

Project Study Areas

Minnesota's new outstate urban complexes are facing unprecedented rates of land development and population growth risking loss of the open space that make them such attractive places to live. Although these outstate urban complexes will be absorbing much of the land development pressures over the next several decades they do not have an equitable distribution of Regional Recreation Park when compared to the Twin Cities Metro. This study analyzes five outstate urban complexes and two micropolitan⁹ areas, where such pressure and lack of open space warrant identification of candidate sites for regional park development.

Study Areas

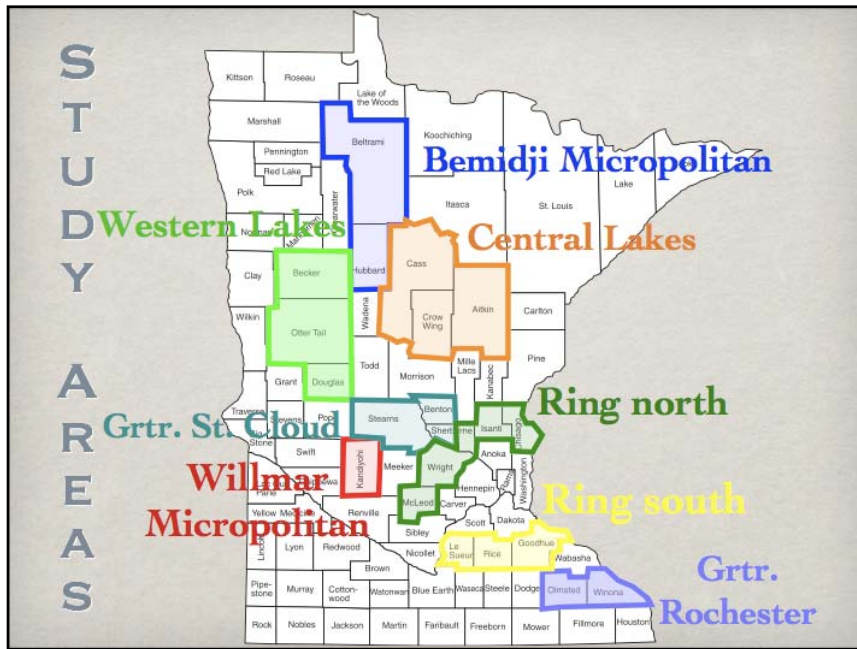
- **Ring: Collar Counties** (Northern Section: Chisago, Isanti, Kanabec, McLeod, Wright and eastern Sherburne counties. Southern Section: Goodhue, LeSueur, and Rice counties.)
- **Greater St. Cloud Region** (Benton, Stearns, and western Sherburne counties.)
- **Greater Rochester** (Olmsted and Winona counties)
- **Central Lakes** (Aitkin, Cass, and Crow Wing counties)
- **Western Lakes** (Becker, Otter Tail, and Douglas counties)
- **Greater Bemidji** (Beltrami, and Hubbard counties)
- **Greater Willmar** (Kandiyohi County)

The purpose of this section is to identify and describe each study area. The description includes analysis of the population in each region and the amount of existing open space that has the potential to become Regional Recreation Parks. The population of each region is used to determine the amount of extra acreage necessary to provide the region with adequate Regional Recreation Park amenities. The original Metropolitan Council parkland acquisition standard was utilized to determine acreage needs. The reasoning for this standard will be discussed further in this report. In simplest terms use of this standard creates equity between these developing areas and the Metro area in Regional Parkland distribution.

All population data was drawn from "Minnesota Population Projections 2000-2030," Minnesota Planning State Demographic Center, Martha McMurry, 2002.¹⁰ Open space data was drawn from two sources unless otherwise noted. These sources are 1) "Examples of Regional Parks Outside the Twin Cities Metro Area," Wayne Sames, MN DNR, 2003. 2) "Legislative Commission on Minnesota Resources Greater Minnesota Park Inventory Regional Park Criteria, Final Report, 2005.

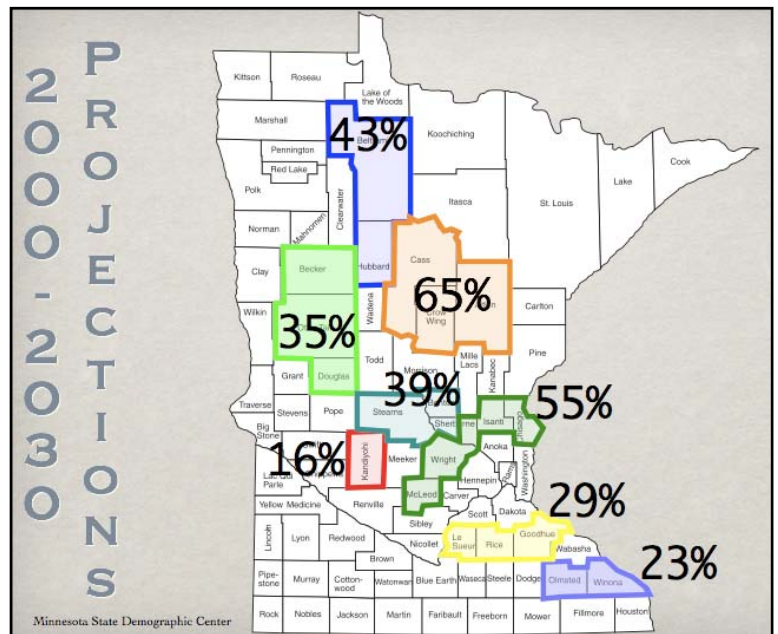
⁹ A micropolitan area contains an urban core of at least 10,000 (but less than 50,000) population. Each metro or micro area consists of one or more counties and includes the counties containing the core urban area, as well as any adjacent counties that have a high degree of social and economic integration. <http://www.census.gov/population/www/estimates/metroarea.html>

¹⁰ See See Minnesota State Demographer Population Projections 2000-2030.



This section illustrates the general conclusions that Minnesota’s new urban centers currently are, and will be, deficient in Regional Parklands, and that such lands are not equitably distributed between the Twin Cities Metro and the outstate areas.

This report relied on the Minnesota State Demographer Population Projections in calculating the projected populations of each of the study areas. It is essential to remember that these numbers relate to the study areas as a whole. Many of the study areas are also experiencing intra-county migration with people moving away from rural agricultural lands to more amenity rich lands. This move is taking place due to the aging population and the declining need for labor in the agricultural industry.



Ring: Collar Counties

The “Ring” counties border the seven metropolitan counties under the jurisdiction of the Metropolitan Council. Counties within the Ring include: Chisago, Goodhue, Isanti, Kanabec, LeSueur, McLeod, Rice, Wright, and east Sherburne. Because of several factors, including differences in governance and projected settlement patterns, the Ring is discussed throughout this report as both a single region and northern and southern sections. The *northern section* includes:

Chisago, Isanti, Kanabec, McLeod, Wright, and eastern Sherburne¹¹ counties. The *southern section* includes: Goodhue, LeSueur, and Rice counties. The two regions are experiencing somewhat different growth patterns, and have existing multi-jurisdictional park planning policies that encourage discussion of the region in sections.

The counties within the Met Council’s jurisdiction have comprehensive development guidelines that provide for orderly growth and preservation of open space within the seven county region. The Met Council, working with counties, succeeded in setting aside tens of thousands of acres for parklands as the region developed. This preservation has not occurred in the Ring counties, and not surprisingly these Ring counties are *extremely* deficient in parklands when compared to the Seven County Metropolitan Area.

Population of the Ring Counties

Table 1.1a

Metropolitan Ring Counties Population			
Area	2000 Census	2030 Projection	Percent Change
Chisago	41,101	69,540	69%
Goodhue	44,127	52,890	20%
Isanti	31,287	42,350	35%
Kanabec	14,996	21,520	44%
LeSueur	25,426	30,100	18%
McLeod	34,898	41,580	19%
Rice	56,665	80,010	41%
Wright	89,986	139,010	54%
East Sherburne	44,268	83,700	89%
Metropolitan Ring Total Population	382,754	560,700	46%

By 2030 the Metropolitan Ring counties are expected to contain well over a half million people. It is also projected that these people will develop the region at rates that are less dense than current development patterns. This projected development pattern will result in an increasing rate of land consumption. The rate of land consumption is projected to outpace the actual population growth rate, resulting in land being consumed for development increasing at a faster rate than the population is growing. This will cause high value recreational open space to be permanently lost at an increasingly rapid pace reducing the inventory of high quality tracts that are suitable as Regional Parks.

The Minnesota Demographer’s projections, as summarized in Table 1.1a, foresee a 46% increase in population for the Ring, with the highest rates of growth in East Sherburne, Chisago and Wright counties. Wright County will add the most people with nearly 50,000 new residents by

¹¹ East Sherburne Population was derived from Minnesota Department of Administration / Office of Geographic and Demographic Analysis / Land Management Information Center, 2000 Census data. East Sherburne includes: Blue Hills Township, Orrock Township, Big Lake City, Big Lake Township, Baldwin Township, Livonia Township, Elk River City, Princeton City (part), Zimmerman City.

2030. This influx of people throughout the region will dramatically alter the landscape and reduce access to quality recreational opportunities unless steps are taken to ensure an adequate inventory of recreational open space.

Table 1.1b

Metropolitan Ring Counties (North) Population			
Area	2000 Census	2030 Projection	Percent Change
Chisago	41,101	69,540	69%
Isanti	31,287	42,350	35%
Kanabec	14,996	21,520	44%
McLeod	34,898	41,580	19%
Wright	89,986	139,010	54%
East Sherburne	44,268	83,700	89%
Metropolitan Ring (North) Total Population	256,536	397,700	55%

The northern portion of the Metro Ring will experience a 55% change in population by 2030 partly fueled by development along the I-94 and I-35 corridors. Like other outstate areas, there is currently an inventory of relatively inexpensive land that has convenient access through a high capacity interstate and state highway system. Much of the population growth in the northern Ring consists of commuters that work in the core cities. Increasingly, because of the decentralization of jobs and businesses, many of the new residents will be commuting between suburbs. This inter-exurban commuting will increase the amount of land consumed as a percentage of population due exclusive reliance on automobile transportation. Land consumption in the northern ring will likely be further exacerbated by the proposed North Star Rail, which will decrease the transportation costs associated with sprawl-based growth.¹²

The northern Ring counties are in a transitional state, shifting from agricultural open space to low density sprawling residential. This transition has the potential to eliminate recreational opportunities that can only be undertaken on large tracts of open space. This potential loss will also eliminate the services these spaces provide such as; clean water, clean air, wildlife, aesthetic beauty, etc.

Table 1.1c

Metropolitan Ring Counties (South) Population			
Area	2000 Census	2030 Projection	Percent Change
Goodhue	44,127	52,890	20%
LeSueur	25,426	30,100	18%
Rice	56,665	80,010	41%
Metropolitan Ring (South) Total Population	126,218	163,000	29%

¹² By decreasing the commuting cost (in time, actual dollars, and ease) people will be more willing to live further and further away from their places of work. As cost-of-commute is one of the only remaining limits on commuting distance the North Star Rail will subsidize sprawl by reducing that limiting factor.

The southern region of the Metropolitan Ring is not growing as fast as the northern region but the development pressure is, and will continue to be significant. Growth is occurring in this region because of the proximity of Goodhue County to both the Twin Cities and Rochester and the wealth of lakes in Rice and LeSueur Counties. The rich farmland of the region is rapidly being removed from production as fields are turned into subdivisions, and the scenic rolling hills of the Mississippi River Valley are permanently becoming adorned with houses. It is essential that open space be set-aside in these invaluable areas for the future recreation needs of Minnesotans before the necessary land becomes unavailable.

Existing Potential Regional Parkland in the Ring

All of the Ring Counties (except Kanabec) have parks that are identified as Regional Parks, or Parks that have Regional potential.¹³ With a total of 5,562 acres of Regional Park or potential Regional Park the entire region currently has about 15 acres per 1000 people.¹⁴ When the projected growth for 2030 is factored in that amount decreases to only 10 acres per 1000 people.¹⁵ The existing parks in the regions are a good foundation to provide part of the framework necessary to develop the Ring's Regional Park System.



¹³ Criteria for regional parks explained in: Legislative Commission on Minnesota Resources [Greater Minnesota Regional Park Criteria](#), Final Report, 2005.

¹⁴ Population numbers from 2000 Census.

¹⁵ See Table 1.2.

Table 1.2a

Existing Park Space For Metropolitan Ring Counties *					
Area	Park Name	Acreage	Reference	2000: Acres per 1000	2030: Acres per 1000
Chisago County	Dennis Frandsen County Park	117	1, 2	7	4
	Fish Lake County Park	152	1, 2		
Goodhue County	Cannon Valley Wilderness Area	780	1	18	15
Isanti	Springvale County Park	172	1	10	7
	Becklin Homestead Park/WMA	140	2		
Kanabec County		0	1,2	0	0
LeSueur County	Lake Washington Park	162	2	20	17
	Ney Environmental Learning Center	340	2		
McLeod County	Lake Marion Regional	86	2	11	9
	Pioepenberg Regional	156	2		
	Stalhs Lake Park	127	2		
Rice County	Cannon River Wilderness Area	850	2	15	11
Wright County	Beebe Lake Regional Park	70	1, 2	25	16
	Clearwater/Pleasant County Park	210	1, 2		
	Collinwood County Park	308	1, 2		
	Otsego	70	1		
	Robert Ney Memorial County Park	600	1, 2		
	Schroeder Regional Park		1		
	Harry Larson Park	170	1, 2		
	Stanley Eddy Memorial Park Reserve	660	1, 2		
	Montissippi County Park	170	1, 2		
East Sherburne County	Grams Regional Park	108	2	5	3
	Fremont Park (in planning)	114	1		
	Total Acres Reference 1	3593		9	6
	Total Acres Reference 2	4118		11	7
	Total Acreage	5562		15	10

* Criteria for regional parks explained in: Legislative Commission on Minnesota Resources Greater Minnesota Regional Park Criteria, Final Report, 2005.

