

# Trail Farm Mini Case Summary

The Outdoor Recreation Alliance Campaign Readiness Study Summit



For the last 20 years, the Outdoor Recreation Alliance (ORA Trails) has been getting people outside and 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 with benefits that span from our personal lives to our national 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 give 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 ecological, cultural, recreational, and historical significance. The project will revolve around a robust network of shared-use trails and the amenities needed to lower the barriers of getting people 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, build 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 to secure site ownership
- \$1.5M for trail construction and restoration
- \$1.2M for site sustainability and amenity development
- \$800,000 for 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 goal.

Through innovative projects like this one, ORA Trails has become a leader in cooperative 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 implement 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. This progress can be seen in many recent ORA 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 sustainable additions and improvements in Hixon Forest.

ORA Trails has partnered with the team at Crescendo Fundraising Professionals to complete the Study Summit, determining and assessing the interest in and capacity for reaching the \$6M goal. During this one-day summit on Tuesday, November 15, focus groups, confidential interviews, and surveys will be conducted to secure needed input. Recommendations on the potential success and recommended strategies to achieve the campaign goals will be presented to the Board of Directors. Crescendo has been helping municipalities and nonprofits build capacity and raise funds for 25 years in the tri-state area. No solicitation will take place during the Summit.

