs, serving approximately 3,000 students	June 30, 2029
Deliver third year of Field Trip Programs, serving approximately 3,000 students	June 30, 2030

**Activity 2: Provide Outreach programs connecting underserved youth with outdoor learning experiences and watershed stewardship.**

**Activity Budget:** \$124,290

**Activity Description:**

This activity provides access to outdoor environmental learning through partnerships with youth-serving organizations that support young people who face barriers to accessing natural spaces.

Hartley Nature Center will collaborate with approximately five to seven community organizations to co-design experiential environmental education programs tailored to the needs of each group. Programs typically occur in multiple sessions that build familiarity with outdoor environments and environmental concepts over time.

Sessions may begin at partner agency sites with introductory activities and gradually expand to neighborhood parks and ultimately to immersive outdoor learning experiences at Hartley Park and the Tischer Creek watershed.

Participants explore topics including watershed health, forest ecology, wildlife habitat, and the importance of protecting Minnesota’s land and water resources. Programs emphasize curiosity, observation, and hands-on exploration.

By meeting youth where they are and building progressive outdoor experiences, the program helps participants develop confidence in natural spaces while fostering understanding of environmental stewardship and place-based connection.

**Activity Milestones:**

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Establish outreach partnerships and develop program plans	December 31, 2027
Deliver first year of outreach sessions serving approximately 300 youth	June 30, 2028
Deliver second year of outreach sessions serving approximately 300 youth	June 30, 2029
Deliver third year of outreach sessions serving approximately 300 youth	June 30, 2030

**Activity 3: Develop inclusive watershed interpretation materials highlighting Lake Superior ecosystem science, restoration efforts, and cultural perspectives.**

**Activity Budget:** \$93,400

**Activity Description:**

Hartley Nature Center will develop new inclusive environmental education and interpretation materials for use during programs, within the public exhibit hall supporting access and education for 200,000 annual visitors to Hartley Park, and complementing school field trip content for a deeper educational impact.

Working with educators, cultural consultants, and natural resources restoration professionals at state, regional, and local agencies, this activity will create engaging interpretation materials focused on the Lake Superior watershed and trout stream ecosystem.

Materials will increase public awareness of place-based indigenous and cultural history and language through a natural resources focus. Materials will include a combination of posters, displays, and tactile materials for all ages. Video lessons with captioning for hearing impaired audiences for pre- and post- field trips will augment student experiences and deepen engagement with the topics of watershed conservation, natural resources restoration, and stewardship of clean water and healthy ecosystems in Minnesota. These short form videos will also be provided to youth serving agencies to distribute to kids in their programs to enhance learning objectives.

Cultural consultation will enhance environmental education initiatives through culturally relevant and inclusive integration of traditional knowledge and Ojibwemowin language in educational materials.

**Activity Milestones:**

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Develop request for proposals for professional services	December 31, 2027
Enter professional service contracts for cultural consultant and videography and initiate projects	March 31, 2028
Complete filming of content for video lessons	June 30, 2029
Launch video lessons as enhanced learning tools for the 2029-2030 School Field Trip Programs	September 30, 2029
Incorporate physical cultural and educational interpretation materials	June 30, 2030

## Project Partners and Collaborators

Name	Organization	Role	Receiving Funds
Allison Brooks	City of Duluth	The City of Duluth manages Hartley Park and Natural Area and will support program implementation through collaboration with partner agencies, providing technical information about restoration and enhancement efforts, and coordination with Hartley Nature Center for program delivery within Hartley Park.	No
John Lindgren	Minnesota Department of Natural Resources - Fisheries	Provide technical assistance on curriculum and interpretive materials regarding Creek restoration efforts, aquatic habitat, cold-water trout stream ecology, and water quality.	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.**

This project does not include the collection of environmental data. Dissemination will focus on expanding public understanding of Minnesota’s natural resources through education and interpretation.

All School Field Trip and Outreach Program education materials will include information about the Lake Superior watershed, Tischer Creek restoration efforts, and opportunities for stewardship, extending reach to students across northern Minnesota.

Educational videos will be used with school groups as pre- and post-field trip learning tools and shared with teachers and partner organizations for continued classroom use.

Interpretive materials will be shared with the public through Hartley Nature Center’s Welcome Desk and Exhibit Hall, reaching approximately 200,000 annual visitors with information about the Lake Superior watershed, Tischer Creek restoration, and conservation actions.