Reference 1: "Examples of Regional Parks Outside the Twin Cities Metro Area," Wayne Sames, MN DNR, 2003.

Reference 2: Legislative Commission on Minnesota Resources Greater Minnesota Regional Park Criteria, Final Report, 2005.

There is a large disparity in Regional Park acreage when the Ring Counties are compared to the Metro region. The Metro currently has about 52,000 acres in the system or about 20 acres per thousand people; compared with 5,562 acres or 15 acres per thousand people in the Ring. There is also disparity in distribution of parklands throughout the Ring, but all of the counties except Wright are currently experiencing a deficit as measured by the 25 acres per thousand benchmark. Even Wright will have a deficit of 9 acres per thousand people if no new lands are acquired before 2030.

Table 1.2b

Existing Park Space For Metropolitan Ring Counties (North)					
Area	Park Name	Acreage	Reference	2000: Acres per 1000	2030: Acres per 1000
Chisago County	Dennis Frandsen County Park	117	1, 2	7	4
	Fish Lake County Park	152	1, 2		
Isanti	Springvale County Park	172	1	10	7
	Becklin Homestead Park/WMA	140	2		
Kanabec County		0	1,2	0	0
McLeod County	Lake Marion Regional	86	2	11	9
	Pioopenberg Regional	156	2		
	Stalhs Lake Park	127	2		
Wright County	Beebe Lake Regional Park	70	1, 2	25	16
	Clearwater/Pleasant County Park	210	1, 2		
	Collinwood County Park	308	1, 2		
	Otsego	70	1		
	Robert Ney Memorial County Park	600	1, 2		
	Schroeder Regional Park		1		
	Harry Larson Park	170	1, 2		
	Stanley Eddy Memorial Park Reserve	660	1, 2		
	Montissippi County Park	170	1, 2		
	East Sherburne County	Grams Regional Park	108		
Fremont Park (in planning)		114	1		
	Total Acres Reference 1	2813		11	7
	Total Acres Reference 2	3074		12	8
	Total Acreage	3430		13	9

Table 1.2c

Existing Park Space For Metropolitan Ring Counties (South)					
Area	Park Name	Acreage	Reference	2000: Acres per 1000	2030: Acres per 1000
Goodhue County	Cannon Valley Wilderness Area	780	1	18	2
LeSueur County	Lake Washington Park	162	2	20	17
	Ney Environmental Learning Center	340	2		
Rice County	Cannon River Wilderness Area	850	2	15	11
	Total Acres Reference 1	780		6	5
	Total Acres Reference 2	1352		11	8
	Total Acreage	2132		17	13

According to the benchmark of 25 acres per thousand people the southern portion of the Ring is fairing slightly better than the northern portion with currently 17 acres per thousand as opposed to the northern Ring’s 13 acres per thousand. By 2030 if no new parklands are added the northern and southern portions, and all potential Regional Parklands are added to the system those portions of the Ring will have 9 and 13 acres per thousand respectively.

Regional Parkland Needs for the Ring

By utilizing the 25 acres per thousand as a benchmark it is possible to estimate the acreage currently needed, and needed by 2030 for each of the counties, and for the Ring as a whole. This estimate simply illustrates how much raw acreage of regional parklands is needed for equitable distribution between the Ring and the Metro. The estimate makes no assumptions about the types of recreational experiences that users want, and the differences in acreage that those uses require. The 25 acre per thousand creates a benchmark to measure the amount of land needed, so that that land can be acquired before high recreational value tracts are consumed by development.

Table 1.3a

Acreage Needed to Meet 25 acres per 1000 Guideline for Metropolitan Ring Counties Study Region		
	2000 Census	2030 Projection
Total Acreage of Regional Recreation Open Space Needed	9569	14018
Extra acreage necessary (Ref. 1)	5976	10425
Extra acreage necessary (Ref. 2)	5451	9900
Extra Acreage Necessary (Total)*	4007	8456

*This is assuming that ALL potential and existing parkland are incorporated into the system.

Table 1.3a is the “big picture” view of what needs to be done to make distribution of parklands equitable between the Twin Cities Metro and the Ring Counties. The overall goal for the Ring Counties is, “A Regional Park System containing 14,018 acres of regional parklands by 2030.” This goal can be met by integrating *all* the existing recreational acreage as identified in Table 1.2a into the Ring’s Regional Park System, and by adding 8,456 acres to the system. This is an ambitious goal, but can be accomplished by prioritizing natural resources spending across jurisdictions and within different governmental agencies.

This “big picture” is regionalized in tables 1.3b and 1.3c. Table 1.3b illustrates that by 2030 the northern portion of the Ring will require 6,513 acres to meet the benchmark. Table 1.3c shows the need for parklands in the southern portion of the Ring is nearly 2,000 acres in 2030 to meet the benchmark.

Table 1.3b

Acreage Needed to Meet 25 acres per 1000 Guideline for Metropolitan Ring Counties Study Region (North)		
	2000 Census	2030 Projection
Total Acreage of Regional Recreation Open Space Needed	6413	9943
Extra acreage necessary (Ref. 1)	3600	7130
Extra acreage necessary (Ref. 2)	3339	6869
Extra Acreage Necessary (Total)*	2983	6513

*This is assuming that ALL potential and existing parkland are incorporated into the system.

Table 1.3c

Acreage Needed to Meet 25 acres per 1000 Guideline for Metropolitan Ring Counties Study Region (South)		
	2000 Census	2030 Projection
Total Acreage of Regional Recreation Open Space Needed	3155	4075
Extra acreage necessary (Ref. 1)	2375	3295
Extra acreage necessary (Ref. 2)	1803	2723
Extra Acreage Necessary (Total)*	1023	1943

*This is assuming that ALL potential and existing parkland are incorporated into the system.

The List of Tables (Appendix A) includes a breakdown of estimated Regional Parkland needs by county.

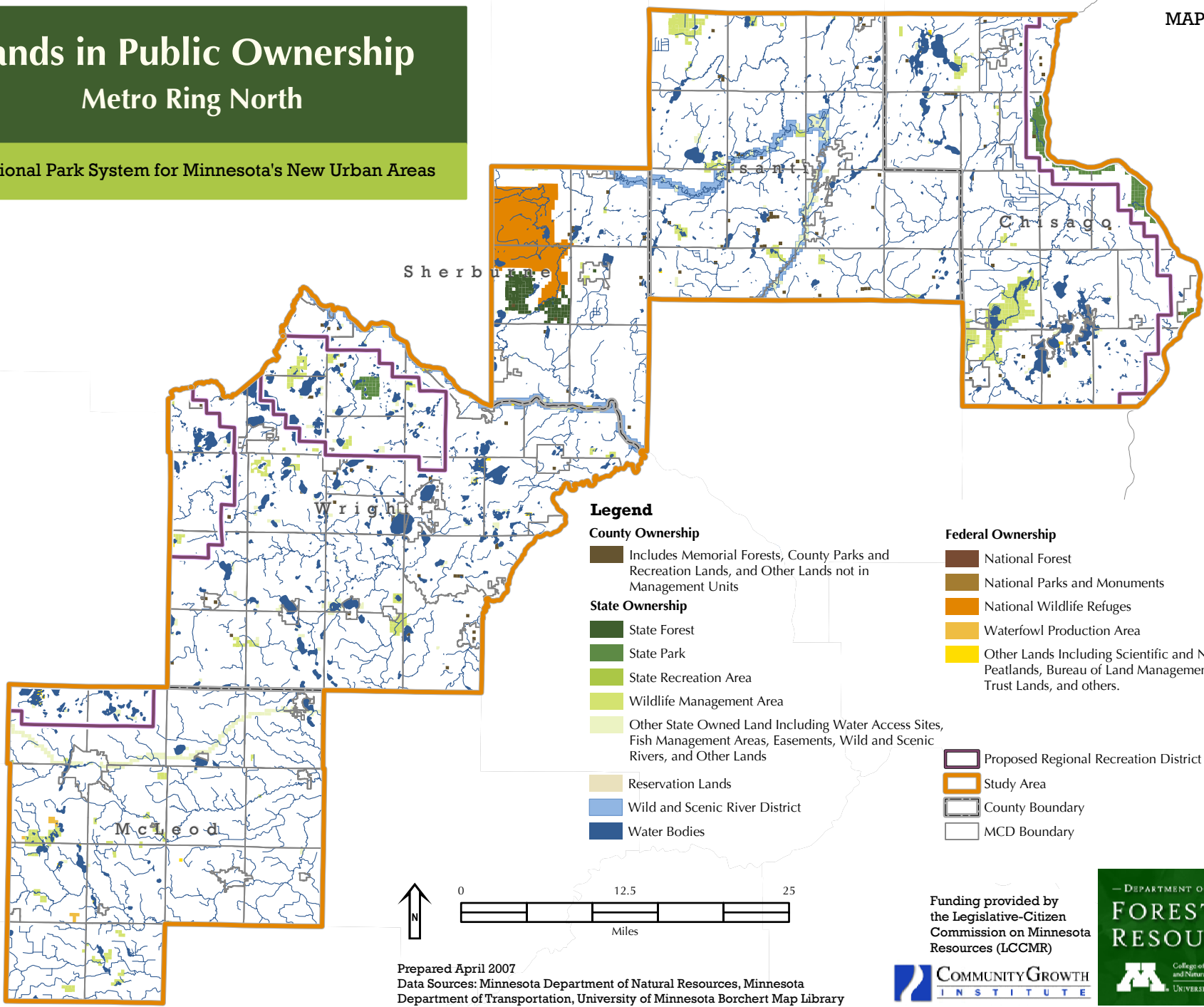
Proposed Regional Park Search Locations

The maps on the next four pages identify the areas of highest amenity value as determined by their proximity to hills, trees, and water. Such features provide for recreational opportunities and are important in determining location of the new Regional Parks. Two maps also identify existing public land ownership, which is important in building large hubs of protected open space. The maps are marked with a purple line, this purple line signifies a proposed Regional Recreational Resource District which will be further discussed in Part B. This proposal suggests development of at least one Regional Recreation Park within the boundaries of each proposed Regional Recreation Resource District. After taking public comments about preliminary drafts of this report the authors believe that the Minnesota River valley and bluff-lands should be included within the search locations as depicted on maps 5 and 6 (following pages).

Lands in Public Ownership

Metro Ring North

A Regional Park System for Minnesota's New Urban Areas



Legend

County Ownership

Includes Memorial Forests, County Parks and Recreation Lands, and Other Lands not in Management Units

State Ownership

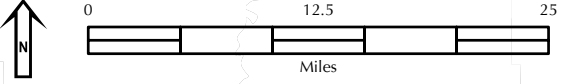
- State Forest
- State Park
- State Recreation Area
- Wildlife Management Area
- Other State Owned Land Including Water Access Sites, Fish Management Areas, Easements, Wild and Scenic Rivers, and Other Lands

- Reservation Lands
- Wild and Scenic River District
- Water Bodies

Federal Ownership

- National Forest
- National Parks and Monuments
- National Wildlife Refuges
- Waterfowl Production Area
- Other Lands Including Scientific and Natural Area Peatlands, Bureau of Land Management Lands, Trust Lands, and others.

- Proposed Regional Recreation District
- Study Area
- County Boundary
- MCD Boundary



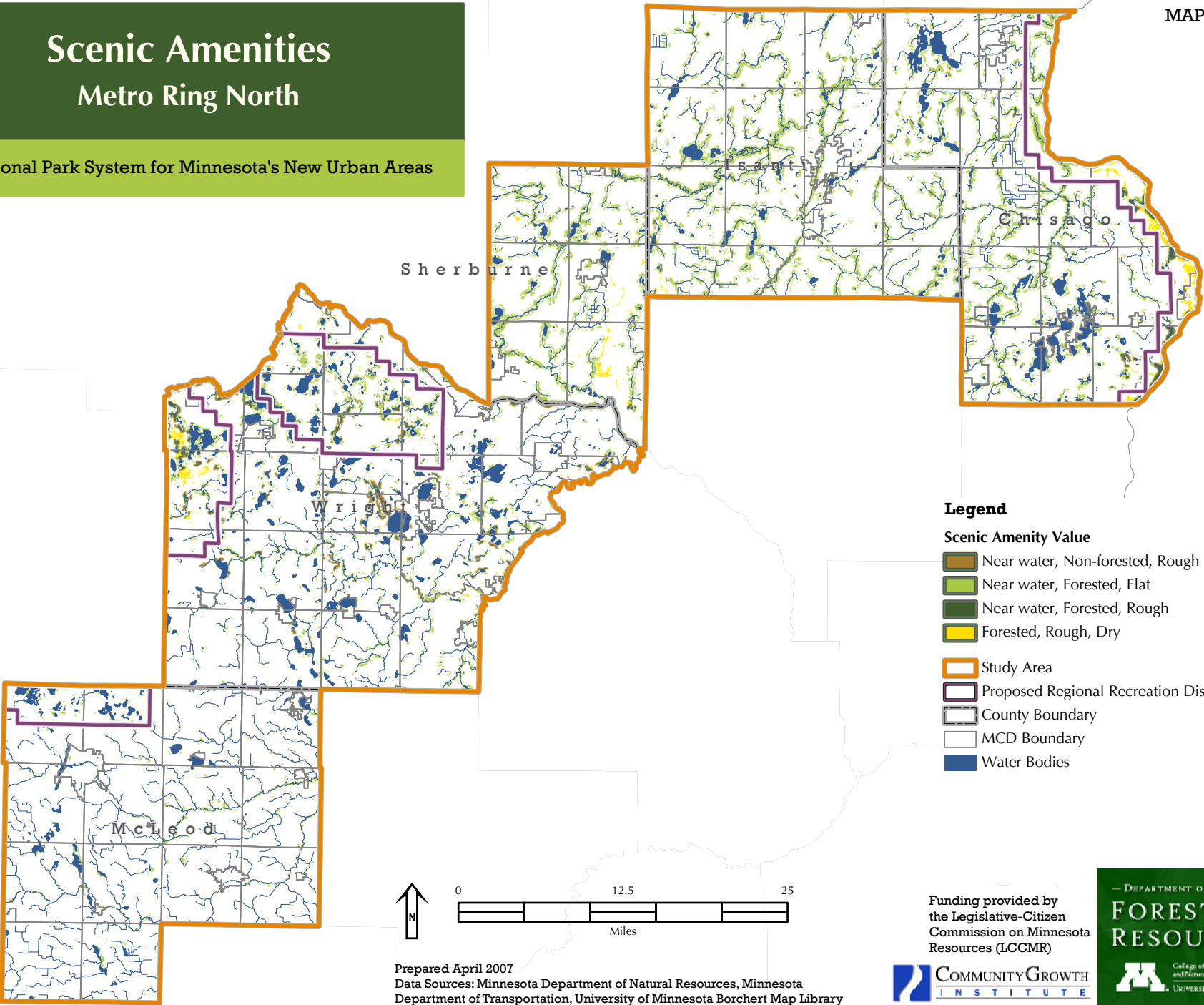
Prepared April 2007
Data Sources: Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Minnesota Department of Transportation, University of Minnesota Borchert Map Library

