

Hawk Ridge Nature Reserve Facilities Improvement Plan



Overview

- Brief history of site - Hawk Ridge Nature Reserve (HRNR) and organization - Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory (HRBO)
- Background of the HRNR Facilities Improvement Plan
- Key Issues/Needs for Facilities Improvements
- Planning Process and Design
- Funding and Timeline
- Questions?





AMAZING FALL MIGRATION!!
200,000-300,000 birds counted each fall!

History of Hawk Ridge Nature Reserve (Site)

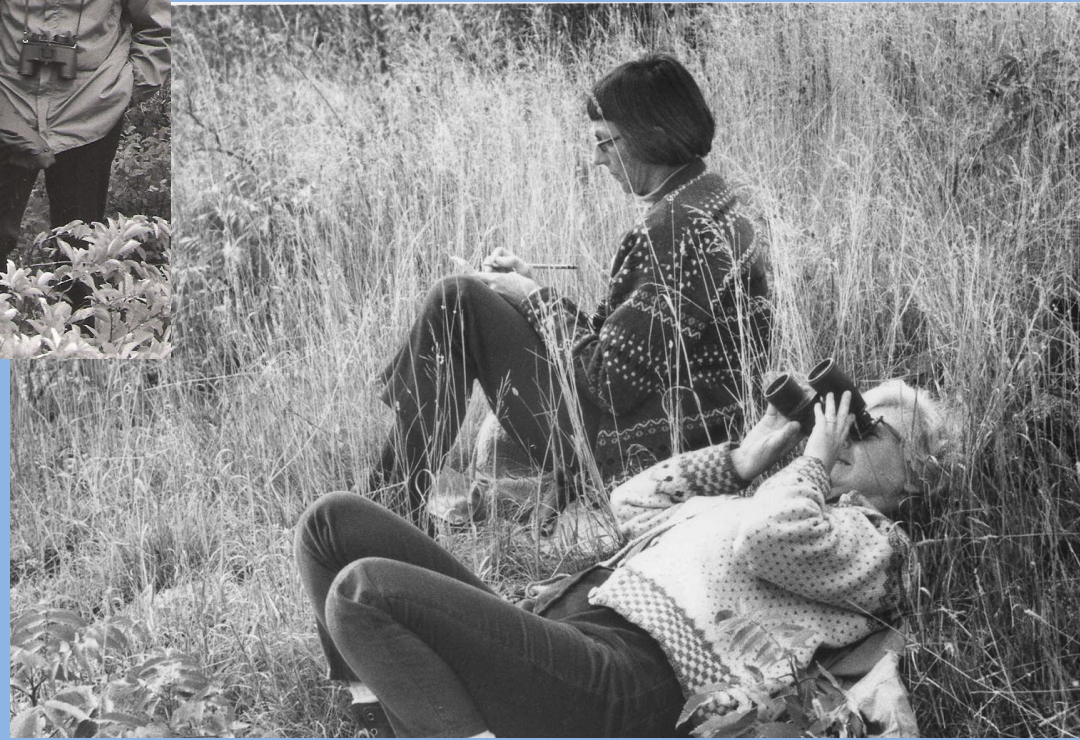


- Once known as a place where birds were shot for target practice
- 1937 – members of Duluth Bird Club gathered “bushel baskets of dead hawks”
- Birds of prey (Raptors), such as hawks, falcons, eagles, owls weren’t protected by early laws.

Early years and pioneers of Hawk Ridge Nature Reserve



1972: Hawk Ridge Nature Reserve established with trust agreement between City and Duluth Audubon. Raptor count & banding research started.



History of Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory (Organization):



2003-04: The Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory formed as new nonprofit and new management entity for HRNR. HRNR designated as the first Important Bird Area in MN. Education programs and visitor services expand.



