General

This section provides the basic information about the park or trail and the organizations responsible for it.

Last Update
17 Apr 2017 07:27:16

Park or Trail Name
Lake Vermilion Trail

District
1

Location Description
The Lake Vermilion Trail will be located in north-central St. Louis County, about 90 miles northwest of Duluth and 25 miles north of Virginia. It will extend from its western terminus in the City of Cook north through Owens Township and Beatty Township to the western shore of Lake Vermilion, then parallel the southern shore of the Lake through the Townships of Beatty, Greenwood, Vermilion Lake, and Kugler, as well as Bois Forte Reservation, to its eastern terminus in the City of Tower, where it will directly connect to the Mesabi Trail and create access to the Soudan Underground Mine State Park and Lake Vermilion State Park approximately two miles east of Tower.

Park/Trail Address

City

Park/Trail State

Zip

Latitude
47.86339196

Longitude
-92.48222351

Map of Park/Trail
Description: Trail Concept Map depicting trail segments

Facility Website
www.arrowheadplanning.org/lakevermiliontrailimplementation

Organization
City of Tower

Lead Contact Person
Title
Linda Keith
City Clerk/Treasurer

**Mailing Address**
P.O. Box 576

**City**
Tower

**State**
Minnesota

**Zip**
55790

**Phone**
218.753.4070

**Email**
linda@cityoftower.com

### Joint Applicants

**Joint Applicant #1**
City of Tower

**Joint Applicant #2**
City of Cook

**Joint Applicant #3**

**Joint Applicant #4**

### Other project supporters
- Arrowhead Regional Development Commission
- Beatty Township
- Bois Forte Band of Chippewa
- Breitung Township
- City of Cook
- City of Tower
- Cook Chamber of Commerce
- Cook Lions Club
- Greenwood Township
- Kugler Township
- Lake Vermilion Chamber of Commerce
- Lake Vermilion Resort Association
- Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
- National Park Service
- Northwoods Friends of the Arts
- Owens Township
- Sportsmen's Club of Lake Vermilion
- St. Louis County
- Vermilion Lake Township

### Description

This section provides the basic information about the park or trail and the organizations responsible for it.

**Regional Significance Statement**

**Classification**
Regional Trail (Non Motorized)

**Overview/Description of Park or Trail**
The Lake Vermilion Trail (LVT) is a planned 10 foot-wide, 39 mile-long, non-motorized, bituminous-surface trail connecting the cities of Cook and Tower along the western and southern shores of Lake Vermilion, directly serving 3,800 permanent residents, 20,000 annual resort visitors, plus seasonal residents and other area tourists. About four miles of the LVT already exist near Fortune Bay Resort. Set in the year-round tourist destination of the Lake Vermilion area (partially adjacent to the Superior National Forest and abutting the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness), the Lake Vermilion Trail will traverse through forested land primarily consisting of boreal hardwood-conifer and Great Lakes pine forests among granite outcrops, pocketed wetlands, and peat bogs. While known for its Ojibwe, fur trade and mining history, the quality of the area's premier natural features convinced the State Legislature to acquire and designate the state's newest state park, Lake Vermilion State Park. The lake's scenic, forested bays have inspired a tourism economy based primarily on fishing and water recreation. This trail will expand land-based recreational opportunities to better align with changing tourist desires. Existing state- and regional-level facilities that will make a direct
connection to the Lake Vermilion Trail include the Arrowhead and Taconite State (snowmobile) Trails, Kabetogama and Sturgeon River State Forests, and the 132-mile Mesabi Trail. Soudan Underground Mine and Lake Vermilion State Parks will be accessible via a 2-mile Mesabi Trail link. In addition, existing local trails that will feed into the LVT include the Greenwood Walking and Biking Trail, Bois Forte Reservation Trails, the Hoodoo Point Trail, and the 24-mile Ashawa Ski Trails. As a connector among local facilities, large-scale facilities, and multiple cities, the LVT will form the backbone of a regional trail system within a prized recreational area in the state.

