Appendix D. Maintaining or Improving Existing State, Regional or Local Trails

Name of Granting Agency: Minnesota Department of Natural Resources

Title of Grant Program/Opportunity: Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund Community Grant Program

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Short reference: Maintaining or Improving Existing Trails

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D.1 Purpose and when to use Appendix D

Use Appendix D when the primary funded purpose of your project is to maintain or improve an existing state, regional or local trail.

For this funding opportunity, grant requests must be $20,000 to $150,000, and substantive project work must be completed within 12 months or less. Up to two additional months may be authorized for approved startup and closeout administration, but not to extend substantive project work.

The basic fit test is straightforward: the trail already exists, the proposed work maintains or improves that existing trail and the project does not construct a new trail or new trail segment.

Community Grant funds under this activity area may not be used to construct a new trail or new trail segment.

D.2 What makes a project fit

Your project should identify the existing trail, the condition or need being addressed and the maintenance or improvement work proposed.

For this funding opportunity, the project must involve an existing state, regional or local trail. At Stage 1, the applicant must provide enough information for the DNR to determine that the affected trail already exists and that the proposed work is reasonably capable of qualifying as maintenance or improvement rather than construction of a new trail or new trail segment. Additional technical, ownership, authorization or property documentation may be required at Stage 2 or pre-award.

A trail may be paved or natural-surface and may support different forms of use. Eligibility depends on the trail being an existing state, regional or local trail and on the proposed work remaining within the statutory authority for maintenance or improvement. The DNR does not require a trail to participate in another DNR trail grant or maintenance program solely to qualify under this activity area.

D.3 Existing trail work versus new trail construction

Maintenance generally means work that keeps an existing trail or existing trail feature functional, safe, usable, sustainable or in appropriate condition without creating a new route.

Improvement generally means upgrading or enhancing an existing trail or existing trail feature while maintaining the identity of the existing trail.

For this funding opportunity, the DNR will assess proposed rehabilitation or reconstruction to determine whether it maintains or improves an existing trail without constructing a new trail or new trail segment.

New trails, extensions into new corridors, new connectors, new loops and new segments that create trail access where no trail previously existed are not eligible under this activity area.

A proposed reroute or alignment adjustment requires project-specific review to determine whether it maintains or improves an existing trail or would construct a prohibited new trail or new trail segment.

D.4 Projects that may fit

Depending on the existing trail and proposed work, projects that may fit include:

- Resurfacing or repairing an existing trail surface or tread

- Correcting erosion or drainage problems affecting an existing trail
- Repairing or replacing an existing bridge, boardwalk or other trail feature in place
- Addressing accessibility barriers within an existing trail
- Stabilizing slopes or restoring vegetation disturbed by existing trail use or maintenance
- Rehabilitating deteriorated trail infrastructure
- Other work that maintains or improves the function, condition, safety, accessibility or sustainability of an existing trail

Replacement, rehabilitation or improvement of bridges, boardwalks and other structures integral to an existing trail may qualify when the work remains part of maintaining or improving that trail. Proposed maintenance or improvement of existing ancillary facilities such as parking areas, overlooks, picnic areas, trailheads, requires project-specific review to determine whether the work qualifies as maintenance or improvement of an existing trail. This provision does not authorize construction of new ancillary facilities.

D.5 Projects that do not fit

A project does not fit Appendix D if it would construct a new trail or new trail segment.

Projects also may not fit this funding opportunity when their scale, technical complexity, engineering, environmental review, property needs, permitting, capital costs or implementation period cannot reasonably be completed within the funding and timing established in the RFP.

Calling proposed work maintenance or improvement does not make it eligible if the project would create a new functional trail route or segment.

D.6 Activity-specific information required at Stage 1

If you select this as your primary activity area, the Stage 1 Concept Note will ask for concise information needed to understand how the project fits Appendix D. You should be prepared to identify:

- The existing state, regional or local trail, including its location and, if known, its owner or managing entity
- Where the proposed work will occur and enough information to understand that the affected trail already exists
- The existing trail condition or need the project will address
- The maintenance or improvement work proposed
- Whether the proposed work would construct a new trail or new trail segment or materially extend the existing trail beyond its current route or footprint
- Your relationship to the trail and known approvals or permissions needed
- The realistic result expected when the project is complete

Detailed engineering drawings, completed environmental review, final permits and complete authorization documents are not normally required at Stage 1 unless a specific legal requirement states otherwise.

D.7 Additional activity-specific information at Stage 2

If your Concept Note advances, the Stage 2 Full Application may ask for additional information needed to evaluate the actual trail project. Depending on the project, this may include:

- Trail and project-segment maps, photographs and existing and proposed alignment
- Trail ownership, management, landowner authorization or corridor documentation
- Trail-condition information, dimensions, quantities and cost estimates
- Engineering or technical design appropriate to the proposed work
- Accessibility, erosion, drainage, structure, environmental-review, protected-species, cultural-resource and seasonal-construction considerations
- Permits, approvals, construction schedule, procurement approach and partner or contractor roles
- Long-term maintenance responsibility
- Information demonstrating that the project does not create a prohibited new trail or new trail segment

The DNR will request information proportionate to the project. A straightforward resurfacing project should not be required to provide the same engineering information as a bridge rehabilitation or other technically complex project.

D.8 Ownership, authorization, design, permit and continuing-responsibility issues

Receiving a Community Grant does not give an applicant authority to perform work on a trail owned, managed or controlled by another entity. Applicants should identify what they know about ownership, management, public use, their relationship to the trail and authorization needs at Stage 1. Formal property-control, public-use, authorization or continuing-maintenance documentation may be required at Stage 2 or pre-award when necessary.

Trail projects may also require accessibility review, environmental review, permits, engineering, protected-species review, cultural-resource review, seasonal construction constraints or other technical requirements. These requirements do not generally need to be completed at Stage 1. Funding by the DNR does not guarantee approval by another DNR program, land manager, regulator or other authority.

Projects involving Tribal lands, waters, natural resources, jurisdiction, treaty-protected interests, culturally important resources or other matters subject to Tribal governmental authority will require coordination, authorization or other action by the affected Tribal Nation. Applicants should not submit culturally restricted, sacred or other protected information through ordinary application fields.

Projects must also satisfy the generally applicable requirements of the RFP, including the required connection to environmental or natural-resource benefit.

D.9 Help and technical information

Applicant resources and technical assistance may provide additional help with identifying the appropriate activity area, documenting existing-trail status, distinguishing maintenance or improvement from new

construction, planning for ownership and authorization and identifying project-specific accessibility, engineering, environmental or permitting requirements.

The DNR will rely on applicable Parks and Trails, accessibility, engineering, environmental and other authoritative requirements rather than reproducing technical standards in this appendix.

Resources and technical assistance may explain the requirements in the RFP but do not create new eligibility or scoring requirements.