FRIENDS OF COOKS RUN

Proposal for Public Use of Cooks Run

Revised and Restated — August 2026

Submitted to the Iron County Board of Commissioners in response to the reopened Request for Proposals for Public Use of Cooks Run

Submitted by: Don Lintner, Chair · Cooks Run Steering Committee · Crystal Falls, Michigan · 414-426-3014 · info@friendsofcooksrun.org

Section 1 — Transmittal Letter

August 28, 2026

Lynette Lorenz, Project Representative
Iron County Courthouse
2 South Sixth Street, Suite 7
Crystal Falls, MI 49920

Dear Ms. Lorenz and Members of the Iron County Board of Commissioners,

On behalf of the Cooks Run Steering Committee — nine Iron County and regional conservation, recreation, and heritage organizations — we are pleased to submit this revised and restated proposal in response to the reopened Request for Proposals for Public Use of Cooks Run.

This proposal supersedes our proposal of June 3, 2026 and Addendum No. 1, which are withdrawn effective upon the County's receipt of this submission. It consolidates both into a single document — the Committee's one and only proposal before the Board. The enclosed letters of support endorse the Friends of Cooks Run partnership; every term those letters endorse is integrated, unchanged, in this document.

This proposal differs from our June 3 submission in four ways, each responding directly to the Board's discussion:

- **No cost to the County.** During an initial three-year term, Friends of Cooks Run funds and performs all work. No county financial contribution is requested, and no waiver of any RFP deliverable is required. Several founding donors have already pledged more than $10,000 in startup funding.
- **A three-year initial term** rather than ten years, renewable by mutual consent based on measurable benchmarks. The County retains full ownership and ultimate authority at all times.
- **A limited, mapped conservation zone** in place of a property-wide timber pause. The wetlands and riparian corridor along Cooks Run are protected; the balance of the property remains available for County timber management (Exhibit E).
- **Schools involved from the first year.** Supervised school field days begin in Year 1. The Watersmeet Township School District has provided a letter of support (Exhibit F), and West Iron County Public Schools has stated it is not interested in owning the property. The program is open to every area district.

This proposal shall remain binding for ninety (90) days from the submission date. All programs described herein will operate in full compliance with the deed restriction requiring that Cooks Run be used solely for public purposes. We request written acknowledgment of the County's receipt of this proposal, and respectfully ask to be placed on the Board's September 8, 2026 meeting agenda to present it in person and answer the Board's questions.

Respectfully submitted,
Don Lintner, Chair — Cooks Run Steering Committee, on behalf of the proposed Friends of Cooks Run

Section 2 — Executive Summary

Cooks Run is one of Iron County's most underutilized assets: 121.56 acres encompassing a historic log cabin (built 1933–35 by the Civil Works Administration, known locally as the WPA cabin) on the National Register of Historic Places, a high-quality trout stream, diverse forest and wetland habitat, and a location just off US-2, one of the Upper Peninsula's most traveled tourist corridors. For decades the property has sat at the end of an unmarked road while its historic cabin deteriorates.

We propose the formation of Friends of Cooks Run, a Michigan 501(c)(3) nonprofit emerging from the nine-organization Cooks Run Steering Committee, to serve as the County's dedicated partner in the stewardship, restoration, and public development of the property. The County retains full ownership and authority. The Friends bring the volunteer labor, fundraising, grant-writing, and community engagement.

The offer, in one paragraph

For an initial three-year term, at no cost to the County, the Friends will: form and insure the 501(c)(3); secure, stabilize, and re-stain the historic cabin; clean up the site and gravel the cabin drive; open the island trail with footbridges; place picnic tables, benches, and interpretive signage; hold public events each year; and run supervised school field days beginning in Year 1. The incorporation documents are drafted and ready to file, and more than $10,000 in startup pledges is already committed. At the end of three years the Board judges the results against the benchmarks in Section 4 and decides — for any reason — whether to renew.

Alignment with the County's own Recreation Plan

This proposal implements what the Iron County Recreation Plan 2022–2026 already calls for. The Plan devotes Goal 3 specifically to this site: "Make improvements to Cooks Run Historical Site to include a driveway and parking area, accessible restroom, interpretive signage, nature trails, and primitive camping." Objective 1C directs the County to take advantage of the natural resources at Cooks Run, and Objective 4A calls for updating its facilities toward ADA standards — the Plan's own accessibility evaluation ranked the site (1), with none of its facilities meeting accessibility guidelines. In the Plan's resident survey, nature trails, snowshoe trails, and accessible restrooms ranked among residents' priorities, and written comments asked the County simply to "do something with Cooks Run." The three-year work plan in this proposal delivers the driveway and parking improvements, interpretive signage, nature trails, accessible facilities, and winter recreation the County's own Plan and survey call for — at no cost to the County.

Stream protection and timber compatibility

Exhibit E is a preliminary map delineating the wetlands and riparian corridor along Cooks Run — a limited portion of the 121.56 acres — that this proposal asks be kept off limits to timber harvest and development to protect water quality and enhance the trout habitat that makes the site distinctive. The zone was delineated by the Iron County Watershed Coalition with input from White Water Associates, following the riparian management zone guidance in the Michigan DNR's Sustainable Soil and Water Quality Practices on Forest Land and existing USFS and DNR landscape-level science. Outside the mapped zone, the property remains available for timber management by the County, and a well-planned harvest outside the zone is compatible with — and can actively assist — trail development and habitat work.