Funding provided by the Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources (LCCMR)



Scenic Amenities Metro Ring North

A Regional Park System for Minnesota's New Urban Areas



Legend

- Scenic Amenity Value**
- Near water, Non-forested, Rough
 - Near water, Forested, Flat
 - Near water, Forested, Rough
 - Forested, Rough, Dry
- Study Area
- Proposed Regional Recreation District
- County Boundary
- MCD Boundary
- Water Bodies



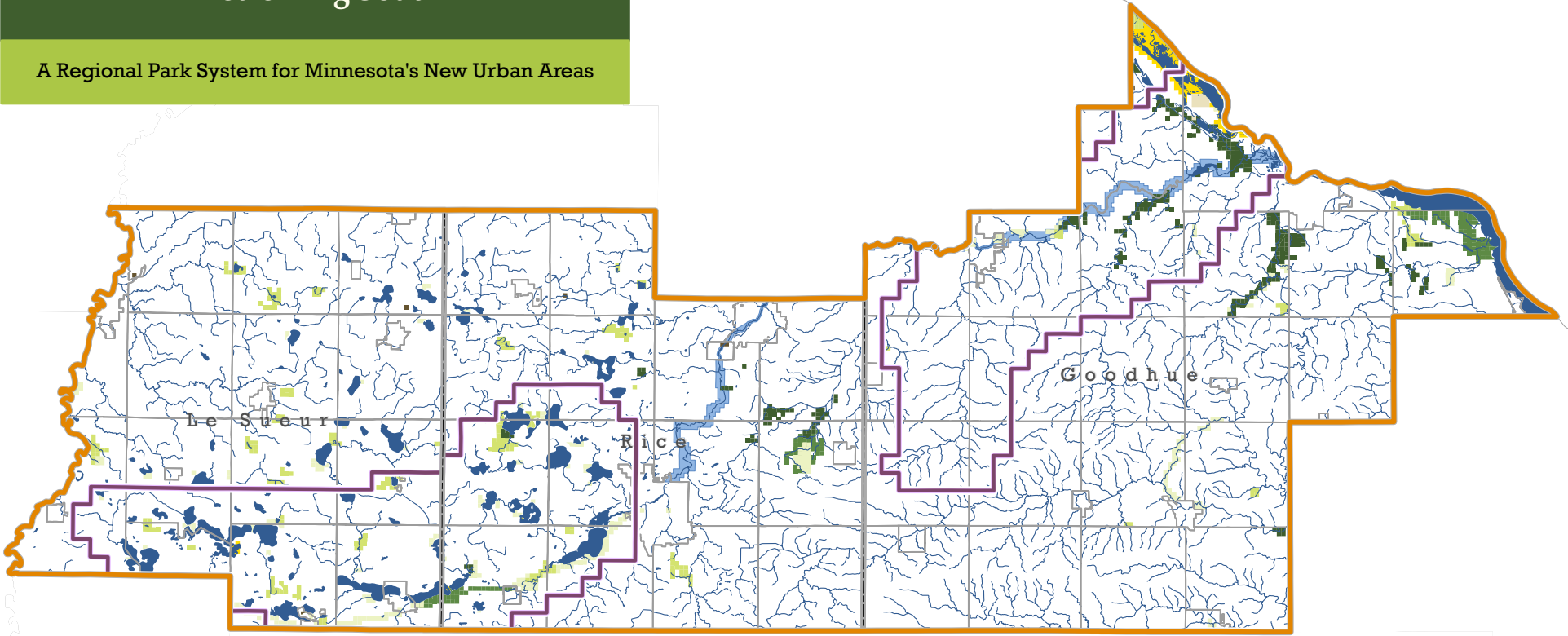
Prepared April 2007
 Data Sources: Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Minnesota Department of Transportation, University of Minnesota Borchert Map Library

Funding provided by the Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources (LCCMR)



Lands in Public Ownership Metro Ring South

A Regional Park System for Minnesota's New Urban Areas



Legend

County Ownership

Includes Memorial Forests, County Parks and Recreation Lands, and Other Lands not in Management Units

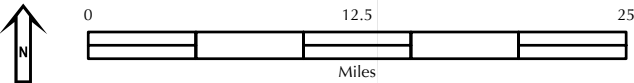
State Ownership

- State Forest
- State Park
- State Recreation Area
- Wildlife Management Area
- Other State Owned Land Including Water Access Sites, Fish Management Areas, Easements, Wild and Scenic Rivers, and Other Lands
- Reservation Lands
- Wild and Scenic River District
- Water Bodies

Federal Ownership

- National Forest
- National Parks and Monuments
- National Wildlife Refuges
- Waterfowl Production Area
- Other Lands Including Scientific and Natural Area Peatlands, Bureau of Land Management Lands, Trust Lands, and others.

- Proposed Regional Recreation District
- Study Area
- County Boundary
- MCD Boundary



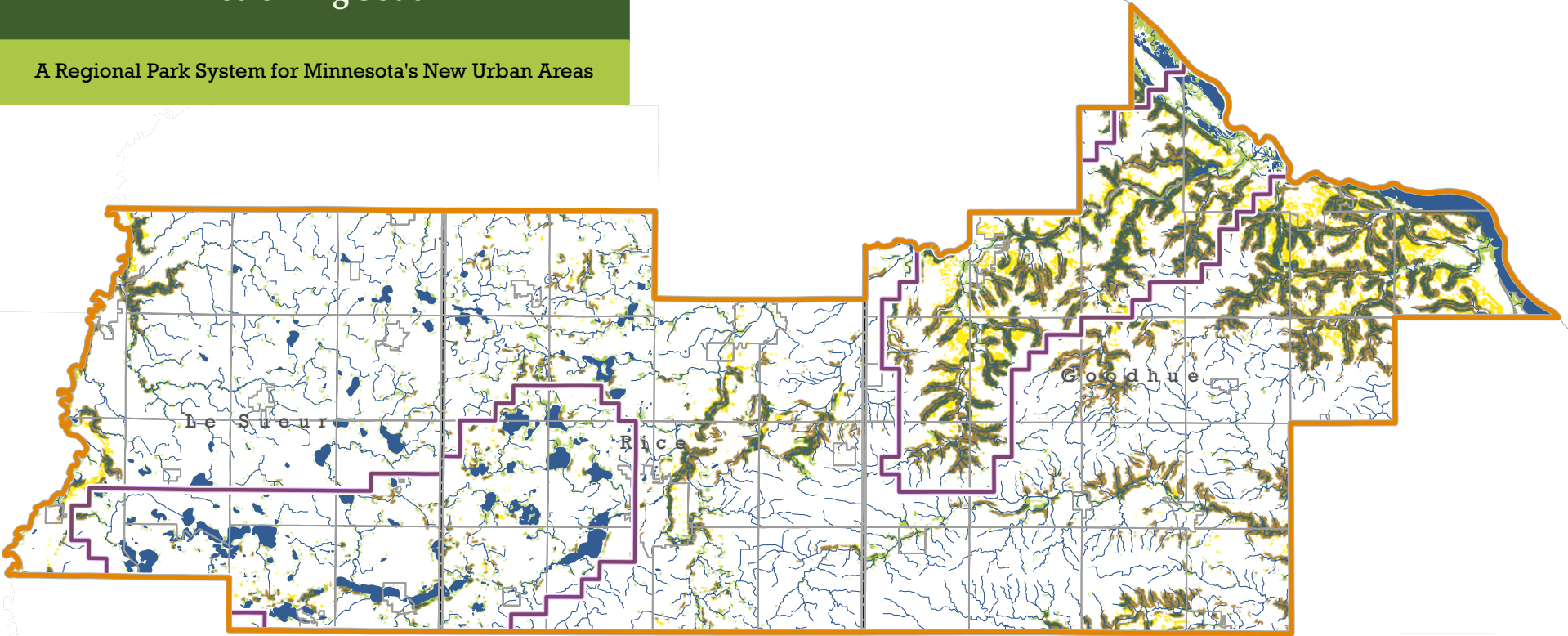
Prepared April 2007
Data Sources: Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Minnesota Department of Transportation, University of Minnesota Borchert Map Library

Funding provided by the Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources (LCCMR)



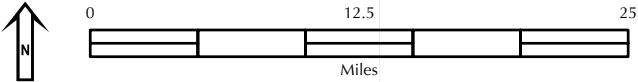
Scenic Amenities Metro Ring South

A Regional Park System for Minnesota's New Urban Areas



Legend

- Scenic Amenity Value**
- Near water, Non-forested, Rough
 - Near water, Forested, Flat
 - Near water, Forested, Rough
 - Forested, Rough, Dry
- Study Area
 - Proposed Regional Recreation District
 - County Boundary
 - MCD Boundary
 - Water Bodies



Prepared April 2007
 Data Sources: Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Minnesota
 Department of Transportation, University of Minnesota Borchert Map Library

Funding provided by
 the Legislative-Citizen
 Commission on Minnesota
 Resources (LCCMR)



Greater St. Cloud

The St. Cloud study region is one of the fastest developing areas in Minnesota. The population of this region is expected to exceed a quarter million people by 2030, an increase of nearly 40%. Greater St. Cloud is currently an attractive place to develop because of the relatively low land costs, low cost of living compared to the Twin Cities Metro, major transportation access including I-94 and U.S. 10, and proximity to open space and scenic beauty. Counties in the Greater St. Cloud study area include: Benton, Stearns, and west Sherburne¹⁶.

Currently St. Cloud has some valuable recreation assets, but as the area grows there will be a need for significant additions and investment to maintain that amenity.

Population of Greater St. Cloud

The greater St. Cloud area will house a projected 260,430 individuals by 2030, up from 187,541 in 2000, an increase of nearly 40%. West Sherburne will see the highest percentage change as its population will swell from just over 20,000 to over 38,000 individuals, almost a 90% change! The rate of population growth is only half the story in St. Cloud as the predominant development pattern in the region is very low density and land intensive thus driving the rate of land consumption to increase faster than the rate of population growth.¹⁷

Table 2.1

St. Cloud Region Population			
Area	2000 Census	2030 Projection	Percent Change
Metropolitan Area Population	167,392	222,330	33%
Stearns	133,166	177,370	33%
Benton	34,226	44,960	31%
West Sherburne [^]	20,149	38,100	89%
Total St. Cloud Region Population	187,541	260,430	39%

[^]West Sherburne was derived from Minnesota Department of Administration / Office of Geographic and Demographic Analysis / Land Management Information Center, 2000 Census data. West Sherburne includes: Haven Township, Palmer Township, St. Cloud City (part), Santiago, Township, Clear Lake City, Clear Lake Township, Becker City, Becker Township.

¹⁶ West Sherburne was derived from Minnesota Department of Administration / Office of Geographic and Demographic Analysis / Land Management Information Center, 2000 Census data. West Sherburne includes: Haven Township, Palmer Township, St. Cloud City (part), Santiago, Township, Clear Lake City, Clear Lake Township, Becker City, Becker Township.

¹⁷ U.S. Census Bureau Data, http://www.sprawlcity.org/charts/top_pogrowth.html, for the Minneapolis/St. Paul area from 1970 to 1990 there was a 22% increase in population growth and a 21% increase in Per Capita Land Consumption. The data also shows that the Minneapolis/St. Paul area uses 0.327 acres per individual. We are assuming for this study that the growth patterns of the St. Cloud region are similar to that of Minneapolis/St. Paul.

As seen in Table 2.1 above, in 2030 the Greater St. Cloud Region will include about 73,000 more people than in 2000, and those individuals will have recreational and open space needs that will not be met by the current system. This influx of people throughout the region will dramatically alter the landscape and reduce access to quality recreational opportunities unless steps are taken to ensure an adequate inventory of recreational open space. Now is the time to make the investment in open space as every day more and more acres of high amenity land are consumed for development.

