



T R A I L S

Mini Case Executive Summary

The Outdoor Recreation Alliance Community Trail Farm Campaign Readiness Study Summit

For the last 20 years, the Outdoor Recreation Alliance (ORA Trails) has been getting people outside by building happy, healthy, and resilient communities by providing sustainable and equitable access to outdoor recreation activities. As we have grown to serve a more diverse area and population, we have kept a focus on improving the human condition through access to nature. Now, more than ever, the need for opportunities to spend time outside is evident and the benefits span from our personal lives to our economy.

“We in the United States are leading such busy strenuous lives that recreation has become an absolute necessity. We are in a hurry all the time. There can be no doubt of it that the worry and bustle of our modern living leads to a great many premature deaths. Many useful lives are blotted out because they did not take time for recreation. If we are going to keep pace with our civilization, we must fibe the public an outlet in the great outdoors.”
-Louis H. Pammel, 1924

ORA Trails has cultivated an opportunity to purchase and protect a large swath of land within the La Crosse Area Blufflands. Our vision is to develop a Community Trail Farm. With hundreds of acres of forests, fields, and streams and in close proximity to neighborhoods, businesses, schools, transit, and other public lands, it will truly connect our community to itself and the outdoors.

With a focus on conservation, recreation, and education, the proposed \$6M project will protect and share landscapes with ecologic, cultural, recreation, and historic value and significance. The project will revolve around a robust network of shared-use trails and the amenities needed to lower the barriers to getting outside and embracing a wider audience in nature. With up to 15 miles of world-class hike, bike, and ski trails for all levels and opportunities to play, learn, and celebrate in the outdoors, the project will strengthen La Crosse’s outdoor community. It will improve connections of neighborhoods to natural areas, provide continuity between existing and future public lands and trail access points, strengthen the area’s outdoor ethos and community, increase quality of life, and highlight the area’s appeal as a destination for residents, students, businesses, and visitors.



ORA Trails wishes to fundraise the following:

- \$2.5M secure site ownership
- \$1.5M trail construction and restoration
- \$1.2M site sustainability and amenity development
- \$800,000 project planning, management, and execution

The total approximate Capital Campaign: \$6M.

Plans are underway to assess the viability of raising \$6M over the next three to five years. A Campaign Readiness Study Summit will secure needed feedback from the area's philanthropic and business community. This study will examine the capacity and strategy for the \$6M goal.

Through innovative projects like this, ORA Trails has become a leader in community impact. We work toward the shared goals of the Blufflands Plan, a community document that lays the foundation of the collaborative efforts needed to and the resulting impact of protecting and celebrating unique blufflands. Out of this plan, the Bluffland Coalition has formed as a group of nonprofit and municipal partners who are working through a concerted effort to raise awareness and value of the natural landscape by protecting blufflands and providing recreation opportunities.

ORA Trails continues to work through a progressive model of public-private partnerships, empowering community members to bring added value by championing new projects, participating in construction and restoration projects, creating educational opportunities, and building relationships with community partners. By focusing on education and empowerment and with over 700 volunteers contributing thousands of hours each year, ORA Trails has become a regional leader in volunteer-led trail and forest work. ORA continues to provide high-impact programming to get more people outside, making nature part of their daily lives. These strides have allowed ORA to lead many recent efforts like the Trempealeau Bicycle Playground, Miller Bluff Hiking Trail, La Crosse Community Forest Connector Trail and Outdoor Classroom, the Gateway Trails on Grandad Bluff, Lueth Park Bicycle Playground and Skatepark Improvements, and many additions and sustainable improvements in Hixon Forest.

ORA Trails has partnered with the team at Crescendo Fundraising Professionals, LLC to complete the Study Summit to determine and assess the interest in and capacity for reaching \$6M. During this one-day summit on Tuesday, November 15, focus groups, confidential interviews in person and virtually, and online surveys will be conducted to secure needed input. Crescendo has a 25 year history working primarily in the tri-state area with municipal facilities and relatively young nonprofits to raise capital funds.

Recommendations will be presented to the Board of Directors regarding the potential success of the proposed private fundraising goal and the strategy recommended to achieve the fundraising goal and reach a successful conclusion for the campaign. No solicitation will take place during the Summit.