The economic case

Western Upper Peninsula visitors spend an average of $101 per day trip and $357 per overnight visit. A modest 1,000 visitors per year generates the equivalent of a full timber harvest every three months — a revenue stream that renews every year and grows as the site matures, sending visitors to Iron County restaurants, motels, and small businesses. With this proposal, that opportunity costs the County nothing to test (Exhibit A).

Section 3 — Response to RFP Deliverables

The following responds to each of the nine deliverables in Section II of the RFP. Unlike our June 3 submission, this proposal requires no waiver of any deliverable: all work during the initial term is financed without support from the County of Iron.

Deliverable 1 — Nonprofit Organization for Year-Round Public Programs

Friends of Cooks Run will be a Michigan 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation emerging directly from the nine-organization Cooks Run Steering Committee. The incorporation documents are drafted and ready to file upon county approval; the full formation plan is in Section 5. The Friends will operate a non-discriminatory public use program year-round, open to the public without regard to any protected characteristic. Programming begins modestly in Year 1 — site access during daylight hours, volunteer workdays, school field days, and community events — and grows as capacity develops.

Deliverable 2 — Conceptual and Organizational Plan: The Three-Year Work Plan

The initial-term work plan is sized for a volunteer organization with a working core of five to ten regular volunteers, at modest cash cost, producing visible results at the site in every year. Larger capital items — a permanent ADA vault toilet, ADA trail surfacing, an accessible fishing platform, US-2 highway signage, and expanded trail development — are deferred to the renewal term, with a rented ADA-compliant portable toilet serving volunteers and visitors each season. Figures are estimates pending quotes.

Each year advances objectives the Recreation Plan 2022–2026 sets for this site (Goal 3, Objectives 1C and 4A): driveway, parking, and interpretive signage in Year 1; nature trails and a winter snowshoe event in Year 2; accessible seating and expanded interpretation in Year 3, with accessible restroom service on site each season.

Year 1 — Organize, Secure, and Open

- **Complete 501(c)(3) formation:** file the prepared incorporation documents with Michigan LARA, adopt bylaws, seat the board, file IRS Form 1023-EZ, open a bank account, and secure general liability insurance.
- **Protect and make the cabin safe:** replace OSB window coverings with Lexan panels, install the basement stair railing, cover the basement window wells, repair entrance light fixtures, and fix the protruding roofing nails in the loft ceiling.
- **Clean up and open the site:** parking-area and grounds cleanup and clearing of the existing two-track trails through organized volunteer workdays (three to four per year).
- **Improve the drive:** gravel and grade the drive to the cabin, using volunteers with their own equipment; cash cost is limited to gravel.
- **Tell the story:** install one professionally produced historic interpretive panel at the cabin connecting Cooks Run to the county's Depression-era relief heritage.
- **Build the base:** hold the founding community fundraiser, launch the website and Facebook page, and place a donation station at the parking area.
- **Bring the schools in from day one:** hold the first supervised school field day with at least one local district, in coordination with the Iron County Watershed Coalition, and engage student art, media, and marketing classes in outreach materials (Exhibit C).

Item	Estimate	Basis
501(c)(3) formation (LARA articles $20; IRS Form 1023-EZ $275)	$295	Published fees
General liability insurance (small-nonprofit policy)	$600–$1,200	Typical quotes
Lexan window protection (approx. 4 sheets @ ~$180)	$720	Site assessment
Basement stair railing and window-well covers (materials)	$200–$300	Site assessment
Outdoor light fixture repair (materials)	$200	Site assessment
Loft ceiling repair	Volunteer labor	Site assessment
Hand tools, safety gear, workday supplies	$300	Committee estimate
Historic interpretive panel at cabin (printed panel, posts)	$600–$900	Vendor pricing
Gravel for cabin drive (grading by volunteers with equipment)	$600–$1,200	Committee estimate
ADA-compliant portable toilet, workdays/events (3 months @ $275–$350)	$825–$1,050	Vendor pricing
Website, domain, printing, donation station	$300	Committee estimate
School field-day supplies	$250	Committee estimate
Year 1 estimated cash total	**$4,890–$6,715**	

Year 2 — Restore and Welcome

- **Stabilize the cabin exterior:** log repair with Abatron Wood Epox and exterior oil-based stain compatible with the original creosote finish — the single most important preservation task for the National Register cabin.
- **Open the island trail:** open the loop using the existing two-track drives and the berm single-track, with two simple timber footbridges over wet crossings.
- **Make it comfortable to stay:** place two picnic tables near the cabin.
- **Hold the first public events:** three Friends-sponsored public events — suggested: a spring fishing clinic, a fall heritage walk, and a winter snowshoe outing.
- **Grow the outdoor classroom:** a second season of school field days, adding districts and student water-quality monitoring with the Watershed Coalition.
- **Pursue outside money:** submit the first round of grant applications (Trout Unlimited Embrace-A-Stream, Michigan historic preservation programs, UPEC and regional community grants) for Year 3 and renewal-term projects.