Currently the Regional Park system operated by the Metropolitan Council includes more than 52,000 acres and 170 miles of regional trails.¹⁸ The population of the seven county Metropolitan area is 2.64 million, thus the Metropolitan Council operates parks at a ratio of slightly less than 20 acres per 1000 people.¹⁹ Compare that with the population of 187,541 in the St. Cloud Region with 2,015 acres of Regional Park and a ratio of about 11 acres per thousand persons. In order for the Metropolitan Council to get to its current ratio in 1974 it employed the initial acquisition guideline of 25 acres per thousand, now the St. Cloud region must do the same to ensure that in thirty years it has a sufficient base of land in its regional park system.

It is essential, and equity demands, that the distribution of regional recreation open space be similar between the state's urban areas. As the St. Cloud Region becomes increasingly urban and populous the quality of life and character of the region must be maintained, the equitable distribution of regional parks will play an important role in this maintenance. The Park system provides public benefits including the preservation of natural resources, protection of open spaces, protection of cultural and historical resources, physical fitness opportunities, and recreational opportunities.²⁰ All urban areas of the state need to have similar opportunities for the population to enjoy.

By not providing sufficient open space for recreation, the population is adversely affected. Minnesotans are more active on average than the typical American, but can only maintain their activity level if sufficient opportunities are available.

Existing Potential Regional Parkland in Greater St. Cloud

Greater St. Cloud does contain parks that are, or have the potential to be, regional parks. However, these parks are not organized or maintained as part of an interconnected system. They are identified by the DNR and LCMR as having "regional park potential," but may not meet this study's criteria for inclusion in this proposed Regional Recreation Park system. Further, these parks merely have the *potential* to provide the type of recreational assets that the population demands, and until they are organized by a system that is designed to meet those needs they are not meeting that potential. The population of the region is used to assess the general need for regional recreation open space by employing the original Metro Council acquisition guide-

¹⁸ 2030 Regional Parks Policy Plan, Metropolitan Council, June 29, 2005. Executive Summary page i.

¹⁹ The 52,000 acres only includes regional recreational open space that is under the jurisdiction of the Metropolitan Council. It does not include the numerous large county and city parks that may qualify under the broad definition that is employed to identify regional parks in Greater Minnesota.

²⁰ LCMR Parks Study Group Report, to the full LCMR. December 18, 2003. Findings, page i.

line.(see Table 2.2) Not all the parks identified in Table 2.2 will be added to the new regional park system, so as bad as the current acreage ratio is, the true deficiency is actually worse. The 25 acre per thousand guideline, as discussed earlier, is based on what the Metropolitan Council used in determining initial acquisition needs for the Metro Regional Park System. Therefore, Table 2.2 also illustrates the inequality in distribution of regional recreation open space between the Metropolitan area and the St. Cloud region.

Table 2.2

Existing Park Space For St. Cloud Study Region*					
Area	Park Name	Acreage	Reference	2000: Acres per 1000	2030: Acres per 1000
Stearns	Quarry Park and Nature Preserve	643	1, 2	7	5
	Mississippi River County Park	230	2		
	Warner Lake County Park	241	1, 2		
	Lake Koronis Park	67	1, 2		
Benton	Bend in the River Regional Park	286	2	8	6
West Sherburne	Oak Savanna Land Preserve	140	2	7	4
City of St. Cloud	Neenah Creek Regional	213	2		
	Plum Creek Regional Park	139	2		
	Riverside Regional Park	56	2		
	Total acreage: Reference 1	951		5	4
	Total acreage: Reference 2	2015		11	8
	Total Acreage	2015		11	8

* Criteria for regional parks explained in: Legislative Commission on Minnesota Resources Greater Minnesota Regional Park Criteria, Final Report, 2005.

Reference 1: "Examples of Regional Parks Outside the Twin Cities Metro Area," Wayne Sames, MN DNR, 2003.

Reference 2: Legislative Commission on Minnesota Resources Greater Minnesota Regional Park Criteria, Final Report, 2005.

While there is an obvious disparity in parklands between Greater St. Cloud and the Twin Cities Metro there is little disparity of distribution within the study region. It is important to maintain an equitable distribution throughout the region so that residents can have convenient access to the recreation resources.

Currently there is only a total of 2,015 acres in Greater St. Cloud, or about 11 acres per 1000 people compared with 52,000 acres in the Metro area, or about 20 acres per 1000. If no new regional recreation open space is added to the Greater St. Cloud system by 2030 there will only be 8 acres per 1000 residents.

Regional Parkland Needs for Greater St. Cloud

While the region does have a selection of existing parks that could be incorporated into the Regional Recreation Park system, this selection is far from what is needed. At the 2000 census, Greater St. Cloud had less than half of the necessary acreage according to the 25 acre per thou-

sand guideline, or approximately 11 acres per thousand.

In utilizing 25 acres per thousand as a benchmark it is possible to estimate the acreage currently needed, and needed in 2030 for each of the counties and for Greater St. Cloud as a whole. This estimate simply illustrates how much raw acreage of regional parkland is needed for equitable distribution between Greater St. Cloud and the Metro. The estimate makes no assumptions about the types of recreational experiences that users want, and the differences in acreage that those uses require. The 25 acre per thousand guideline creates a benchmark to measure the amount of land needed so that that land can be acquired before high recreational value tracts are consumed by development.

Table 2.3

Acreage Needed to Meet 25 acres per 1000 Guideline for St. Cloud Study Region		
	2000 Census	2030 Projection
Total Acreage of Regional Recreation Open Space Needed	4689	6511
Extra acreage necessary (Ref. 1)	3738	5560
Extra acreage necessary (Total)*	2674	4496

*This is assuming that ALL potential and existing parkland are incorporated into the system.

Table 2.3 is the “big picture” of what additions are needed to the Greater St. Cloud system to make distribution of regional parklands equitable in comparison to the Twin Cities Metro. The overall goal for development in the Greater St. Cloud region is, “A Regional Park System containing 6,511 acres of regional parklands by 2030.” This goal can be met by integrating *all* the existing recreational acreage as identified in Table 2.2 into Greater St. Cloud’s Regional Park System, *and* by adding 4,496 new acres to the system. This is an ambitious goal, but can be accomplished by prioritizing natural resources spending across jurisdictions and within different governmental agencies.

The List of Tables (Appendix A) includes a breakdown of estimated Regional Parkland needs by county.



Proposed Regional Park Search Locations

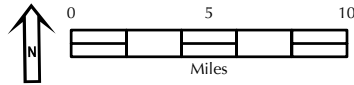
The following map (7) identifies the areas of highest amenity value in the St. Cloud Region as determined by proximity to hills, trees, and water. Such features provide for recreational oppor-

tunities and are important in determining locations of the new Regional Parks. The second map (8) identifies existing public land ownership, which is important in building large hubs of protected open space. Both maps are marked with a purple line, this purple line signifies a proposed Regional Recreational Resource District (RRRD) which will be further discussed in Part B. This proposal suggests development of at least one Regional Recreation Park within the boundaries of each proposed Regional Recreation Resource District, therefore the boundary of the RRRD also serves as the search area for the Regional Park.

Lands in Public Ownership

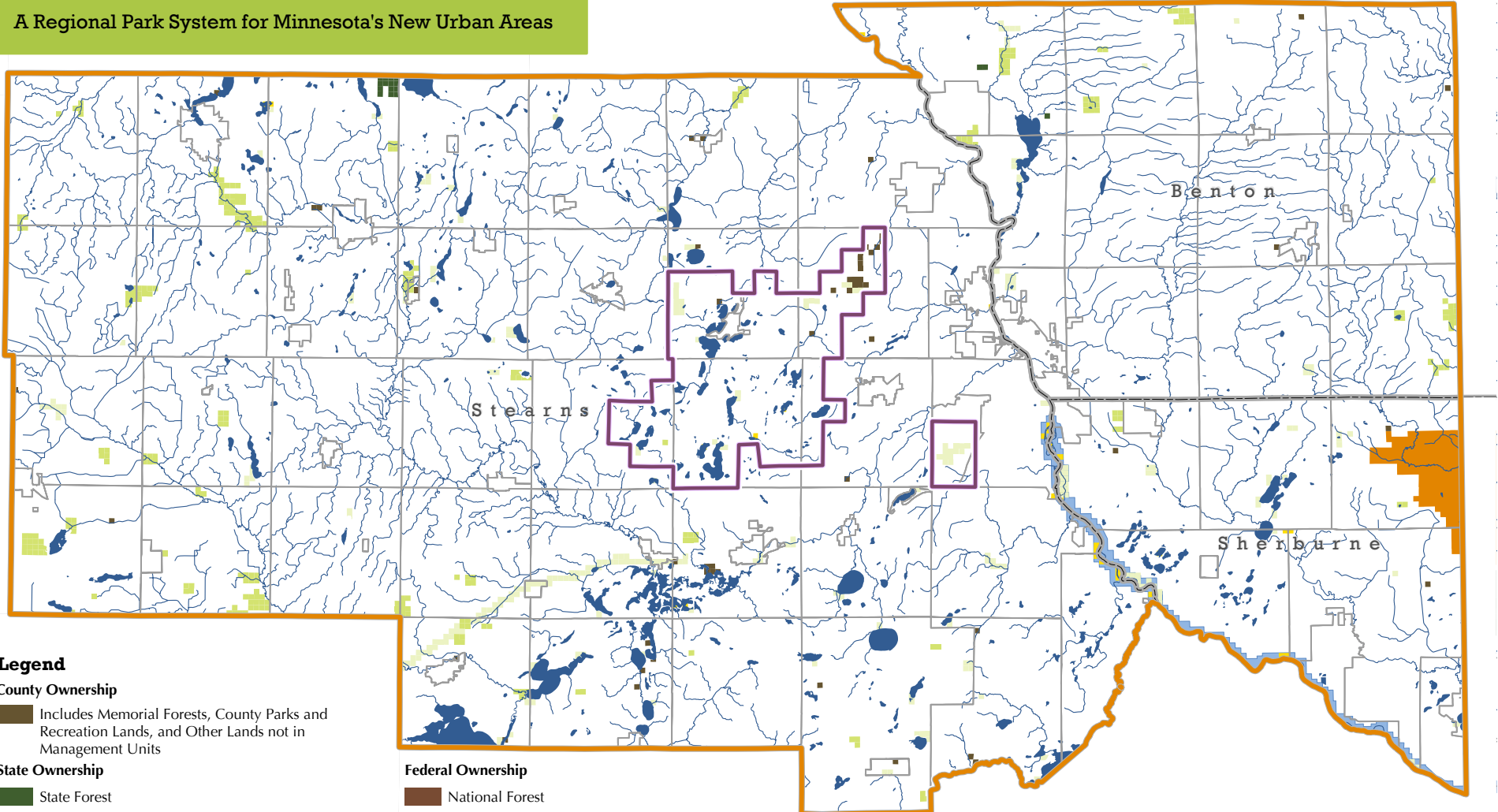
Greater St. Cloud Region

A Regional Park System for Minnesota's New Urban Areas



Prepared April 2007
 Data Sources: Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Minnesota Department of Transportation, University of Minnesota Borchert Map Library

Funding provided by the Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources (LCCMR)



Legend

County Ownership

Includes Memorial Forests, County Parks and Recreation Lands, and Other Lands not in Management Units

State Ownership

- State Forest
- State Park
- State Recreation Area
- Wildlife Management Area
- Other State Owned Land Including Water Access Sites, Fish Management Areas, Easements, Wild and Scenic Rivers, and Other Lands

Federal Ownership

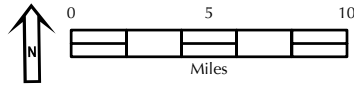
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- National Parks and Monuments
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- Waterfowl Production Area
- Reservation Lands
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- Wild and Scenic River District
- Water Bodies

- Proposed Regional Recreation District
- Study Area
- County Boundary
- MCD Boundary

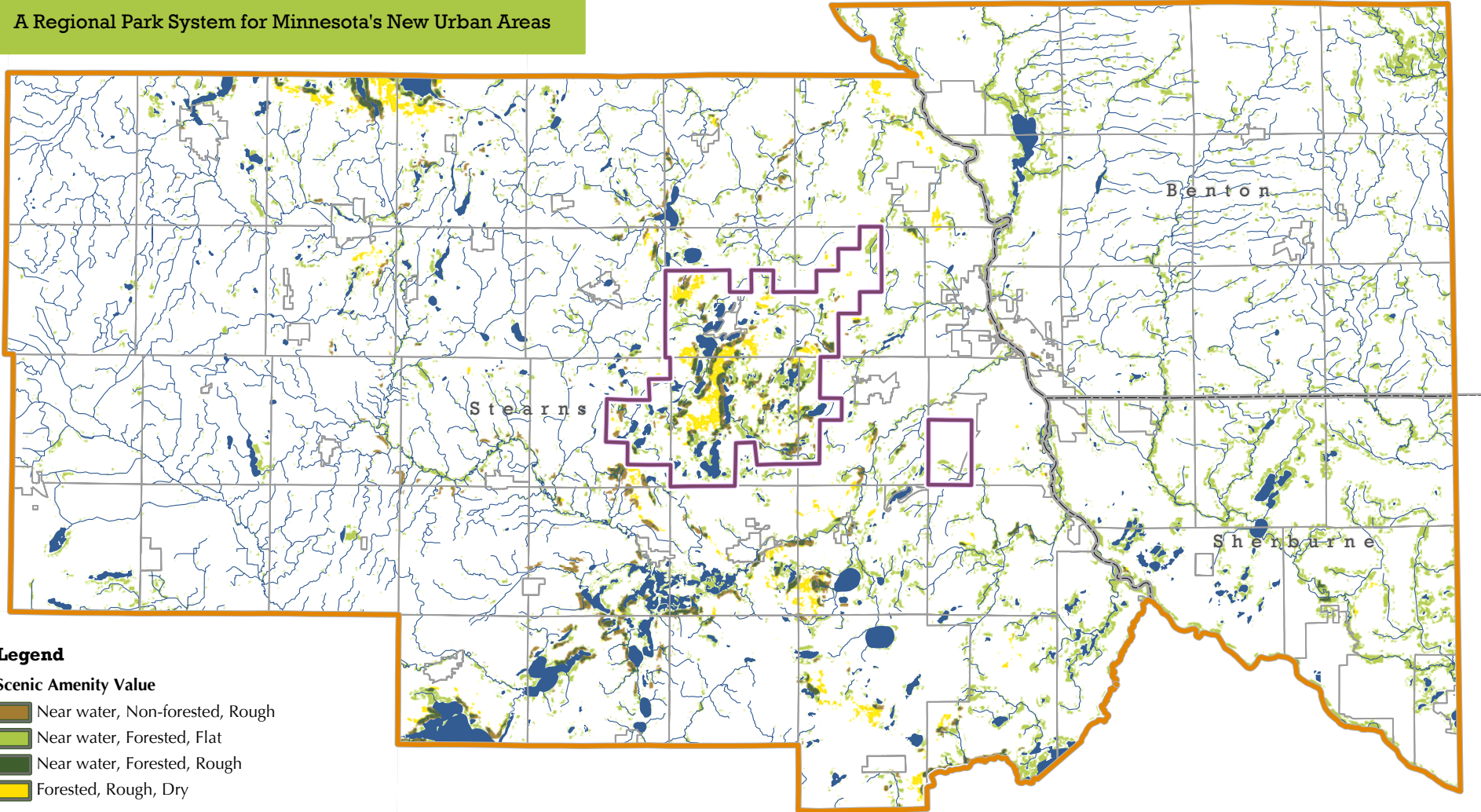
Scenic Amenities Greater St. Cloud Region