All curriculum, videos and interpretive materials will include acknowledgment of the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund and the Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources (LCCMR).

## 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?**

Environmental education programs supported through this project will continue beyond the grant period as part of Hartley Nature Center’s (HNC) ongoing school field trip and outreach programming. These programs are sustained through a combination of program fees and philanthropic support.

Interpretive materials developed through this project will remain in use as long-term educational resources within HNC’s programs and facilities and will be updated periodically through organizational operating funds and partnerships.

The project will strengthen collaboration between HNC and regional natural resource agencies, ensuring continued public engagement with watershed restoration efforts and stewardship of Minnesota’s land and water resources.

## Project Manager and Organization Qualifications

**Project Manager Name:** Amy Demmer

**Job Title:** Executive Director

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

Amy will be responsible for grant and project management, including coordinating efforts between the program implementation team, LCCMR, and project partners to ensure the project is completed as described and in a timely manner. Additionally she will oversee personnel, direct spending, and coordinate with staff to submit reports and reimbursement requests.

Amy has been the Executive Director at Hartley Nature Center since 2024 where her responsibilities include organizational leadership, board stewardship, financial and grant management, strategic direction, and staff and program oversight. She has served as an executive nonprofit leader for over 15 years. She holds a BA in History from Lewis and Clark College and a Master's Degree in advocacy and political leadership from the University of Minnesota Duluth. She has prior experience managing grants through the Lessard -Sams Outdoor Heritage Council and other Legacy projects similar to the LCCMR, including ensuring compliance with state procurement requirements, developing appropriate workplans, and compiling detailed grant reporting.

**Organization:** Hartley Nature Center

**Organization Description:**

Hartley Nature Center is an independent 501c(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to inspiring lifelong connections to nature through education, play, and exploration. Located in Duluth's 660-acre Hartley Park along Tischer Creek, a cold-water trout stream tributary of Lake Superior, Hartley Nature Center provides place-based environmental education for all ages.

## Budget Summary

Category / Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Purpose	Gen. Ineligible	% Benefits	# FTE	Classified Staff?	\$ Amount
<b>Personnel</b>								
Education Director		Oversight of Field Trip and Outreach Programs delivery, training, progress reporting, and evaluation. Supervision of Ast Edu Director and Outreach Coordinator. Coordinate with Consultants to integrate traditional knowledge and language into programs and interpretive materials and develop video lessons. This position also teaches programs.			25%	1.5		\$112,500
Assitant Education Director		Coordination and delivery of School Field Trip programs including program planning, scheduling with schools, recruitment, training, scheduling and managing naturalist educators, program delivery, supply purchasing, and data collection. This role also teaches school field trip programs.			25%	2.01		\$125,625
Outreach Coordinator		Responsible for coordinating all aspects of the Outreach Program to underserved youth including partnership development, co-program design, supply purchasing, program delivery and data collection. This role also teaches Outreach programs.			25%	1.2		\$67,500
Naturalist Educators		Responsible for instructing school field trip programming			7.76%	1.11		\$45,000
Executive Director		Supervision of Education Director; oversight of grant projects, compliance, and reporting; and support for contractor projects.			25%	0.3		\$31,875
							<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>\$382,500</b>
<b>Contracts and Services</b>								
TBD - Indigenous Cultural Consultant	Service Contract	Provide traditional knowledge and language for programs and interpretive materials				0.4		\$20,000
TBD - Local Film Maker	Service Contract	Local film maker will develop video lessons for pre and post school field trips to augment student experiences and impact with captioning for hearing impaired audiences				0.4		\$20,475