Item	Estimate	Basis
General liability insurance	$600–$1,200	Typical quotes
Cabin log repair and exterior stain (materials)	$1,200	Materials research
Two picnic tables (@ ~$800)	$1,600	Vendor pricing
Two timber footbridges (materials)	$1,000–$1,600	Committee estimate
Event costs (three public events)	$450	Committee estimate
School field-day supplies	$250	Committee estimate
ADA-compliant portable toilet, season (5 months @ $275–$350)	$1,375–$1,750	Vendor pricing
Year 2 estimated cash total	**$6,475–$8,050**	

Year 3 — Interpret and Prove

- **Interpretive trail signage:** four to six small nature and history panels along the island trail, designed and fabricated with local school art and technical classes where possible (Exhibit C).
- **Accessible seating:** two ADA-compliant benches at the cabin and streamside.
- **Expand the outdoor classroom:** field days open to all three area districts — West Iron County, Forest Park, and Watersmeet — and student participation in trail-signage design and fabrication.
- **Keep the events going:** continue the three annual Friends-sponsored public events begun in Year 2.
- **Count the results:** install a trail counter and maintain a cabin guest log so the Year 3 report to the Board is built on measured use, not anecdotes.
- **Report and propose renewal:** deliver a three-year results report and a proposed renewal-term plan to the Board.

Item	Estimate	Basis
General liability insurance	$600–$1,200	Typical quotes
Interpretive trail panels (4–6 small panels)	$900–$1,200	Vendor pricing
Two ADA-compliant benches (@ $500–$1,000)	$1,000–$2,000	Vendor pricing
School field-day supplies	$250	Committee estimate
Trail counter and guest log	$200–$400	Vendor pricing
Event costs (three public events)	$450	Committee estimate
ADA-compliant portable toilet, season (5 months @ $275–$350)	$1,375–$1,750	Vendor pricing
Year 3 estimated cash total	**$4,775–$7,250**	

Three-year estimated cash total: $16,140–$22,015, funded entirely by the Friends through the founding fundraiser, member-organization contributions, individual donations, and grants. More than $10,000 of this total has already been pledged by founding donors. No County funds are requested during the initial term.

Renewal-term vision.

If the partnership is renewed, later phases follow the vision of our June 3 submission: an ADA-accessible fishing platform on the existing concrete weirs, expanded hiking, snowshoeing and mountain-biking trails, US-2 wayfinding signage, cabin interior Depression-era heritage exhibits, an insulated cabin roof, structured university partnerships, seasonal events, and possible connection to the Ottawa National Forest trail network.

Deliverable 3 — Financing Method for Public Programs

All public programming during the initial three-year term is financed by Friends of Cooks Run without support from the County of Iron, as the RFP requires. Funding sources:

- **Startup pledges already committed:** more than $10,000 pledged by several founding donors — the majority of the three-year budget — before the first community fundraiser has been held.
- **Community fundraising:** a founding fundraiser in Year 1, annual giving campaigns, donation stations at the site, and major donor cultivation.
- **Member organization in-kind contributions:** volunteer labor, equipment, and materials from the nine Steering Committee organizations.

- **Grants:** Michigan DNR Heritage Fund, Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund, Recreation Passport grants, Trout Unlimited Embrace-A-Stream and Northern Great Lakes Initiative, National Trust for Historic Preservation, Michigan Historic Preservation Network, Superior Watershed Partnership, UPEC, and WE Energies Mitigation and Enhancement Fund.
- **Long-term:** endowment earnings — building a permanent fund is the Friends' central long-term financial goal.

Deliverable 4 — Tentative First-Year Budget

The Year 1 budget is presented in full under Deliverable 2 above: an estimated cash outlay of $4,890–$6,715, funded by startup pledges and the founding fundraiser, plus substantial volunteer labor from the nine member organizations. Years 2 and 3 are budgeted at $6,475–$8,050 and $4,775–$7,250 respectively.

Deliverable 5 — Usage Fees

General public access to Cooks Run will be free of charge, consistent with the deed's public-purpose requirement. No fees for trail use, fishing, or general site access. Optional donation stations may be placed at the parking area and cabin. Modest fees for structured programming (guided tours, organized events, group reservations) may be considered in future phases, reviewed annually, and will never create a barrier to public access.

Deliverable 6 — Financing for Maintenance and Improvement

During the initial term, all maintenance of areas and facilities under the partnership is performed and funded by the Friends — routine upkeep through volunteer labor, materials through the budgets above, and insurance carried by the Friends from Year 1. Long-term maintenance funding follows the same structure as Deliverable 3: endowment earnings, annual giving, historic preservation grants available to National Register structures, and in-kind member contributions.

Timber management and the conservation zone.

This proposal does not request a property-wide timber pause. It asks that the limited wetland and riparian conservation zone mapped in Exhibit E be kept off limits to harvest and development, protecting the stream corridor that anchors the site's recreational, ecological, and economic value. Outside that zone, timber management remains the County's prerogative, and the Friends would welcome coordinating harvest planning so that it assists trail building and habitat work. At renewal, if the Board finds it in the County's interest, the parties may discuss directing a share of future timber revenue — on the order of one third — into a dedicated fund for site improvement. Nothing in this proposal commits the County to that step.

Deliverable 7 — Staffing and Hours of Operation

All staffing is volunteer-based during the initial term, coordinated by the Friends board. The site is open to the public during daylight hours year-round. Staffed programming follows volunteer availability and seasonal demand — weekends and select weekdays in summer, fall color, and winter snowshoe seasons. An emergency contact and site steward program will be established in Year 1. A paid part-time site coordinator is a renewal-term goal as the endowment matures.