A Regional Park System for Minnesota's New Urban Areas



Prepared April 2007
Data Sources: Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Minnesota Department of Transportation, University of Minnesota Borchert Map Library

Funding provided by
the Legislative-Citizen
Commission on Minnesota
Resources (LCCMR)



- Legend**
- Scenic Amenity Value**
- Near water, Non-forested, Rough
 - Near water, Forested, Flat
 - Near water, Forested, Rough
 - Forested, Rough, Dry
- Study Area
 - Proposed Regional Recreation District
 - County Boundary
 - MCD Boundary
 - Water Bodies

Greater Rochester

The Greater Rochester study region contains areas that will experience both increases and declines in population but as a whole the region is projected to absorb more than 50,000 new residents by 2030. The rolling hills, proximity to the Twin Cities, the Mayo Clinic, IBM, relatively inexpensive land, and current amount of open space are just some of the reasons that this is such an attractive place to live. In the greater Rochester Region, Olmsted County is projected to experience the majority of population increase, about 37%.

Population of Greater Rochester

Table 3.1

Rochester and Winona Region Population**			
Area	2000 Census	2030 Projections	Percent Change
Rochester Metropolitan Area	124,277	170,500	37%
Olmsted	124,277	170,530	37%
Winona	49,985	56,090	12%
Rochester Metropolitan Area Totals	174,262	226,620	23%

The Greater Rochester study region will house a projected 226,620 residents by 2030, up from 174,262 in 2000, an increase of about 23%. The rate of population growth is only half the story in Greater Rochester as the predominant development pattern in the region is low density and land intensive, and the rate of land consumption in the area is increasing faster than the rate of population growth.²¹

By 2030 Greater Rochester will include about 50,000 more residents, and those individuals will have recreational and open space needs that will not be met by the current system. This influx of people throughout the region will dramatically alter the landscape and reduce access to quality recreational opportunities unless steps are taken to ensure an adequate inventory of recreational open space. Now is the time to make the investment in open space as every day more and more high amenity value acres in the region are consumed for development.

Currently the Regional Park system operated by the Metropolitan Council includes more than 52,000 acres and 170 miles of regional trails.²² The population of the seven county Metropolitan area is 2.64 million thus the Metropolitan Council operates parks at a ratio of nearly 20 acres per

²¹ U.S. Census Bureau Data, http://www.sprawlcity.org/charts/top_popgrowth.html, for the Minneapolis/St. Paul area from 1970 to 1990 there was a 22% increase in population growth and a 21% increase in Per Capita Land Consumption. The data also shows that the Minneapolis/St. Paul area uses 0.327 acres per individual. We are assuming for this study that the growth patterns of the St. Cloud region are similar to that of Minneapolis/St. Paul. (See supra note 3.)

²² 2030 Regional Parks Policy Plan, Metropolitan Council, June 29, 2005. Executive Summary page i.

1000 people.²³ Compare that with the current population of 174,262 in the Greater Rochester region with 3,279 acres of Regional Park and a current ratio of about 19 acres per thousand persons (see table 3.2), which will decrease to about 14 acres per thousand in 2030. In order for the Metropolitan Council to get to its current ratio in 1974 it employed the initial acquisition guideline of 25 acres per thousand, now the same must be done in the Greater Rochester region to ensure that in thirty years it has a sufficient base of land in its regional park system.

It is essential, and equity demands, that the distribution of regional recreation open space be similar between the state's urban areas. As the Greater Rochester Region becomes increasingly urban and populous, the quality of life and character of the region must be maintained, equitable distribution of regional parks will play an important role in this maintenance. The proposed Regional Recreation Park system provides public benefits including the preservation of natural resources, protection of open spaces, protection of cultural and historical resources, physical fitness opportunities, and recreational opportunities.²⁴ All urban areas of the state need to have similar opportunities for the population to enjoy.

By not providing sufficient open space for recreation, the population is adversely affected. Minnesotan's are more active on average than the typical American, but can only maintain their activity level if sufficient opportunities are available.

Existing Potential Regional Parkland in Greater Rochester

Greater Rochester does contain parks that are, or have the potential to be, regional parks. However, these parks are not organized or maintained as part of an interconnected system. They are identified by the DNR and LCMR as having "regional park potential," but may not meet this study's criteria for inclusion in this proposed Regional Recreation Park system. Further, these parks merely have the *potential* to provide the type of recreational assets that the population demands, and until they are organized by a system that is designed to meet those needs they are not meeting that potential. In order to assess Rochester/Winona's general need the acreage of those parks are applied to the population to determine the overall number of acres per thousand persons. (see Table 3.2)

It is likely that not all the parks included in Table 3.2 will be added to the new Regional Recreation Park system, so while the current ratio does not appear to be that bad it is a best case scenario. The 25 acre per thousand guideline, as discussed earlier, is based on what the Metropolitan Council used in determining initial acquisition needs for the Metro Regional Park System. Therefore, table 3.2 also illustrates the inequality in distribution of regional recreation open space between the Metropolitan area and the Greater Rochester region.

²³ The 52,000 acres only includes regional recreational open space that is under the jurisdiction of the Metropolitan Council. It does not include the numerous large county and city parks that may qualify under the broad definition that is employed to identify regional parks in Greater Minnesota.

²⁴ LCMR Parks Study Group Report, to the full LCMR. December 18, 2003. Findings, page i.

Table 3.2

Existing Park Space For Rochester/Winona Study Region**					
Area	Park Name	Acreage	Reference	2000: Acres per 1000	2030: Acres per 1000
Olmsted County*	Chester Woods Park	1,380	1,2	16	12
	Oxbow Park	624	1,2		
Winona County		0	1,2	0	0
Rochester	Eastwood	188	2		
	Essex	160	2		
	Foster Arend Park	200	2		
	Gamehaven Reservoir	230	2		
	Quarry Hill	302	2		
	Willow Creek Reservoir	195	2		
	Total Acreage	3,279		19	14

* Acreage for Olmsted County Regional Parks is not consistent between the two references used. Acreage figures are taken from reference "2" data as the reference 2 is more recent and since the figures are larger than reference 1.

** Criteria for regional parks explained in: Legislative Commission on Minnesota Resources Greater Minnesota Regional Park Criteria, Final Report, 2005.

Reference 1: "Examples of Regional Parks Outside the Twin Cities Metro Area," Wayne Sames, MN DNR, 2003.

Reference 2: Legislative Commission on Minnesota Resources Greater Minnesota Regional Park Criteria, Final Report, 2005.

While there is not a huge current disparity in parklands between Greater Rochester and the Metro, area there is a large disparity in distribution between Olmsted (16 acres per 1000) and Winona Counties (0 acres). It is important to maintain an equitable distribution throughout the region so that residents can have convenient access to recreation resources. Currently there is about 3,279 acres (this assumes that ALL identified parklands are incorporated into the system) in Greater Rochester or 19 acres per 1000, but the parklands deficit will increase, as there will only be 14 acres per 1000 in 2030 if no new lands are added.

Regional Parkland Needs for Greater Rochester

While the region does currently have a selection of existing parks that could be incorporated into the regional park system this selection is far from what will be needed. By 2030 the Greater Rochester region will have to nearly double its current inventory of Regional Parklands to meet the 25 acres per 1000 benchmark. The estimate in Table 3.2 simply illustrates how much raw acreage of regional parklands is needed for equitable distribution between the Greater Rochester and the Metro. The estimate makes no assumptions about the types of recreational experiences that users want, and the differences in acreage that those uses require. The 25 acre per thousand creates a benchmark to measure the amount of land needed so that that land can be acquired before high recreational value tracts are consumed by development.

Table 3.3

Acreage Needed to Meet 25 acres per 1000 Guideline for Rochester/Winona Study Region		
	2000 Census	2030 Projection
Total Acreage of Regional Recreation Open Space Needed	4357	5666
Extra acreage necessary (Total)*	1078	2387

Table 3.3 is the “big picture” of what additions are needed to the Greater Rochester system to make distribution of regional parklands equitable in comparison to the Twin Cities Metro. The overall goal for development in the Greater Rochester region is, “A Regional Park System containing 5,666 acres of regional parklands by 2030.” This goal can be met by integrating *all* the existing recreational acreage as identified in Table 3.2 into Greater Rochester’s Regional Park System, *and* by adding at least 2,387 new acres to the system. This is an ambitious goal, but can be accomplished by prioritizing natural resources spending across jurisdictions and within different governmental agencies.

The List of Tables (Appendix A) includes a breakdown of estimated Regional Parkland needs by county.

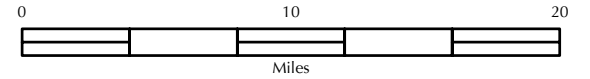
Proposed Regional Park Search Locations

The following map (9) identifies the areas of highest amenity value in the Rochester/Winona Region as determined by proximity to hills, trees, and water. Such features provide for recreational opportunities and are important in determining locations of the new Regional Parks. The second map (10) identifies existing public land ownership, which is important in building large hubs of protected open space. Both maps are marked with a purple line, this purple line signifies a proposed Regional Recreational Resource District (RRRD) which will be further discussed in Part B. This proposal suggests development of at least one Regional Recreation Park within the boundaries of each proposed Regional Recreation Resource District, therefore the boundary of the RRRD also serves as the search area for the Regional Park.

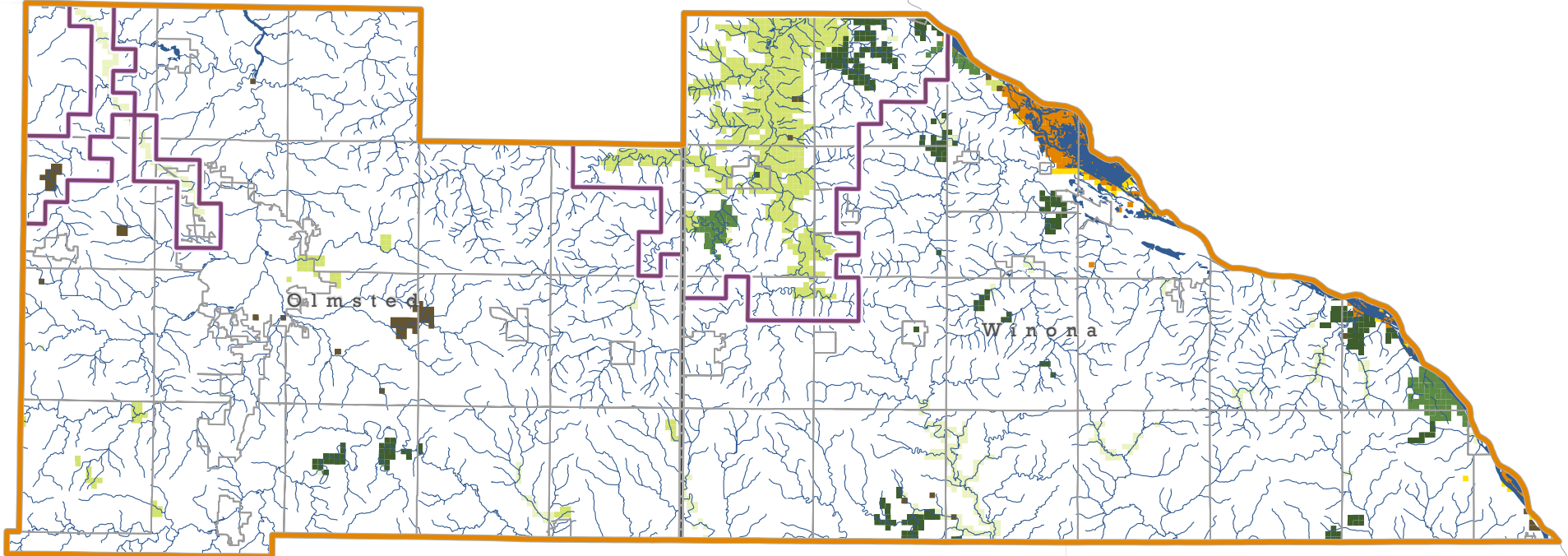
Lands in Public Ownership

Greater Rochester Region

A Regional Park System for Minnesota's New Urban Areas



Prepared April 2007
 Data Sources: Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Minnesota
 Department of Transportation, University of Minnesota Borchert Map Library