Despite Lake Vermilion's draw to tourists, seasonal residents, and permanent populations for water recreation, opportunities for non-motorized land-based recreation are limited in the area. Other than facilities on the lake's southeastern shore near Tower, few locations for residents and visitors to safely walk or bicycle on an off-road, paved surface now exist. The LVT will fill that gap. The trail will be located outside of road rights-of-way for the majority of the route, taking advantage of scenic views, and large tracts of government and corporate-owned undeveloped land. The pine forests, elevation changes, rock outcrops, and tamarack lowlands will make this, arguably, one of the most scenic trails in the state. Variation of trail type may also occur in wetland areas, which is the primary trail development obstacle along some segments of the trail corridor. In this case, modular floating docks or boardwalks may be used to ensure continuity. For programming, the local trail committee seeks to add interpretative signage highlighting the area's history and culture, and locally made art installations along the corridor. The energetic, active trail committee plans on offering running races, bike rides, and other events to promote trail use, and an adopt-a-trail program to assist with maintenance.

**Total Acreage or Mileage**

**Acquisition and Development Status**

**Development status**

**Facility Listing**

This section provides an overview of existing and proposed site facilities and general site characteristics.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Existing Facilities</th>
<th>Proposed Facilities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Proposed Facilities Other Information**

Trail signage, interpretation kiosks and trailside signs, art installations, scenic overlooks

**General Site Characteristics**

**Site characteristics upload**

Description: Wakemup Hill will serve as a scenic overlook point for the trail.


**Site characteristics upload**

Description: The Wakemup Hill Overlook will also offer views of Lake Vermilion.

Site characteristics upload
Description: Lake Vermilion is one of the biggest and most scenic lakes in Minnesota. In turn, it serves as a year-round tourist destination, especially for recreationists.

Site characteristics upload
Description: The Hoodoo Point Trail is one of the existing portions of the Lake Vermilion Trail in the City of Tower.
http://dms.gmrptcommission.org/uploads/applications/16-035D/Hoodoo Point Trail_b7e409.JPG

Site characteristics upload
Description: The Hoodoo Point Trail is one of the existing portions of the Lake Vermilion Trail in the City of Tower.
http://dms.gmrptcommission.org/uploads/applications/16-035D/Hoodoo Point Trail Bridge_e11a1.JPG

Site characteristics upload
Description: The Greenwood Walking and Biking Trail is one of the local trails the Lake Vermilion Trail will connect to within Greenwood Township.

Site characteristics upload
Description: Breitung Township Trail in Soudan. Similar to what the Lake Vermilion Trail will look like
http://dms.gmrptcommission.org/uploads/applications/16-035D/P7190397_37c6ea.JPG

Site characteristics upload
Description: Hoodoo Point Campground--Swimming Beach in Tower
http://dms.gmrptcommission.org/uploads/applications/16-035D/P7190355_17398b.JPG

Site characteristics upload
Description: Utility corridor west of Tower, close to Segment 7 alignment
http://dms.gmrptcommission.org/uploads/applications/16-035D/P7180342_3a5ce5.JPG

Master Plan

Additional Supportive Information:

Classification Details

Regional Trail (Non-Motorized) Classification

Provides a High-Quality "Destination" Trail Experience
The LVT will be a high quality destination trail. In the 1940s, the National Geographic Society declared Lake Pike River Dam, which segment 6 of the trail will pass

Criteria #1 Images
Pike River Dam, which segment 6 of the trail will pass
http://dms.gmrptcommission.org/uploads/applications/16-035D/Pike River Dam_52c3b6.png
Vermilion one of the top 10 most scenic lakes in the U.S., and it still is. Views of and access to the lake, the state’s 4th largest, will add significant scenic value along the LVT; the lake spans 40,000 acres with 1,200 miles of shoreline, 365 islands, and hundreds of bays and coves. Set within the Laurentian Mixed Forest Ecological Province, the trail corridor will traverse several ecological subsections, offering a variety of scenic, sparsely developed landscapes, from peatlands near Cook to hilly glacial till uplands, to bedrock cliffs and Canadian Shield pine forests, and to the narrow, high Giant's Range ridge near Tower. Although the exact trail alignment has not been finalized, the Trail Plan and the steering committee call for the trail to be located well away from roads for most of its length. Where the trail needs to be located near a road due to environmental constraints or development, the trail will be separated from the roadway by at least the MnDOT-recommended minimum distance of 24 feet for a 45+ mph road, with a vegetative (likely existing forest) buffer to maintain scenic integrity. Because relatively few roads exist in the area, road crossings will generally occur only about once every trail mile. Many of the roads are low-volume county or township roads, and crossing location and design will be carefully designed to maximize safety. Adding to the “destination” trail experience, unique trail features will include elevation changes, floating or boardwalk segments, and a possible bike ferry across Lake Vermilion's Pike Bay. Combined, these features will make the LVT a truly unique experience that will inspire return visitors both familiar and new to the Lake Vermilion area.