Deliverable 8 — Central Contact Information

Contact: Don Lintner, 414-426-3014, info@friendsofcooksrun.org. The friendsofcooksrun.org domain is registered; the full website and a Facebook presence launch in Year 1 to support outreach, event promotion, and fundraising.

Deliverable 9 — Partner Organizations

The breadth of organizational support behind Friends of Cooks Run is unmatched by any alternative approach, and it is no longer just a promise — letters of support are attached as Exhibit F.

- **Founding coalition (Cooks Run Steering Committee):** Iron County Audubon – Lee LeBlanc Chapter; Northwoods Heritage Guild; Iron County Historical and Museum Society; Iron County Trail Club; Iron County Watershed Coalition; Fred Waara Chapter, Trout Unlimited; Green UP; Silent Sporters; Wildlife Unlimited of Iron County.
- **Letters of support in hand:** Watersmeet Township School District (George Peterson, Superintendent) and the Golden Lake Landowners Association (Russ Ford, President) — the property owners nearest the site, who share the Cooks Run watershed. Watersmeet's letter highlights a partnership with the Lac Vieux Desert Band's Environmental Department: student wetland-plant programming and participation in the tribe's Manoomin restoration monitoring — opportunities that extend to every partner district.
- **Education partners:** school field days begin in Year 1 and the program is open to all area districts — West Iron County and Forest Park in Iron County, and Watersmeet in neighboring Gogebic County. Students from both counties contribute field science, art and signage fabrication, historical research, and event support (Exhibit C).
- **Anticipated technical and scientific partners:** U.S. Forest Service – Ottawa National Forest (advisory); Michigan DNR; Michigan Technological University (Dr. David Flaspohler); Northern Michigan University (Professors Jill Leonard, Jacquie Medina, Alec Lindsay); Purdue University (Dr. Marisol Sepúlveda); Lac Vieux Desert Environmental Department (Roger Labine); White Water Associates (conservation zone delineation input). Individual participation is anticipated, with confirmations in progress.
- **Grant and funding partners:** Superior Watershed Partnership, UPEC, Trout Unlimited Northern Great Lakes Initiative, Michigan Historic Preservation Network, National Trust for Historic Preservation.
- **County partnership:** Iron County Parks and Recreation Committee as the primary county liaison for the partnership agreement.

Section 4 — Proposed Partnership Agreement: Term and Benchmarks

- **Initial term:** three (3) years from execution of the partnership agreement.
- **Renewal:** extension by mutual consent at the end of Year 3, informed by annual reports and the benchmarks below.
- **Ownership and authority:** Iron County retains full ownership and ultimate authority over the property at all times.
- **Management responsibility:** the Friends manage public programming, volunteer coordination, fundraising, grant administration, and routine maintenance.
- **Conservation zone:** the wetland and riparian zone mapped in Exhibit E (as finalized by survey) is off limits to timber harvest and development for the duration of the agreement. The boundary is intended to hold from year to year, changing only after documented scientific review agreed by the County and the Friends — not by unilateral action on either side. At renewal, the Friends will work with the County to carry this protection into the County's Forest Management Plan at its next revision, so the zone is reflected in the County's own planning documents, not just this agreement. This is a renewal-term goal; it commits the County to nothing now.
- **Termination:** the County may decline to renew at the end of the initial term for any reason. Improvements made by the Friends remain with the property.
- **Annual reporting:** the Friends report to the Board each year on programs, finances, volunteer hours, and property condition.
- **Amendment:** material changes require mutual written consent.

Performance Benchmarks for the Year 3 Renewal Decision

We ask the Board to hold us to results. At the end of the initial term, Friends of Cooks Run will have:

- An operating 501(c)(3) in good standing, insured, with audited-quality annual financial reports to the Board.
- The historic cabin secured, stabilized, and re-stained, with interpretive signage in place.
- The island trail open and bridged, with picnic and accessible seating at the site.
- At least six public events held, and school field programs held in every year of the term — growing from at least one district in Year 1 toward all three.
- Documented visitor counts, volunteer hours, and dollars raised — the evidence on which the Board can judge renewal.

Section 5 — Organization Background and 501(c)(3) Formation

The Cooks Run Steering Committee was established in September 2025 to advance the potential of the Cooks Run property as a public asset. Its nine member organizations collectively represent hundreds of Iron County residents with expertise spanning conservation biology, fisheries management, historic preservation, outdoor recreation, education, water quality, and community organizing. There are no pending lawsuits or judgments against the Steering Committee, its member organizations, or their officers in the past five years.

- **Leadership:** Steering Committee Chair Don Lintner. The founding board of Friends of Cooks Run will be drawn from the nine member organizations and other members of the community, with Mark Sarder serving as President. The remaining officers are elected by the board at the organizational meeting under bylaws adopted there.
- **Formation readiness:** Articles of Incorporation and bylaws are drafted and ready to file with Michigan LARA upon county approval; IRS Form 1023-EZ follows immediately (1–3 months typical approval). Estimated time from county approval to fully operational 501(c)(3): 3–6 months.
- **Bridge period:** volunteer site work — trail clearing, cabin assessment, community outreach — begins immediately upon county approval under an informal stewardship arrangement, in parallel with the formation process.
- **Capitalization:** more than $10,000 in founding pledges is committed; the founding fundraiser and member-organization contributions seed Year 1 operations, with grant applications submitted in Year 1 for Year 2 funding.