Legend

County Ownership

Includes Memorial Forests, County Parks and Recreation Lands, and Other Lands not in Management Units

State Ownership

- State Forest
- State Park
- State Recreation Area
- Wildlife Management Area
- Other State Owned Land Including Water Access Sites, Fish Management Areas, Easements, Wild and Scenic Rivers, and Other Lands

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- National Forest
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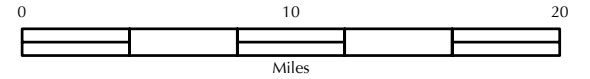
MAP 13 OF 20

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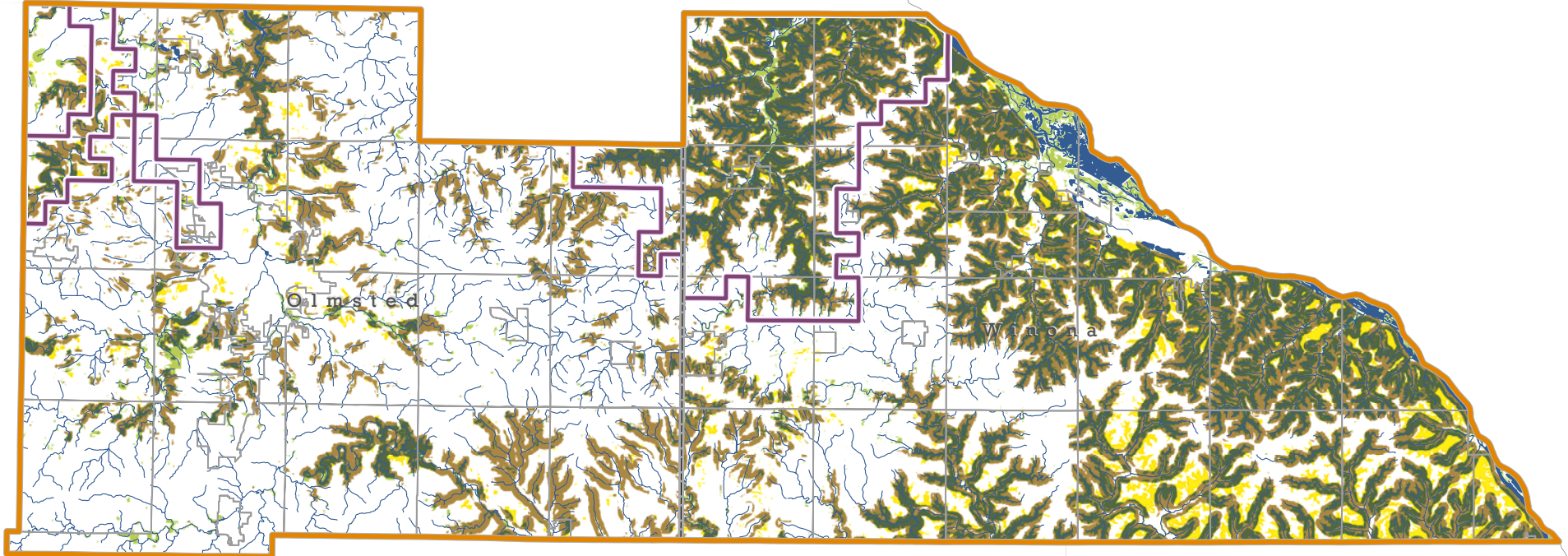


Scenic Amenities Greater Rochester Region

A Regional Park System for Minnesota's New Urban Areas












Prepared April 2007
Data Sources: Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Minnesota Department of Transportation, University of Minnesota Borchert Map Library



Legend

Scenic Amenity Value

-  Near water, Non-forested, Rough
-  Near water, Forested, Flat
-  Near water, Forested, Rough
-  Forested, Rough, Dry

-  Study Area
-  Proposed Regional Recreation District
-  County Boundary
-  MCD Boundary
-  Water Bodies

MAP 14 OF 20

Funding provided by
the Legislative-Citizen
Commission on Minnesota
Resources (LCCMR)

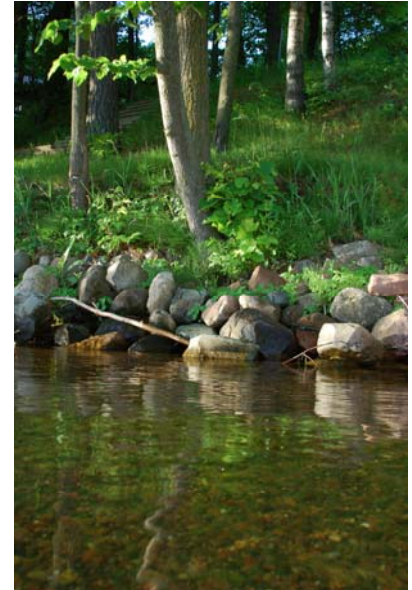


Central Lakes

The Central Lakes region is currently experiencing, and will continue to experience, massive population growth and development pressures. The permanent population of the region is expected to increase approximately 65% by 2030. The natural beauty of the area with its wealth of lakes, rivers, and forests, coupled with the aging demographic of the state, and the ability to work from remote locations is driving this massive migration. The Central Lakes Region’s natural open space is an invaluable resource, but that resource is threatened by the population influx. In other words, Minnesotans risk loving one of their natural treasures to death.

In analyzing the Central Lakes Region two methods were utilized; the first uses the population projections and census numbers published by the Minnesota Demographer, the second applies a simplistic functional assumption to estimate the seasonal population.

Currently, the region has valuable recreational assets such as Deep Portage Environmental Learning Center and the Paul Bunyan Arboretum. It is unlikely, however, that these assets will adequately preserve the “Northwood’s” character that makes the Central Lakes such a Minnesota Treasure.



Population of the Central Lakes

The Central Lakes region will house an estimated 160,790 (Table 4.1) permanent residents and may play host to 285,757 (Table 4.1a) seasonal and permanent residents by 2030. This is a massive 65% increase in population across the region, but this change is only part of the issue. As an open space destination where owning acreage is very desirable, the rate of land consumption and large tract fragmentation will outpace the rate of population growth.

Table 4.1

Central Lakes Region Population: No Seasonal Adjustment*			
Area	2000 Census	2030 Projection	Percent Change
Aitkin County	15,301	25,270	65%
Cass County	27,150	45,280	67%
Crow Wing County	55,099	90,240	64%
Central Lakes Region Total Population	97,550	160,790	65%

* from Minnesota Population Projections 2000-2030, Minnesota Planning State Demographic Center, Martha McMurry, 2002.

Table 4.1a

Central Lakes Population with Adjustment								
County	2000 Census	2000 Seasonal Homes*	2000 Lodging Estimate**	2000 Adjusted Total	2030 Projection	2030 Seasonal Homes Projection***	2030 Lodging Estimate****	2030 Adjusted Total
Aitkin	15,301	16,806	1,770	33,877	25,270	25,309	2,089	52,668
Cass	27,150	24,147	11,750	63,047	45,280	36,363	13,865	95,508
Crow Wing	55,099	25,848	7,133	88,080	90,240	38,925	8,416	137,581
Total Population with Adjustment	185,004				285,757			

*2000 Seasonal Homes: This number was arrived at by multiplying the number of seasonal homes in the 2000 census by Minnesota's household size of 2.52 also from the 2000 census. State Demographer Tom Gillaspay assisted in generating these numbers.

**2000 Lodging Estimate: This number was generated with assistance from Explore Minnesota Tourism's Patrick Simmons and Peggy Nasby. These individuals compiled the total number of lodging units in each county. Lodging units includes indoor units and camping units. Those units were then multiplied by Minnesota's average household size of 2.52 to arrive at a population estimate.

***2030 Seasonal Homes Projection: 2000 Seasonal Homes population estimate multiplied by the 65% regional growth rate multiplied by the State Demographer's projected household size of 2.3.

****2030 Lodging Estimate: The 2000 Lodging Estimate was multiplied by the regional growth rate of 65% then multiplied by the State Demographer's projected household size of 2.3.

By the summer of 2030 the Central Lakes could include 100,000 more people than its current estimated seasonal population, and those individuals will have recreational and open space needs that will not be met by the current open space assets. This influx of people throughout the region will dramatically alter the landscape and reduce access to quality recreational opportunities unless immediate steps are taken to ensure an adequate inventory of recreational open space. From fouling the lakes to fragmenting the forests, development of the region's open space will greatly alter the character of this Minnesota treasure. Now is the time to make the investment in open space as every day more and more acres in the region are consumed for development.



Existing Potential Regional Parklands in the Central Lakes

The Central Lakes currently contain a wealth of open space including the unique Deep Portage Environmental Learning Center. But, the existing assets are not organized or maintained as part of a system. It is also unclear if these parks are providing the type of recreational experiences that the population desires, and will desire. It is clear that Minnesotans are participating less in

wildlife related recreation less per capita,²⁵ one valid explanation for the decline is that the recreational opportunities are not attractive enough. This project proposes not only more open space for recreation, but attractive and diverse opportunities to meet the desires of the population.

Table 4.2 illustrates the number of acres per 1000 people (without seasonal adjustment), and when compared with the benchmark of 25 acres per 1000 the current inventory does not look that bad. But, is it proper to apply a benchmark developed for urban parklands to an open space amenity area like the Central Lakes? No, open space amenity areas are fundamentally different than developed areas such as the Metro, and need their open space to be managed to preserve the character and value of the amenity. (This issue is further addressed in Part B.) Table 4.2a illustrates the acres per 1000 (with seasonal adjustment), and when the ELCs are not included in the total there is a more apparent deficiency.

Table 4.2

Existing Park Space for Central Lakes Region: No Seasonal Adjustment					
County	Park Name	Acreage	Reference	2000: Acres per 1000	2030: Acres per 1000
Aitkin County	Jacobson Campground and Wayside Rest	762	2	50	30
	Snake River Campground	1,753	2		
	Long Lake ELC	760	2		
Cass County	Deep Portage ELC	6,103	2	225	135
Crow Wing County	Paul Bunyan Arboretum	200	2	4	2
	Total Acreage	9,578		98	60
	Not including the ELCs	2,715		28	17

Table 4.2a

Existing Park Space for Central Lakes Region: With Seasonal Adjustment					
County	Park Name	Acreage	Reference	2000: Acres per 1000	2030: Acres per 1000
Aitkin	Jacobson Campground and Wayside Rest	762	2	22	14
	Snake River Campground	1,753	2		
	Long Lake ELC	760	2		
Cass	Deep Portage ELC	6,103	2	97	64
Crow Wing	Paul Bunyan Arboretum	200	2	2	1
	Total Acreage	9,578		52	34
	Not Including ELCs	2,715		15	10

²⁵ Tim Kelly, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Outdoor Recreation Participation trends in Wildlife Related Activities and Recreational boating. April 2004..

Regional Parkland Needs for the Central Lakes Region

Determining the true open space need in the Central Lakes (and all the other study areas for that matter) is difficult unless we know exactly what values the open space is to provide. If we want the open space to maintain the Northwoods character, the clean water, clean air, habitat, or scenic beauty the calculation is much different than if we are trying to determine the need for regional recreation parklands in a fully developed urban area. Since this study is concerned with the latter, the 25 acre per 1000 guideline is utilized. (The authors of this report strongly emphasize that these types of open space amenity regions are not the same as developed metropolitan regions, and should not be managed in the same way.) In determining the raw acreage needed the existing ELCs are not included as they are not recreational assets within the scope of this study.

Table 4.3

Acreage Needed to Meet 25 acres per 1000 Guideline for Central Lakes Region		
	2000 Census	2030 Projection
Total Acreage of Regional Recreation Open Space Needed With Seasonal Adjustment	4625	7144
Total Acreage of Regional Recreation Open Space Needed Without Seasonal Adjustment	2439	4020
Extra acreage necessary with adjustment*	1910	4429
Extra acreage necessary without seasonal adjustment*	None	1305

*This is assuming that ALL potential and existing parkland (except ELC's) are incorporated into the system.

Table 4.3 is the “big picture” of what additions are needed to the Central Lakes system to make distribution of regional parklands equitable in comparison to the Twin Cities Metro. The overall goal for development in the Central Lakes region is, “A Regional Park System containing 7,144 acres of regional parklands by 2030.” This goal can be met by integrating *all* the existing recreational acreage as identified in Tables 4.3 and 4.4 (except the ELCs) into the Central Lakes Regional Park System, *and* by adding 4,429 new acres to the system. This is an ambitious goal, but can be accomplished by prioritizing natural resources spending across jurisdictions and within different governmental agencies.

Even if this goal is met the natural character of the Central Lakes will not be adequately protected. This need simply identifies the acreage that is needed for a specific type of park asset to be equitably distributed between Metro and the Central Lakes.

The List of Tables (Appendix A) includes a breakdown of estimated Regional Parkland needs by county.

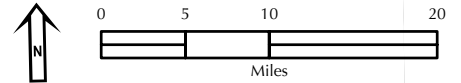
Proposed Regional Park Search Locations

The following map (11) identifies the areas of highest amenity value in the Central Lakes Region as determined by proximity to hills, trees, and water. Such features provide for recreational opportunities and are important in determining locations of the new Regional Parks. The second map (12) identifies existing public land ownership, which is important in building large hubs of protected open space. Both maps are marked with a purple line, this purple line signifies a proposed Regional Recreational Resource District (RRRD) which will be further discussed in Part B. This proposal suggests development of at least one Regional Recreation Park within the boundaries of each proposed Regional Recreation Resource District, therefore the boundary of the RRRD also serves as the search area for the Regional Park.