							<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>\$40,475</b>
<b>Equipment, Tools, and Supplies</b>								
	Tools and Supplies	Gear for Programs: Boots	For accessing wet outdoor learning locations 40 pairs x \$95 each					\$3,800
	Tools and Supplies	Gear for Programs: Snowshoes	For accessing outdoor learning locations in the winter. 35 pairs x \$100 each					\$3,500
	Tools and Supplies	Gear for Programs: Skis	For accessing outdoor learning locations in the winter. 12 pairs x \$400 each					\$4,800
	Tools and Supplies	Gear for Programs: Teaching Backpacks	For carrying all teaching supplies to outdoor teaching locations 5 x \$100					\$500
	Tools and Supplies	Program supplies	Supplies for Program delivery including replacement and consumable supplies like water quality testing kits, owl pellets, craft supplies, thermometers, nets, etc. \$750 per year					\$2,250
	Tools and Supplies	Replacement Gear for Borrowed Gear Library	Replacing lost or damaged gear available to youth to borrow during programs - jackets, snowpants, hats, mittens \$500 per year					\$1,500
	Tools and Supplies	Interpretive Materials	To increase program participants and public awareness of place-based indigenous and cultural history and language as well as natural resource restoration efforts. Materials will include a combination of posters, displays, and tactile materials.					\$4,800
							<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>\$21,150</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>								
	Printing	Curriculum materials	Instructions, worksheets, maps, and other hand-outs					\$2,500
							<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>\$2,500</b>
<b>Other Expenses</b>								
		Financial Aid for School Field Trip Fees	Removing school field trip fee for 5,250 students x \$7.50					\$39,375
							<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>\$39,375</b>
							<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>\$486,000</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>				
Cash	Program Fee	Field trip fees from schools that can afford to pay the low-cost fee \$7.50 per student x 2,250 students. These funds are reinvested into the program to help cover a portion of the Administrative and Operations Staff cost to support program delivery.	Potential	\$16,875
Cash	Grant	Cover Program Transportation Expenses for low-income schools and the Outreach Program \$100 stipend x 30 groups	Potential	\$3,000
In-Kind	Volunteers	Volunteer Chaperones for Field Trips. 1 adult per 5 students. 7,500 students / 5 = 1,500 x \$38.16 (based on 2025 Independent Sector valuation for Minnesota)	Potential	\$57,240
			<b>Non State Sub Total</b>	<b>\$77,115</b>
			<b>Funds Total</b>	<b>\$77,115</b>

**Total Project Cost: \$563,115**

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

Yes

## Attachments

### Required Attachments

#### *Visual Component*

File: [4100bd35-94a.pdf](#)

#### *Alternate Text for Visual Component*

Photo collage of Hartley Nature Center's School Field Trip and Outreach programs. Pics 1) school group looking for birds; 2) highschoolers studying winter ecology; 3) Outreach group sitting around fire; 4) kids snowshoeing to teaching spot; 5) students in stream catching invertebrates 6) Outreach group meeting Hartley's ambassador snake...

#### *Financial Capacity*

Title	File
Certificate of Good Standing	<a href="#">4d84c487-567.pdf</a>
Most Recent Audit - 2023_2024	<a href="#">6220494a-fd9.pdf</a>
Most Recent 990 - 2024	<a href="#">bfd003b4-ed7.pdf</a>

#### *Board Resolution or Letter*

Title	File
Authorization Letter for LCCMR grant application_Hartley Nature Center	<a href="#">1cfc5c1f-8ee.pdf</a>

### Supplemental Attachments

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

Title	File
City of Duluth Letter of Support for Hartley Nature Center	<a href="#">0fc99f69-f2d.pdf</a>
Myers Wilkins Elementary School Letter of Support for Hartley Nature Center	<a href="#">23a7f3bd-b7c.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?**

Yes

**Do you understand and acknowledge IP and revenue-return and sharing requirements in 116P.10?**

Yes

**Do you wish to request reinvestment of any revenues into your project instead of returning revenue to the ENRTF? If so, describe here (1) the source and estimated amounts of any revenue and (2) how you propose to use those revenues:**

Yes, School field trips will be offered on a sliding-scale fee structure designed to minimize financial barriers while

ensuring broad access to high-quality environmental education. Fees are intentionally set at nominal levels and do not cover the full cost of program delivery.

Schools with more than 55% of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch participate at no cost. Schools with 40–54% eligibility are charged a reduced rate of \$3.50 per student, and schools with 39% or fewer students eligible are charged \$7.50 per student. Even at the highest rate, fees remain significantly below the true cost of providing these programs.

All revenue generated through nominal program fees is fully reinvested into program delivery and does not generate profit. These funds help support program delivery for staffing costs. Fee revenue also helps Hartley provide transportation stipends that additionally reduce access barriers for lower-income schools.

We anticipate approximately \$5,625 annually in program fee revenue, totaling \$16,875 over the grant period. These funds are included as a cash match, demonstrating our organizational commitment to sustaining and expanding equitable access to environmental education and reinvesting these funds into program delivery.

**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:**

Amy Demmer, Hartley Nature Center and 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