Section 6 — Signed Statement

The undersigned, as authorized representative of the Cooks Run Steering Committee and on behalf of the proposed Friends of Cooks Run, affirms that: all programs and activities described in this proposal will operate in full compliance with the deed restriction requiring that the property be used solely for public purposes; this proposal shall remain binding for ninety (90) days from its submission date; the Steering Committee and its member organizations have no conflicts of interest with the County of Iron; there are no pending lawsuits or judgments against the Steering Committee, its member organizations, or their officers in the past five (5) years; and the information contained herein is accurate and complete to the best of the undersigned's knowledge.

Donald Lintner

Don Lintner, Chair — Cooks Run Steering Committee, on behalf of Friends of Cooks Run
Date: August 28, 2026

Exhibits

- **Exhibit A** — Economic Value to Iron County: Cooks Run as a Recreational and Heritage Asset (carried forward from the June 3, 2026 submission).
- **Exhibit B** — Cooks Run Property and Proposed Trail Map (carried forward from the June 3, 2026 submission).
- **Exhibit C** — Student Partnership Opportunities (carried forward from the June 3, 2026 submission).
- **Exhibit D** — Northwoods Heritage Guild: Historical Background on Cooks Run CCC/WPA History (carried forward from the June 3, 2026 submission).
- **Exhibit E** — Proposed Wetland & Riparian Protection Zone Map — delineated by the Iron County Watershed Coalition with input from White Water Associates (preliminary; survey pending).
- **Exhibit F** — Letters of Support: Watersmeet Township School District (George Peterson, Superintendent); Golden Lake Landowners Association (Russ Ford, President).

EXHIBIT A

Cooks Run

RECREATIONAL, HISTORIC & EDUCATIONAL VALUE TO IRON COUNTY

Iron County Board of Commissioners
Prepared by the Cooks Run Steering Committee
Iron County, Michigan · 2026

Cooks Run's 121.56 acres carry the 1933–35 log cabin, built under the Civil Works Administration and known locally as the WPA cabin, a high-quality trout stream, and direct frontage on US-2. Developed on its own merits — for public recreation, heritage preservation, and hands-on education — the site becomes a lasting source of visitor spending, workforce and student engagement, and community identity for Iron County.

R RECREATIONAL VALUE

- High-quality trout stream, hiking, and paddling access adjoining the Ottawa National Forest
- Hiking (53%) and hunting & fishing (36%) already rank among the top reported summer activities for Iron County visitors (UMich EGI/ WUPPDR, 2024)
- Western U.P. day-trip visitors spend $101.63 per person on average; Iron County day-trip visitors report $111.24 in regional per-person spending (UMich EGI/ WUPPDR, 2024)
- A signed, plowed, ADA-accessible trailhead on US-2 turns passing traffic into stopping visitors

H HISTORIC VALUE

- The historic cabin is one of Iron County's few surviving Depression-era public works structures, restorable as an interpretive heritage site
- Arts, Culture & History activities were reported by roughly a third of Iron County's summer visitors and a quarter of fall visitors (UMich EGI/ WUPPDR, 2024)
- Places Iron County within the region's established heritage-tourism circuit alongside Fort Wilkins Historic State Park and the Keweenaw National Historical Park
- Restoring and interpreting the cabin returns the site to the public use the 1961 deed intended

E EDUCATIONAL VALUE

- Partnerships proposed with regional universities, the area school districts, and tribal and community organizations; formal commitments in progress
- The stream and forest habitat support ongoing water-quality monitoring, forestry, and ecology fieldwork for K-12 and university students
- A proposed Environmental Impact Study ties the site to regional research capacity, giving the county a standing outdoor classroom
- Builds the kind of place-based amenity that helps rural counties retain and attract young families and talent (Bridge Michigan, 2019)

$216.12
AVG. IN-COUNTY SPENDING PER OVERNIGHT VISITOR (4-DAY TRIP)
UMich EGI / WUPPDR, 2024

225 jobs
ALREADY SUPPORTED BY TOURISM IN IRON COUNTY — 5% OF ALL COUNTY JOBS
UMich EGI / WUPPDR, 2024

$22.5M
ANNUAL ECONOMIC OUTPUT ALREADY GENERATED BY TOURISM IN IRON COUNTY
UMich EGI / WUPPDR, 2024

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR COOKS RUN

Iron County's tourism sector is a proven local economic engine, not a hypothetical one. At a modest 1,500 day-trip visitors a year — reasonable for a signed, US-2-facing trailhead — Cooks Run alone would generate an estimated **$167,000 in regional visitor spending annually**, a figure that recurs and grows every year as the site is developed, gains visibility, and adds programming.

Sources: University of Michigan Economic Growth Institute & Western Upper Peninsula Planning and Development Region (WUPPDR), *Understanding Tourism Impacts in the Western U.P.* (2024); Bridge Michigan, "Talk about Pure Michigan: Outdoor pursuits generate $10B, report says" (2019); Cooks Run Steering Committee.