Mission:

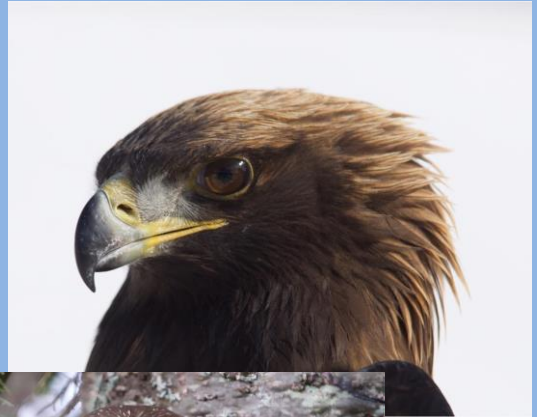
To protect birds of prey and other migratory birds
in the Western Lake Superior Region
through research, education, and stewardship

Hawk Ridge Programs

- Research
- Education
- Stewardship



Research & Education at HRNR 50 Years and Counting!



Bird Research

- Fall Bird Migration Count and Banding at HRNR
- Spring Bird Migration Count at West Skyline Sites
- Summer MAPS Songbird Banding Project at HRNR
- Various year-round bird research projects in conjunction with graduate students and other partners at HRNR and region



Education Programming

- Fall at Hawk Ridge Nature Reserve
- Spring at West Skyline Count
- Year-round outreach and programs



Stewardship at HRNR

- Management and Maintenance of Natural Resources and Facilities
- In partnership with City of Duluth with help of HRBO volunteers and other groups



A wooden sign with green lettering for Hawk Ridge Nature Reserve. The sign is mounted on a wooden post and is surrounded by dry brush and trees.

HAWK RIDGE NATURE RESERVE

MANAGED BY: HAWK RIDGE

BIRD OBSERVATORY

Current Facilities

- Main overlook
- Education program area
- Observation/count platform
- Banding station
- Seasonal portable toilets
- 4 miles of hiking trails

Main Overlook at HRNR

- 18,000 visitors to HRNR each fall
- Busy East Skyline Pkwy (people & vehicles)
- Limited safe, accessible facilities



Education Program Area

- 6,000 participants in programs at HRNR
- Limited capacity for programs



Background on Project

2009 - Need for additional education program area identified due to increased programs and visitors

2016 – Need for additional education facilities improvements recognized for safety and accessibility

2019 – Grants received for initial planning work



Key Issues/Needs for Improvements

- Limited accessible facilities
- Visitor/traffic safety
- Education space and capacity



Planning Process

2020 – HRBO met with City of Duluth Directors (Parks & Rec and Property & Facilities) to share initial planning ideas for facilities improvements

2020 - HRBO begins work with SAS+ Associates on facilities planning and design

2021 – HRBO held focus group meetings to gather further input on facilities improvements

2021 – Grant funding awarded for final planning work

2022 – Public open house held for comment

Plan and Design Goals

- 1) Accessible education areas and facilities
- 2) Improved visitor safety with roadway enhancements
- 3) Additional education areas and facilities for increased capacity, education program opportunities for both guided and self-guided visitors, and program income.





Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory (HRBO) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit charitable organization. It was incorporated in 2004 as a successor to a committee of Duluth Audubon Society. Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory manages the 365-acre natural area, called Hawk Ridge Nature Reserve (HRNR), under a trust agreement with the City of Duluth, MN.

The mission of Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory is to protect birds of prey and other migratory birds in the Western Lake Superior Region through research, education, and stewardship. The primary goals of HRBO are to:

- STUDY ONE OF THE GREATEST MIGRATIONS OF BIRDS OF PREY IN NORTH AMERICA
- RESEARCH THE DISTRIBUTION, ABUNDANCE AND MIGRATORY PATHWAYS OF BIRDS IN THE WESTERN GREAT LAKES
- EDUCATE PEOPLE ABOUT BIRD CONSERVATION
- SERVE AS STEWARDS OF THE HAWK RIDGE NATURE RESERVE, THE FIRST DESIGNATED IMPORTANT BIRD AREA WITHIN MINNESOTA



HAWK RIDGE BIRD OBSERVATORY is known as one of the major sites for raptor migration observation- visitors come from all over the world every fall season to participate. Additionally, the Hawk Ridge Nature Reserve is a hiking and recreation destination for Duluth citizens and visitors on a year-round basis. Due to this ever-growing popularity, HRBO has identified several needs and improvements that will serve to create a safer and more accommodating experience for guests of all abilities.