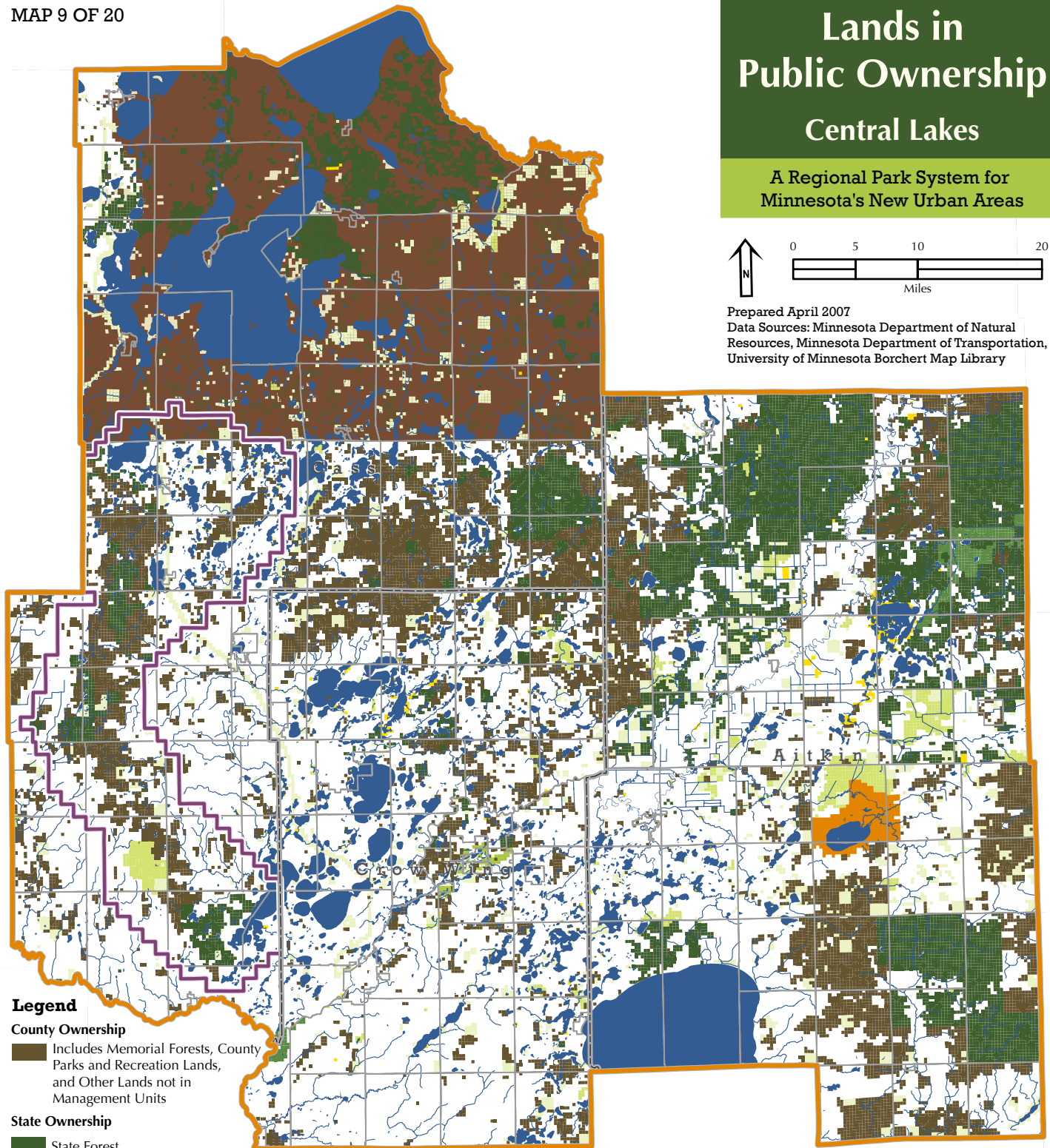
Lands in Public Ownership

Central Lakes

A Regional Park System for Minnesota's New Urban Areas



Prepared April 2007
 Data Sources: Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Minnesota Department of Transportation, University of Minnesota Borchert Map Library



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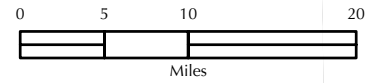
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Funding provided by the Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources (LCCMR)

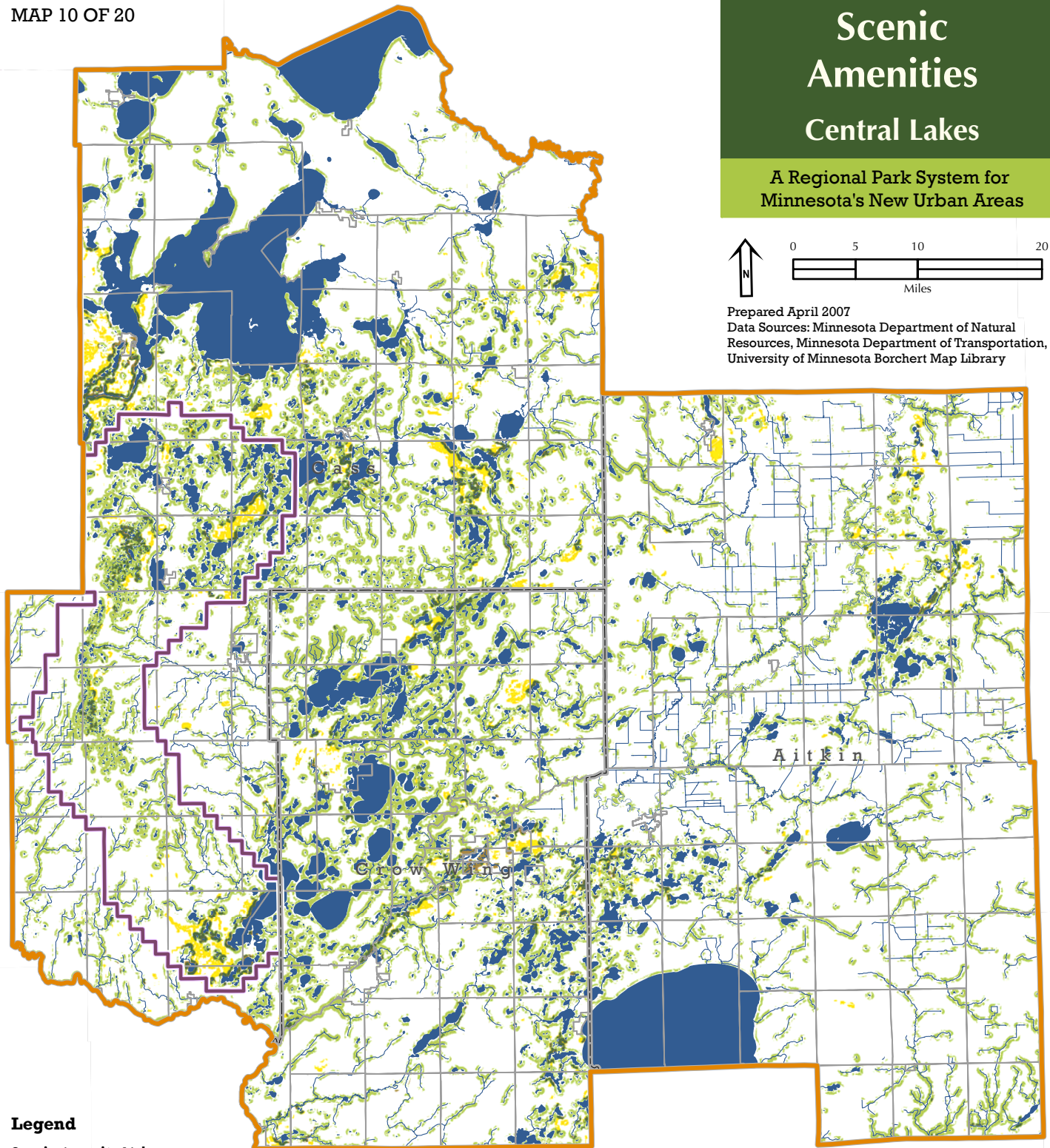


Scenic Amenities Central Lakes

A Regional Park System for
Minnesota's New Urban Areas



Prepared April 2007
Data Sources: Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Minnesota Department of Transportation, University of Minnesota Borchert Map Library



Legend

Scenic Amenity Value

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- Near water, Forested, Flat
- Near water, Forested, Rough
- Forested, Rough, Dry

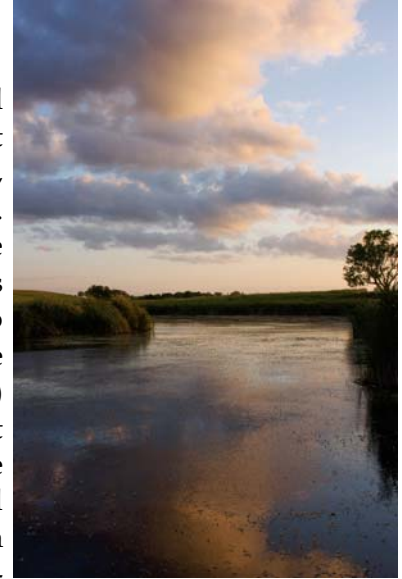
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Funding provided by the Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources (LCCMR)



Western Lakes

The Western Lakes region is currently experiencing, and will continue to experience, rapid population growth and development pressures. This area includes destination towns like Detroit Lakes, and picturesque lakes like Otter Tail, Pelican Lake and Detroit Lake. The permanent population of the region is expected to increase approximately 35% by 2030. The natural beauty of the area with its wealth of lakes, rivers, and forests, coupled with its proximity to several population centers (Fargo/Moorhead, St. Cloud, and the Metro), fuel the population migration. The Western Lakes (WL) region has an invaluable resource in its natural open space, but that resource is threatened by the current and projected migration. Like the Central Lakes region Minnesotans risk loving one of their natural treasures to death. Also like Central Lakes, the Western Lakes region experiences a significant seasonal influx, unfortunately those seasonal numbers are less reliable than those provided for the Central Lakes Region. By using a very conservative approximation of the difference in seasonal population of the Central Lakes Region, a rough estimate of the seasonal population of the Western Lakes Region is possible.²⁶ By expecting that there will be approximately 50% (the Central Lakes experiences an estimated 63%) more seasonal visitors in the region than there are permanent residents, we are able to plan according for needed Regional Parklands.



Population of the Western Lakes Region

The population of the Western Lakes region is projected to increase about 35% between 2000 and 2030 to an estimated 161,620 permanent residents (table 5.1), if the estimated seasonal residents are accounted for then there will be approximately 242,000 people in the region (table 5.1a). As an open space destination where owning acreage and lakefront is very desirable, and compact development is rare, the rate of land consumption will likely outpace the rate of population growth.

Table 5.1

Western Lakes Population*			
Area	2000 Census	2030 Projection	Percent Change
Becker	30,000	37,190	24%
Otter Tail	57,159	78,250	37%
Douglas	32,821	46,180	41%
Western Lakes Total Population	119,980	161,620	35%

* from Minnesota Population Projections 2000-2030, Minnesota Planning State Demographic Center, Martha McMurry, 2002.

²⁶ The estimated seasonal population of the Central Lakes in 2000 was approximately 90% higher than the population of permanent residents in the same year. The estimated seasonal population of seasonal residents in 2030 is approximately 75% higher than the projected permanent population of the Central Lakes. For purposes of estimating the seasonal increase in the Western Lakes Region a conservative 50% increase is used.

Table 5.1a

Western Lakes Population With Seasonal Adjustment*			
Area	2000 Census	2030 Projection	Percent Change
Becker	45,000	55,785	24%
Otter Tail	85,739	117,375	37%
Douglas	49,232	69,270	41%
Western Lakes Total Population	179,970	242,430	35%

*An adjustment factor of 50% is utilized as a conservative estimate of the increase in seasonal residents. This number is roughly based on the estimates of seasonal residents in the Central Lakes Region. The census population was subtracted from the adjusted total population of the central lakes and the resulting number was divided by the census population for 2000 to give the percent increase in seasonal residents. In 2000 the increase was approximately 90% and in 2030 the projected increase is estimated at 75%. We are therefore comfortable using 50% as a conservative estimate of the increase in seasonal population for the Western Lakes Region.

According to the 25 per 1000 guideline the existing system of recreational open space will not adequately serve the 2030-projected population of Western Lakes, much less the estimated seasonal population. This influx of people throughout the region will dramatically alter the landscape and reduce access to quality recreational opportunities unless steps are taken to ensure an adequate inventory and protect recreational open space. From fouling lakes to fragmenting forests, development of the region’s open space will greatly alter the natural character of this Minnesota treasure. Now is the time to make the investment in open space as every day more and more acres in the region are consumed for development, every day of inaction reduces the opportunity to retain large open space.

Existing Potential Regional Parklands in the Western Lakes Region

The Western Lakes region does contain several open space assets including the state parks of Glendalough, Maplewood, and Lake Carlos. But, these assets currently do not provide the type of experience that Minnesotans get at regional recreation parks, and they are not included in determining the adequacy open space for this report. When the 25 acre per 1000 guideline is applied it is clear that the parks identified as potential regional parks are inadequate to provide for the needs of the region. Further, these potential regional parks are not organized or maintained as part of a system that can provide for the diverse needs of Minnesotans.