COOKS RUN PROPERTY

PROPOSED SITE IMPROVEMENTS
PARKING, TRAILS, VAULT TOILET

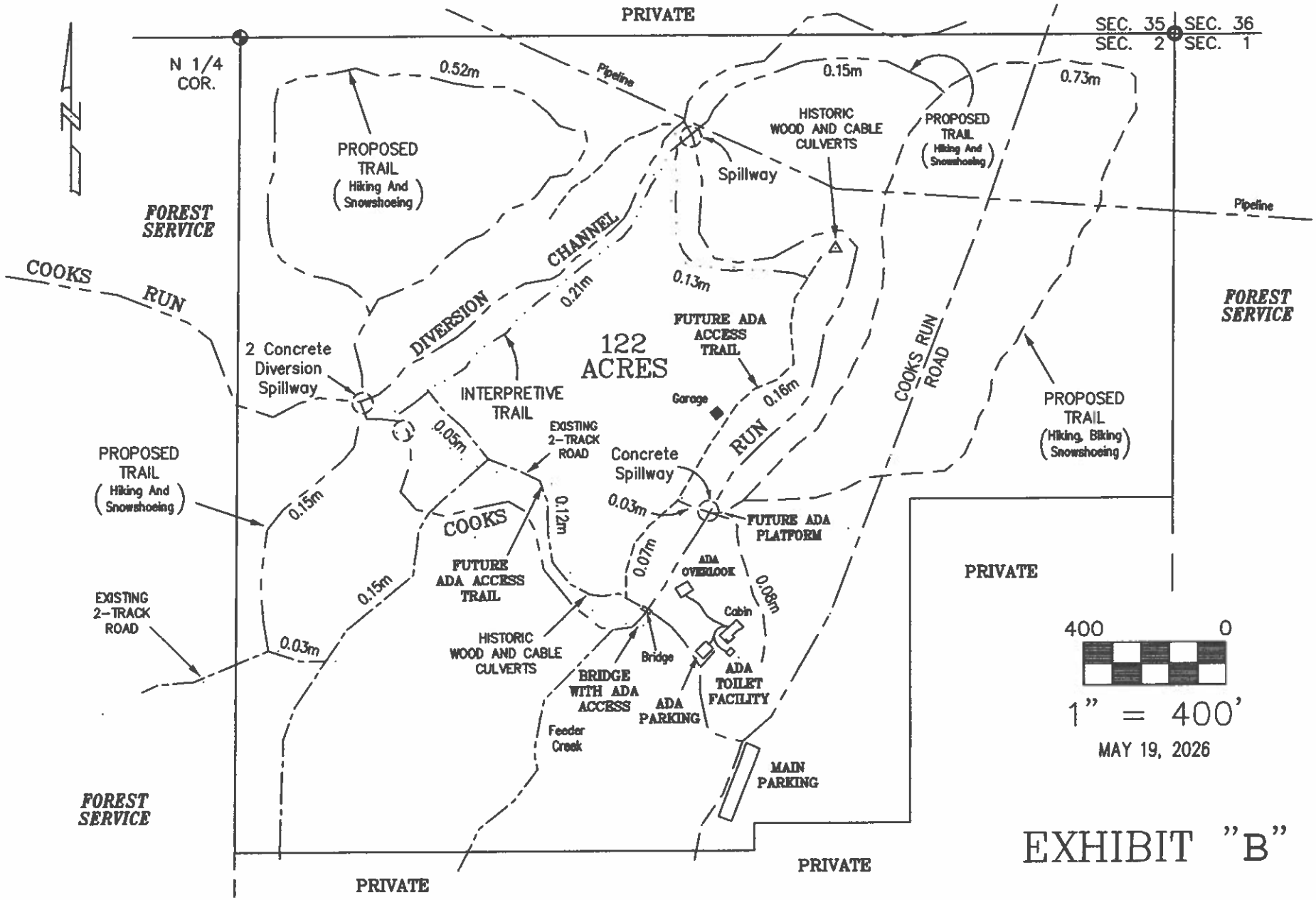


EXHIBIT "B"

Exhibit C

COOKS RUN

Student Partnership Opportunities

A living outdoor classroom, historic site, and community destination — built with local students

F Forestry & Ecology

- Forest inventory and stand assessment
- Stream health and water quality monitoring
- Wildlife habitat field studies
- Collaboration proposed with regional and visiting university faculty
- USFS / DNR landscape-level science as curriculum resource

H History & Heritage

- The 1933–35 log cabin, built under the Civil Works Administration and known locally as the WPA cabin: National Register of Historic Places
- CCC era research, writing, and presentation
- Architectural documentation and drawing
- Connection to Camp Gibbs — one of Michigan's most complete surviving CCC camps
- Oral history projects with community members

A Art, Design & Fabrication

- Poster and promotional design for 3–4 annual events
- Interpretive trail sign design and content
- Fab lab / CNC fabrication of installed site signage
- Photography, video, and social media content
- Real portfolio work installed at a public site

C Community & Leadership

- Event volunteering and coordination
- Student-led cabin and trail tours
- Invasive species and stream bank restoration
- Grant research and writing as classroom exercise
- Civic engagement on a real county asset

Why this partnership works for your school

No cost to the district. Friends of Cooks Run carries all operational, financial, and insurance responsibility for the site. **Real work, real results.** Students produce signs, posters, and data that are actually used — not just graded. **County-wide visibility.** Your school's contribution to a public landmark recognized by the Iron County Board of Commissioners.

Partnerships with named institutions are proposed and under discussion, each is named individually once a formal commitment is documented. Cooks Run Steering Committee.

Exhibit D
Northwoods Heritage Guild: Historical Background on Cooks Run CCC/WPA

Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) and Works Progress Administration (WPA) projects in Iron County, Michigan, during the 1930s and 1940s were focused on forest management, infrastructure improvement, and building public facilities. The Cooks Run Cabin, rearing pond structures, and surrounding forestlands are one such project ("Cooks Run") that deserves to be maintained and improved in this 21st Century when, more and more, we are losing contact with our past and the land that provided us opportunities and recreation.