UPGRADE #1: IMPROVED ACCESSIBILITY & SAFETY

A large portion of the 2020 planning efforts focus on making more aspects of the Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory accessible to all visitors. Utilizing and expanding on existing trails, the proposed plan will provide a three-quarter of a mile accessible loop with interpretive signage, group learning areas, and feeding stations. Improved drop-off areas and permanent accessible restroom facilities will also be added.



UPGRADE #2: ENHANCED VISITOR VIEWING & GATHERING SPACE



With the thousands of visitors that come to Hawk Ridge for the grand view, outdoor recreation, and bird migration, an expanded overlook area adjacent to East Skyline Parkway would provide a safe gathering space off the road for large groups, staging area for visitors and students, and an amphitheater-style seating space for magnificent views. A new picnic shelter will provide additional accessible gathering and seating space.

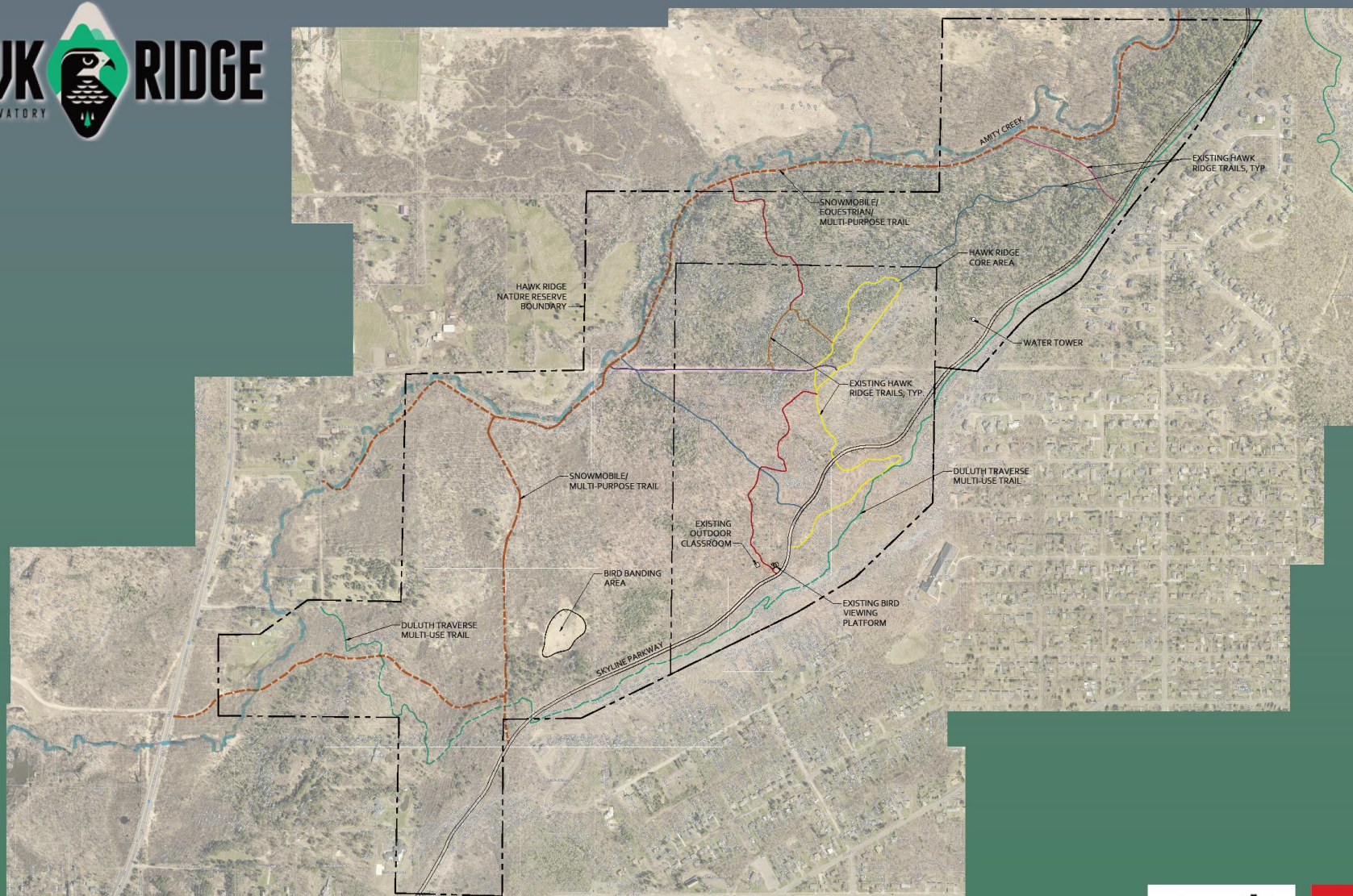
UPGRADE #3: INCREASED EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES

HRBO provides educational programming for schools, private groups, and the general public. As interest in these programs has increased, there is a need for additional and larger outdoor educational learning spaces. Currently, there is only one education program area at Hawk Ridge. It has outgrown its capacity, function, and is in need of repair. A large outdoor amphitheater is proposed for the area north of the current viewing platform. Adjacent to this space will be a new educational playscape for children of all ages to enjoy.

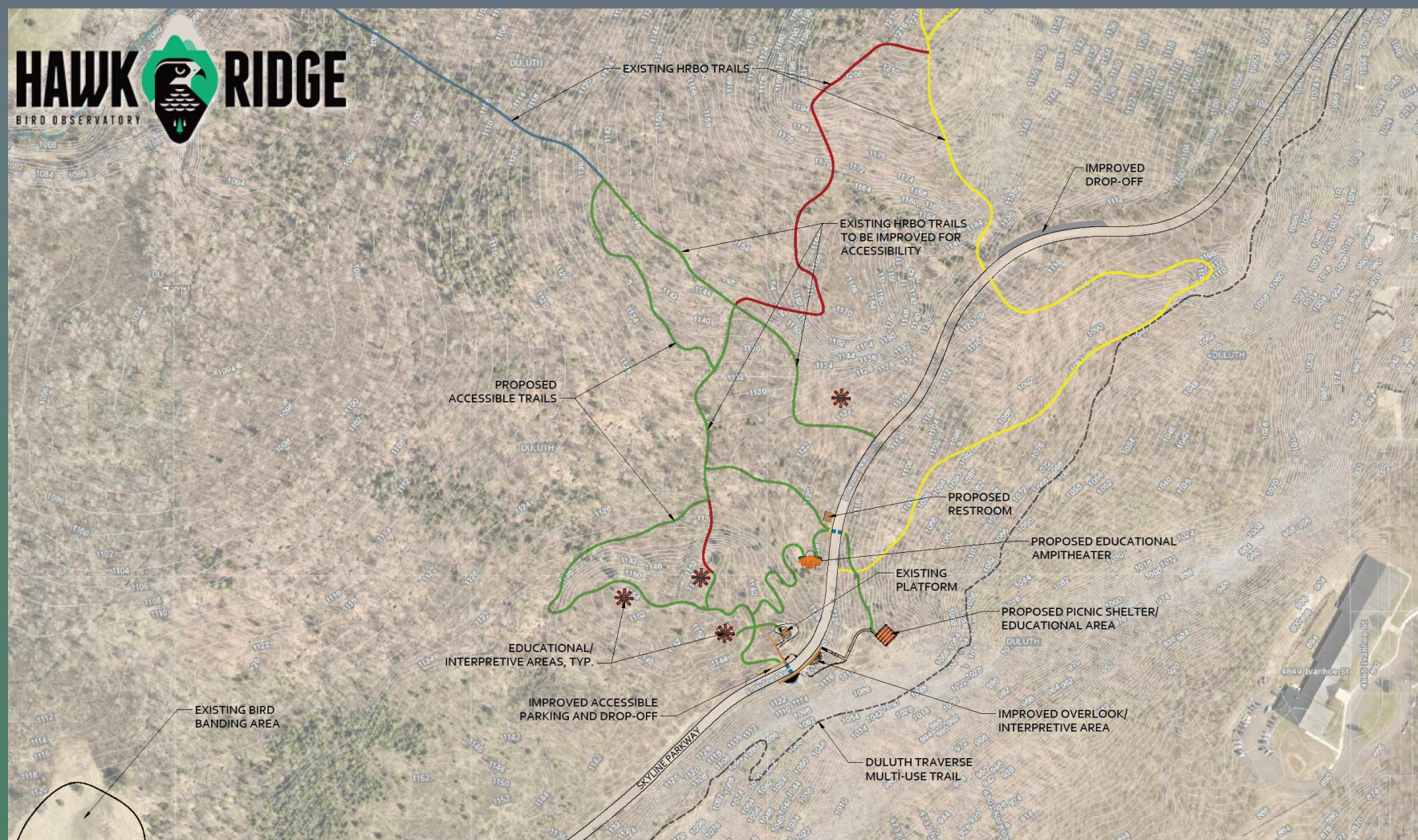


HAWK RIDGE NATURE RESERVE SITE IMPROVEMENTS FOR EDUCATION, ACCESSIBILITY AND SAFETY





EXISTING SITE CONDITIONS



CORE AREA SITE CONCEPT PLAN



EXISTING TRAIL TO BE
UPGRADED FOR ACCESSIBILITY