Well-located (i.e., Convenience of Access/Adequate Length) to Serve Regional Population and/or Tourist Destination

The 39-mile LVT will directly connect residences and tourist accommodations along Lake Vermilion’s shores to area destinations. The Lake Vermilion area is an established regional tourist destination with 20,000 annual resort guests, including Fortune Bay, the largest non-mining employer (500 employees) in the region. The LVT will be within a mile of 21 resorts, two motels, an RV Park and a campground, and within three miles of an additional four resorts and two campgrounds. The Lake Vermilion area is also a local population center with 3,800 permanent residents. The LVT will be within a mile of most of this population. The Iron Range cities, with a total population of 42,000, are within an easy 25 to 45 mile drive; Virginia (pop. 8,700) is the closest, just 25 miles away. In Tower, the LVT will directly connect to the regionally significant Mesabi Trail, a segment of which passes...
through Tower. With this connection, the Lake Vermilion Trail will bridge the gap between local existing paved trails (the 0.9-mile Greenwood Walking and Biking Trail, the 1.1-mile Hoodoo Point Trail, and the 5-mile Vermilion Reservation Trails) and the Mesabi's existing and planned 132 miles, which has a segment from Tower to Ely scheduled for construction in 2016-17. The Lake Vermilion Trail will also directly connect to the 145-mile Taconite State Trail and the 135-mile Arrowhead State Trail as well as approximately 24 miles of rugged backcountry cross country ski trails maintained by the Ashawa Trail Ski Club. The state trails are primarily for snowmobiles and, although officially open to horseback riding, mountain biking, and hiking in the summer, are frequently impassable when not frozen due to wet soils and standing water. Other uses or improvements to these trails may be considered in the future.

**Enhances Connectivity to Regional Destinations**
The Lake Vermilion Trail will expand non-motorized facilities in the area by adding a long "leg" to the Mesabi Trail to connect the major tourist area of Lake Vermilion's western and southern shores as well as the local population centers of the cities of Cook and Tower to other popular recreational facilities in the area. From west to east, the trail will connect to or pass through: Cook City Park, Wakemup Hill scenic overlook, the Arrowhead State Trail, Kabetogama State Forest, Head of the Lakes DNR public lake access, Wakemup Campground, an overlook near Oak Narrows Road, Fraser Bay Public Access, Greenwood Town Hall/Community Center and Park, Bois Forte Community Center, Tower's new harbor and riverfront park, the Taconite State Trail, and the Mesabi Trail. Soudan Underground Mine and Lake Vermilion State Parks are on the Mesabi Trail about 2 miles from the planned end of the LVT. The trail may also pass through a portion of the Sturgeon River State Forest, and will offer views of portions of Superior National Forest. Besides connecting important public lands and recreation facilities, the Lake Vermilion Trail will connect to multiple public interest destinations. On its western end, the trail will make connection to the City of Cook's business district and the U.S. Forest Service LaCroix Ranger Station, which is an information center for area recreational resources. Along the western and southern shores of Lake Vermilion, the trail will make connection to resorts, areas of permanent and seasonal residence, and Fortune Bay Resort and Casino (with its hotel, casino, golf course, RV park, marina, heritage center, and conference center). On its eastern end, the trail will make connection to the City of Tower, including a