Cooks Run has potential to be a bright star in a constellation of Iron County CCC/WPA history. Other nearby projects prove it is not merely an outlier or remnant. A primary CCC site in the county is the closely located Camp Gibbs Recreation Area, which is one of the most complete surviving CCC camps in the state.

Camp Gibbs was established in 1935 by the 3604th Company. This camp, two miles south of the former lumbering town of Gibbs City, consisted of 19 buildings, including barracks, a mess hall, kitchen, officers' quarters, bathhouse, and garage. Today, 16 single-story, wood-frame gable-roof buildings remain, making it a key historical site of the era.

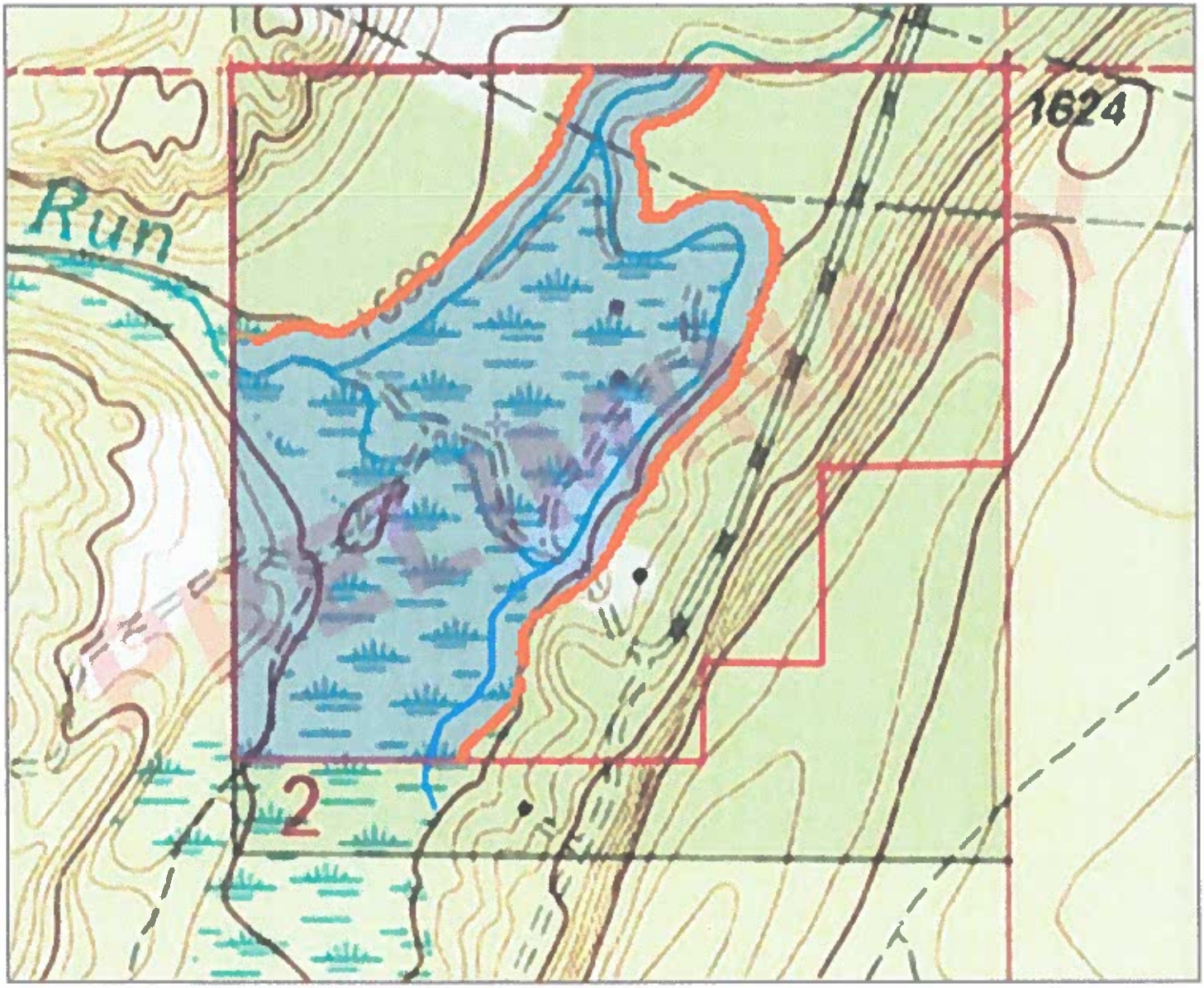
Key builders of Ottawa National Forest infrastructure, workers from Camp Gibbs and other local camps constructed miles of truck trails for fire control, erected fire lookout towers, and installed telephone lines. They likely built nearby Lake Ottawa's impressive log pavilion and visitor center. At Paint Lake, a separate CCC camp was active in the area, acting as a parent unit to the 3604th Company at Camp Gibbs.

Public works project are not just historical artifacts; they are *living* history.
Noteworthy projects include the multiple log structures still serving the public as part of Bewabic State Park near Crystal Falls. Transitioning from county park to state park, this facility serves tens of thousands of visitors each year. Pentoga Park's office and bathhouse (1936) are similar examples of efforts to improve recreational facilities in the area.