PROPOSED ACCESSIBLE
TRAIL/ INTERPRETIVE ROUTE

GROUP LEARNING AREAS/
FEEDING STATIONS

EDUCATIONAL
AMPHITHEATER
AREA

MAIN BIRD
COUNT
STATION

ROADWAY AND PARKING IMPROVEMENTS
TO CONTROL TRAFFIC SPEEDS AND
PROVIDE GREATER ACCESSIBILITY

EDUCATIONAL
PLAYSCAPE

CONCRETE
VAULT TOILET
BUILDING w/
STORAGE

EXISTING HRBO
TRAIL

COGGS
MULTI-USE TRAIL

PICNIC SHELTER FOR
EDUCATIONAL AND
GROUP GATHERINGS

OVERLOOK/ GROUP
SEATING

OVERLOOK/ GROUP
GATHERING DECK w/
INTERPRETIVE SIGNAGE

OVERLOOK/ GROUP GATHERING
DECK w/ INTERPRETIVE SIGNAGE

HAWK RIDGE NATURE
RESERVE BOUNDARY

CENTRAL AREA SITE IMPROVEMENTS

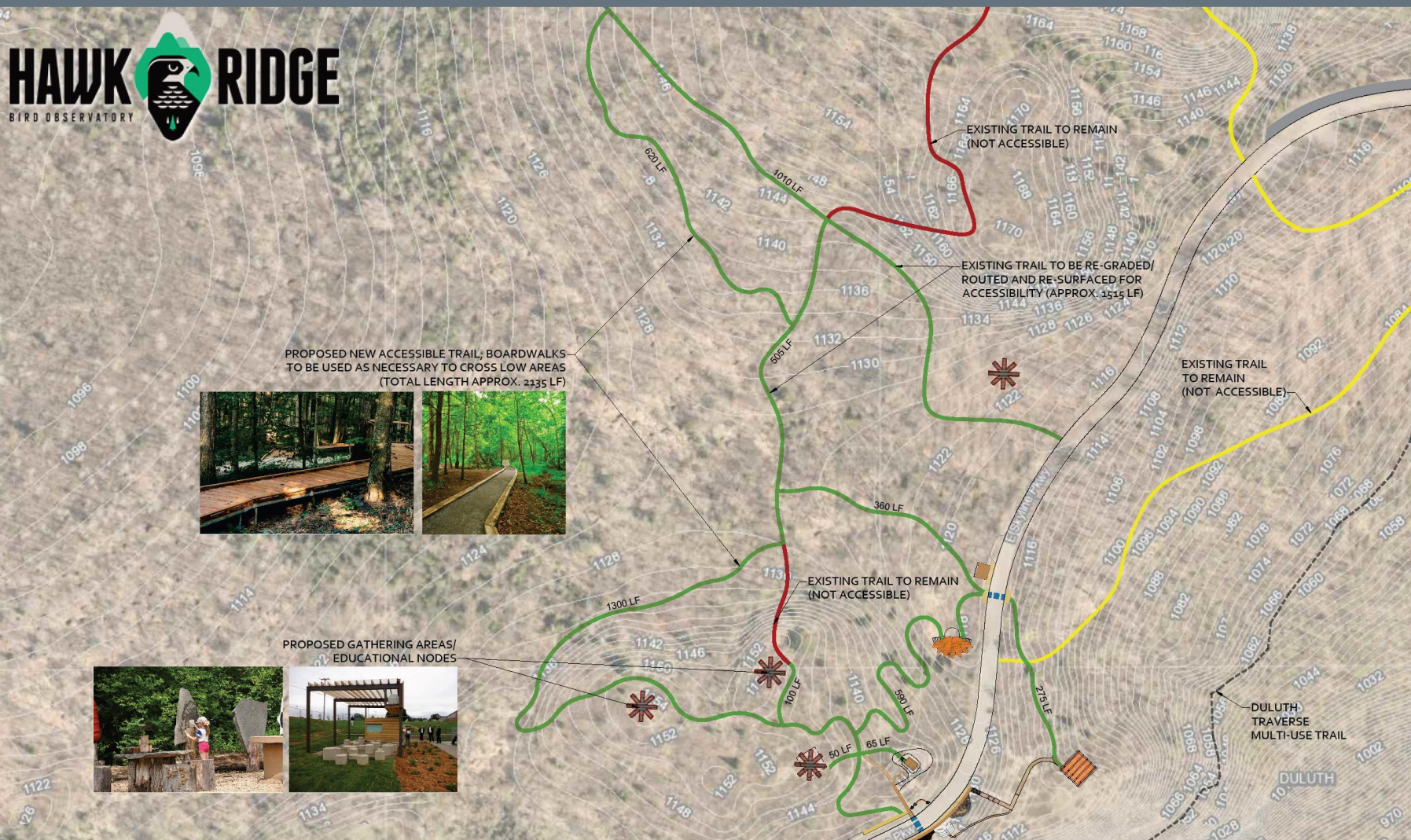




PROPOSED NEW ACCESSIBLE TRAIL; BOARDWALKS
TO BE USED AS NECESSARY TO CROSS LOW AREAS
(TOTAL LENGTH APPROX. 2135 LF)



PROPOSED GATHERING AREAS/
EDUCATIONAL NODES



ACCESSIBILITY IMPROVEMENTS



OVERLOOK & VIEWING PLATFORM IMPROVEMENTS





AMPHITHEATER & RESTROOM PLANS



Fundraising and Timeline

- Fundraising plan/timeline will be established in 2022-23
- HRBO lead fundraising campaign (grants, donations) & some in conjunction with City of Duluth
- Project construction phased based on priority and funding
- Initial cost projections are estimated at \$2-2.5 million.



Special Thanks To:

Lloyd K. Johnson Foundation

Duluth Superior Area Community Foundation

SAS+Associates

City of Duluth

Planning Focus Group Members

**Enjoy the beauty and birds of
Hawk Ridge with us!**

*Visit, volunteer, become a
member! THANK YOU!!*





QUESTIONS?

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