



Frequently Asked Questions

What is the secret to ORA's success?

ORA Trails has been a leading advocate and active participant in community projects for many years, cultivating a strong base of community champions and volunteers known as Trail Friends. This network of critical supporters has provided a platform for people to believe in and contribute to ambitious projects that make significant community impacts. The organization's success is largely attributed to this widespread community support, which has enabled the completion of several high-profile projects. These projects not only bring people together but also promote the vision of a connected community. Some notable achievements include the Chad Erickson Treehouse, La Crosse Community Forest, Trempealeau Bike Playground, and the Bud Hendrickson Nature Loop. Each of these initiatives has fostered community engagement and demonstrated ORA Trails' ability to realize large-scale, impactful projects.

When can I use the Community Trail Farm?

Soon! Recognizing the significant positive impacts of this space, we are diligently working to harness these benefits at the earliest opportunity. The primary focus is on establishing a secure and inviting environment where vital infrastructure can sustain the foundational trail systems as we progress towards realizing the complete vision. The immediate efforts will concentrate on developing a world class trail system, site restoration, safe transportation solutions, restoring the prairie, forest, and Pammel Creek, and providing public restroom access. Expansion of the project will include a welcoming center, education buildings, camping amenities, and outdoor programming, further enriching the community's connection.

How does the Community Trail Farm tie into the bigger picture?

The Community Trail Farm is ideally situated to extend and embrace connections with schools, businesses, retirement communities, Downtown La Crosse, and more. The Farm provides an easy to access hub and jumping off point for exploring the outdoor wonders of our area and provides a critical connection within the "Blufflands Plan". The "Blufflands Plan" has been developed and embraced by the community to improve the quality of life, natural habitat, community health, and local economies by establishing a contiguous network of lands and trails through the region. By integrating with these existing efforts, the Community Trail Farm will help advance shared goals and create a more connected, healthy, and vibrant community.

How will the Community Trail Farm be financially sustainable?

ORA Trails has demonstrated the value of public-private partnerships by effectively leveraging both private and public funding to advance community-strengthening initiatives. ORA Trails have developed a comprehensive business model to secure the long-term sustainability of the Community Trail Farm. This model integrates philanthropic contributions, grants, and earned income, creating a robust framework for continuous revenue generation, including commercial enterprises, service agreements, and programming revenue, ensuring the necessary funds for upkeep and expansion. The project has already garnered support from municipal partners, private businesses, individual donors, foundations, and grant-making entities, providing a solid foundation for its financial sustainability. By diversifying revenue sources and fostering strong community partnerships, the Community Trail Farm will thrive and serve the community for years to come.



How will the land be managed?

Positioned as a valuable community asset, the Community Trail Farm will instill a profound sense of ownership and legacy within community members and volunteers, fostering a dedicated commitment to preserving natural resources. Drawing upon past endeavors, this passion inspires community partners and resources to contribute their expertise in shaping site goals and implementing best management practices. Through this site and approach, an avenue is opened for innovative solutions to conservation endeavors to be discovered and shared. ORA Trails has robust volunteer engagement, including over 700 volunteers who collectively dedicate thousands of hours each year to maintaining ORA-managed spaces, projects, and events. This ethos is rooted in the dedication to empowering employees and volunteers through education, training, and mentorship, resulting in a proficient network of individuals referred to as the "people who get the work done." These initiatives generate a multitude of service opportunities for both groups and individuals. By developing spaces that promote exploration, discovery, and structured avenues for growth, a culture of land stewardship and communal care will flourish throughout the entire community.

How does ORA connect and elevate other programs in the community?

ORA Trails fosters connection by aligning missions with those of other programs, facilitating shared resources and experiences. This collaborative approach expands reach and enhances program effectiveness. For example, partnerships with educational institutions provide outdoor learning opportunities, while alliances with health organizations promote wellness through outdoor activities. ORA Trails actively engages in community events and initiatives, creating additional platforms for interaction and cooperation. Creating networks not only supports ORA Trails' projects, but also amplifies and elevates the visibility and success of partner programs, contributing to a stronger, more connected and resilient community.

Community Trail Farm objectives align with numerous existing plans that span local, regional, and national levels. This includes initiatives by city and county municipalities, state and national programs, educational institutions, and major healthcare providers like Emplify (formerly Gundersen) and Mayo Clinic hospitals. ORA Trails engages many other partner organizations and will continue to benefit from the plans, amenities, and programming opportunities offered. These include the WI DNR, La Crosse School District, UW-La Crosse, La Crosse County Soil and Water Conservation, City of La Crosse, Trout Unlimited, USFS, Trek Bicycles, and many others. ORA Trails integrates its projects with broader community goals, enhancing overall impact.

What's next?

The Community Trail Farm is the springboard into massive action and impact. Whether individuals are walking on a trail or students are engaging in nature-based lessons, Trails Connect Communities. ORA Trails is dedicated to providing access to equitable and sustainable outdoor recreation to improve the health, quality of life, and happiness of both the community and visitors. Access to, encouragement, and lowering the barriers to green spaces enriches the human experience, promoting social connections and a sense of community. Historically, trails have linked people to each other, the natural world, and themselves. The Community Trail Farm will serve as a platform to strengthen and foster these connections and improve lives through educational and mental health programming, inclusive and accessible outdoor spaces, regenerative land practices, and much more. This project is poised to amplify the community's well-being and create lasting positive impacts, serving as a path to even more profound community transformations.