Cooks Run's expansive forestlands offer a unique recreational experience. Its well crafted log structure and interiors provide the opportunity for historical interpretation and ties together past and present, livelihoods and lifestyles. In a world increasingly disconnected from nature, Cooks Run has the potential to extend its history to future generations.

COOKS RUN — PROPOSED WETLAND & RIPARIAN PROTECTION ZONE

PRELIMINARY — approximate boundaries, survey pending



Legend

Cooks Run property boundary (approximate) — 121.56 acres, Iron County

Proposed protection zone — wetlands and riparian corridor along Cooks Run; no timber harvest or development, to protect water quality and trout habitat

All property outside the shaded zone remains available for County timber management.

Zone delineation: Iron County Watershed Coalition, with input from White Water Associates

Prepared by Friends of Cooks Run · August 2026 · Base: USGS topographic map · Boundaries approximate pending survey

Watersmeet Township School District
N 4720 Hwy 45, PO Box 217
Watersmeet, MI 49969

August 26, 2026

Iron County Board of Commissioners
c/o Lynette Lorenz, Project Representative
Iron County Courthouse
2 South Sixth Street, Suite 7
Crystal Falls, MI 49920

Re: Letter of Support — Friends of Cooks Run Proposal

Dear Chairman Stauber and Members of the Board,

On behalf of Watersmeet Township School District, I am writing in support of the Friends of Cooks Run proposal. Through Roger Labine, from the Environmental Department of the Lac Vieux Desert Band of Lake Superior Chippewa, we have been in communication with the Cooks Run Steering Committee about what this property could offer our students. We consider it a genuine educational opportunity for this district.

Cooks Run would give our students a valuable outdoor classroom. Under this partnership, our students would take part in supervised water-quality and stream-health monitoring on Cooks Run alongside the Iron County Watershed Coalition and university faculty. Roger Labine is very interested in developing a wetland plant program for the school district and the Boys & Girls Club as well as including them in the tribe's surface water monitoring for their Manoomin restoration projects. The experience that the students receive at Cook's Run would be valuable for this and other tribal environmental monitoring.

We are glad to see the Friends of Cooks Run approach to the stream itself. Protecting the wetlands and riparian corridor along Cooks Run is not just good conservation practice — it is the foundation of the water-quality and trout-habitat fieldwork our students would be doing there. A protected, healthy stream is what makes this site worth building a curriculum around.

We also appreciate that this partnership asks nothing of the school district financially. Friends of Cooks Run will provide supervision, and operational responsibility for the site; our role is simply to bring our students and our curriculum to a place worth learning from.

Watersmeet Township School District is pleased to stand behind this proposal and looks forward to being a partner in it.

Sincerely,

George Peterson

Superintendent, Watersmeet Township School District
gpeterson3@watersmeet.k12.mi.us

Golden Lake Landowners Association

6096 U.S. Hwy 2 · Iron River, MI 49935

August 1, 2026

Iron County Board of Commissioners
c/o Lynette Lorenz, Project Representative
Iron County Courthouse
2 South Sixth Street, Suite 7
Crystal Falls, MI 49920

Re: Letter of Support — Friends of Cooks Run Proposal and Addendum No. 1

Dear Chairman Stauber and Members of the Board,

On behalf of the Golden Lake Landowners Association (GLLA), I am writing to support the Friends of Cooks Run proposal now before you, and the addendum the Cooks Run Steering Committee has brought to your August meeting. Our Association represents property owners who care deeply about the lakes and streams of this county, particularly Golden Lake and the Cooks Run trout stream. Some are lifetime residents who have spent many years enjoying the Cooks Run property. These two bodies of water are roughly 1,100 feet apart and share a common watershed that we call our home. Long-term protection of these linked resources is important to the GLLA membership.

We are glad to see that protection made explicit. Addendum No. 1 replaces the original property-wide timber pause with a mapped conservation zone covering the wetlands and riparian corridor along Cooks Run, off limits to harvest and development, drawn from the Michigan DNR's Sustainable Soil and Water Quality Practices on Forest Land and the existing USFS and DNR landscape-level science for the area. That is the right approach: it protects the water and the trout habitat that make this site worth protecting in the first place, while still leaving the rest of the property available to the County. We would ask the Board to hold that conservation zone firm as the partnership moves forward, and to keep the Friends' and the Iron County Watershed Coalition's stream monitoring and water-quality data at the center of any future decisions about the property, including any eventual timber management outside the mapped zone.

We also support the broader proposal on its own merits. Asking a volunteer group to prove itself over an initial three-year term, at no cost to the County, is a reasonable and low-risk way to find out what Friends of Cooks Run can deliver. A restored WPA cabin, an open trail system, and a stream protected for trout habitat and water quality would be a genuine asset to Iron County and to everyone downstream who depends on clean water. The involvement of Trout Unlimited, the Watershed Coalition, and university and school partners in monitoring stream health gives us further confidence that the riparian protections described in the addendum will be grounded in real data, not simply good intentions.

We urge the Board to approve the addendum and to keep stream and riparian protection as a non-negotiable condition of any partnership agreement for Cooks Run, now and at renewal. Thank you for your consideration, and for the work you do on behalf of Iron County's lakes, streams, and public lands.

Respectfully,

Russ Ford, President
Golden Lake Landowners Association
414-248-7725 · russ.brzzcon@gmail.com