**Criteria #3 Images**
- Mesabi Trailhead in Tower
  [http://dms.gmrptcommission.org/uploads/applications/16-035D/IMG_0086_e78a0e.JPG](http://dms.gmrptcommission.org/uploads/applications/16-035D/IMG_0086_e78a0e.JPG)
- Legend House/Museum on Bois Forte land
- DNR Campground Fraser Bay
- DNR public lake access Fraser Bay
Fills a Gap in Recreational Opportunity within a Region
The Lake Vermilion area is home to numerous regional destinations, but significant gaps in non-motorized, land-based recreation plague the area. While the City of Tower has recently been connected to the Mesabi Trail, the Lake Vermilion area lacks safe places to walk and bike west of Tower, since most roads in the area are either gravel or have no paved shoulders, and there are only a few short local biking and walking trails. Unfortunately, where these gaps exist along the western and southern shores of Lake Vermilion is where many residents live and where tourists stay during their visits to the area. While a few recreational trails exist in the area, they are notably limited to snowmobile facilities, such as the Arrowhead State Trail and the Taconite State Trail; these facilities pass through swamps and are wet in the summer, making them impassable for walkers or bicyclists. Likewise, more localized trails, like the Ashawa (Cross-country Ski) Trail and non-state snowmobile trails are not open to the public other than during the winter. Even in considering a few paved trail facilities in the area (the 0.9-mile Greenwood Walking and Biking Trail, the 1.1-mile Hoodoo Point Trail, and the 5-mile Vermilion Reservation Trail), they are only local trails with limited ability to serve Lake Vermilion populations and tourists. Likewise, other recreational opportunities are limited for people without boats. There are no County parks or recreational programs, and few ballfields, playgrounds, or ice rinks in the area. The Lake Vermilion Trail will help fill this recreational gap, creating safe, non-motorized recreation and travel options along Lake Vermilion's western and southern shores to connect area visitors and populations to recreation options in state parks and on the Mesabi Trail.

Criteria #4 Images
Greenwood Trail—one of few land based recreational facilities in the 40 mile area

Attachments

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<tr>
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<th>Description</th>
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Other
Lake Vermilion Trail Location Study (2013)

Site Map Upload
Map of southern end of Segment 1A, 2nd segment to be developed. No trail alignment finalized yet.
http://dms.gmrptcommission.org/uploads/applications/16-035D/Wakemup3_3ab002.JPG

Park Trail Map
Trail Concept Map depicting trail segments

Site Map Upload
Map of 1st trail segment to be developed, Seg. 7, at eastern end

Public Health Values Upload
St. Louis County (without Duluth) Bridge to Health Survey (2015)

Economic Development Tourism Upload
City of Cook Comprehensive Plan (2015)

Resolution
Joint Applicant #1 Organization added from general tab

Resolution
Joint Applicant #2 Organization added from general tab

Letters Of Support
Letters of Support - Beatty Township, Breitung Township, City of Cook, City of Tower, Cook Area Chamber of Commerce, Cook Lions Club, Lake Vermilion Resort Association, Northwoods Friends of the Arts, Owens Township, Sportsmen’s Club of Lake Vermilion, Sa

Site Map Upload
Map of northern end of Segment 1A, 2nd trail segment to be developed--no trail alignment finalized yet
http://dms.gmrptcommission.org/uploads/applications/16-035D/Wakemup1_6d635f.JPG

Economic Development Tourism Upload
Tower-Breitung Joint Comprehensive Plan (2015)
http://dms.gmrptcommission.org/uploads/applications/16-035D/Towe...
Wakemup Hill will serve as a scenic overlook point for the trail. [Image]

The Wakemup Hill Overlook will also offer views of Lake Vermilion. [Image]

Lake Vermilion is one of the biggest and most scenic lakes in Minnesota. In turn, it serves as a year-round tourist destination, especially for recreationists. [Image]

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Hoodoo Point Campground--Swimming Beach in Tower [Image]

Utility corridor west of Tower, close to Segment 7 alignment [Image]


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http://dms.gmrptcommission.org/uploads/applications/16-035D/Hoodoo Point Trail Bridge_1e11a1.JPG


http://dms.gmrptcommission.org/uploads/applications/16-035D/Lake Vermilion Trail Regional Map_2ad184.jpg

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http://dms.gmrptcommission.org/uploads/applications/16-035D/P7180342_3a5ce5.JPG

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<td>Pike River Dam, which segment 6 of the trail will pass</td>
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<td>Rgnl Trail Classification1</td>
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<td>View from Fortune Bay Casino/Resort Marina</td>
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