Table 5.2 illustrates the number of acres per 1000 people. The lack of existing potential regional parks is obvious as there is currently only 3.2

acres per 1000 people in the Western Lakes Region. When the population is adjusted to include seasonal residents, there is only 2.1 acres per 1000 residents (Table 5.2a). This inequitable distribution of regional park lands when compared with the Metro will only get worse as the population of the area increases. By 2030 if no further acquisitions are made, and if all the identified potential acres are included in the regional park system, there will be 2.4 acres of Regional Park per 1000 people. When the 2030 estimated seasonal residents are included there is a mere 1.6 acres per 1000 people.

This is an area that thrives because of its open space and scenic beauty. It is a destination because it can provide for the recreational and outdoor needs of Minnesotans, but without adequate investment in the regional park system much of what makes it a destination could be lost.

Table 5.2

Existing Park Space for Western Lakes Region					
Area	Park Name	Acreage	Reference	2000: Acres per 1000	2030: Acres per 1000
Becker County	Chilton County Park	205	1,2	7	6
Otter Tail County		0	1,2	0	0
Douglas County	Runestone County Park	180	1,2	5	4
	Total Acreage	385		3.2	2.4

Table 5.2a

Existing Park Space for Western Lakes Region With Adjustment					
Area	Park Name	Acreage	Reference	2000: Acres per 1000	2030: Acres per 1000
Becker County	Chilton County Park	205	1,2	5	4
Otter Tail County		0	1,2	0	0
Douglas County	Runestone County Park	180	1,2	4	3
	Total Acreage	385		2.1	1.6

Regional Parkland Needs for the Western Lakes Region

Determining the true open space need in the Western Lakes (and all the other study areas for that matter) is difficult unless we know exactly what the open space is to provide. If we want the open space to maintain the Northwood's character, the clean water, clean air, habitat, or scenic beauty the calculation is much different than if we are trying to determine the need for regional recreation parklands. Since this study is concerned with the latter the 25-acre per 1000

guideline is utilized. (Again, the authors of this report strongly emphasize that these types of open space amenity regions are not the same as developed metropolitan regions, and should not be managed in the same way.) In determining the raw acreage needed to make the Western Lakes regional park system equitable with that of the metro it is apparent that significant investment is immediately needed.

Table 5.3

Acreage Needed to Meet 25 acres per 1000 Guideline for Western Lakes Study Region		
	2000 Census	2030 Projection
Total Acreage of Regional Recreation Open Space Needed	3000	4041
Extra Acreage Necessary (Total)*	2615	3656

*This is assuming that ALL potential and existing parkland are incorporated into the system.

Table 5.3a

Acreage Needed to Meet 25 acres per 1000 Guideline for Western Lakes Study Region With Adjustment		
	2000 Census	2030 Projection
Total Acreage of Regional Recreation Open Space Needed	4499	6061
Extra Acreage Necessary (Total)*	4114	5676

*This is assuming that ALL potential and existing parkland are incorporated into the system.

Table 5.3 and 5.3a are the “big picture” of what additions are needed to the Western Lakes system to make distribution of regional parklands equitable when compared to the Twin Cities Metro. Because there are seasonal residents in the region, and because those residents will have recreational needs, the adjusted values should be used to set the regional goal. Therefore, the overall goal for development in the Western Lakes region is, “A Regional Park System containing 6,061 acres of regional parklands by 2030.” This goal can be met by integrating *all* the existing recreational acreage as identified in Tables 5.2, *and* by adding 5,676 new acres to the system. The current system has less than one tenth of the acreage needed to meet the guideline. This is an ambitious goal, but can be accomplished by prioritizing natural resources spending across jurisdictions and within different governmental agencies.

The List of Tables (Appendix A) includes a breakdown of estimated Regional Parkland needs by county.

Proposed Regional Park Search Locations

The following map (13) identifies the areas of highest amenity value in the Western Lakes Region as determined by proximity to hills, trees, and water. Such features provide for recrea-

tional opportunities and are important in determining locations of the new Regional Parks. The second map (14) identifies existing public land ownership, which is important in building large hubs of protected open space. Both maps are marked with a purple line, this purple line signifies a proposed Regional Recreational Resource District (RRRD) which will be further discussed in Part B. This proposal suggests development of at least one Regional Recreation Park within the boundaries of each proposed Regional Recreation Resource District, therefore the boundary of the RRRD also serves as the search area for the Regional Park.

Lands in Public Ownership

Western Lakes

A Regional Park System for Minnesota's New Urban Areas

Legend

County Ownership

Includes Memorial Forests, County Parks and Recreation Lands, and Other Lands not in Management Units

State Ownership

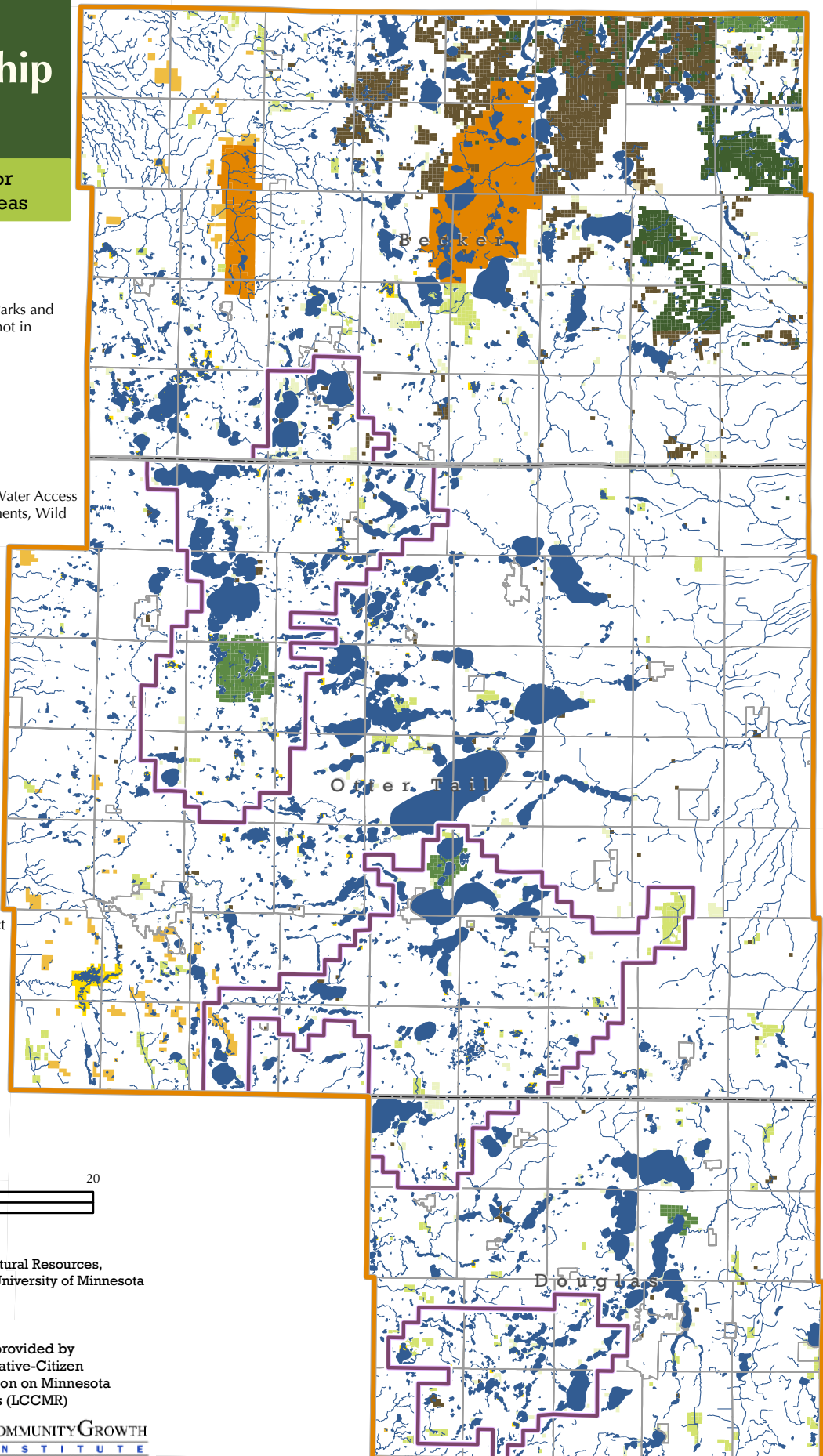
- State Forest
- State Park
- State Recreation Area
- Wildlife Management Area
- Other State Owned Land Including Water Access Sites, Fish Management Areas, Easements, Wild and Scenic Rivers, and Other Lands

Federal Ownership

- National Forest
- National Parks and Monuments
- National Wildlife Refuges
- Waterfowl Production Area
- Other Lands Including Scientific and Natural Area Peatlands, Bureau of Land Management Lands, Trust Lands, and others

- Reservation Lands
- Wild and Scenic River District
- Water Bodies

- Proposed Regional Recreation District
- Study Area
- County Boundary
- MCD Boundary



MAP 11 OF 20



Prepared April 2007
 Data Sources: Minnesota Department of Natural Resources,
 Minnesota Department of Transportation, University of Minnesota
 Borchert Map Library



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Scenic Amenities

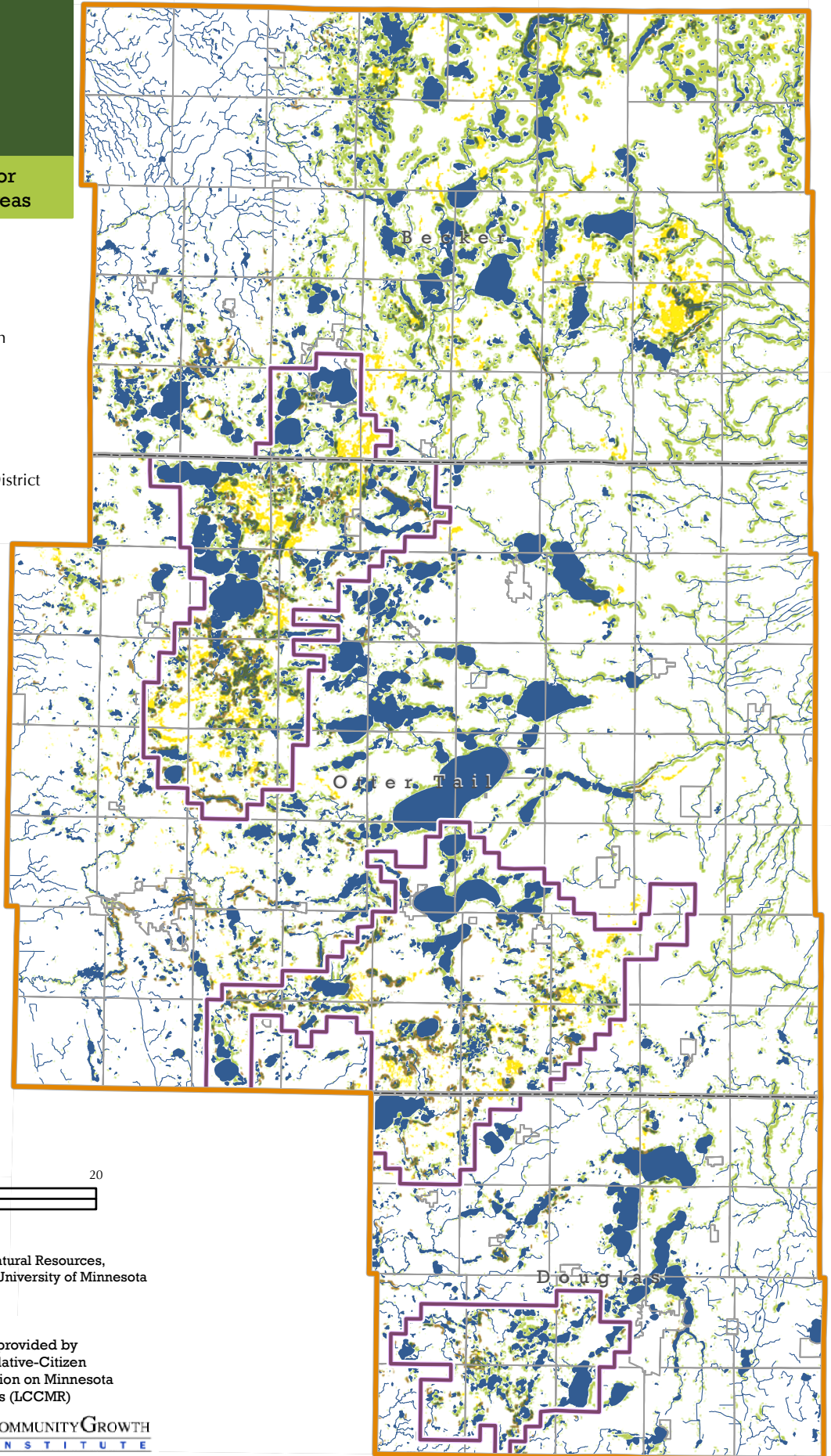
Western Lakes

A Regional Park System for
Minnesota's New Urban Areas

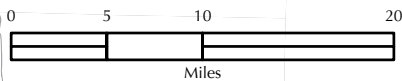
Legend

Scenic Amenity Value

-  Near water, Non-forested, Rough
-  Near water, Forested, Flat
-  Near water, Forested, Rough
-  Forested, Rough, Dry
-  Study Area
-  Proposed Regional Recreation District
-  County Boundary
-  MCD Boundary
-  Water Bodies



MAP 12 OF 20



Prepared April 2007
Data Sources: Minnesota Department of Natural Resources,
Minnesota Department of Transportation, University of Minnesota
Borchert Map Library

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College of Food, Agricultural
and Natural Resource Sciences
UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

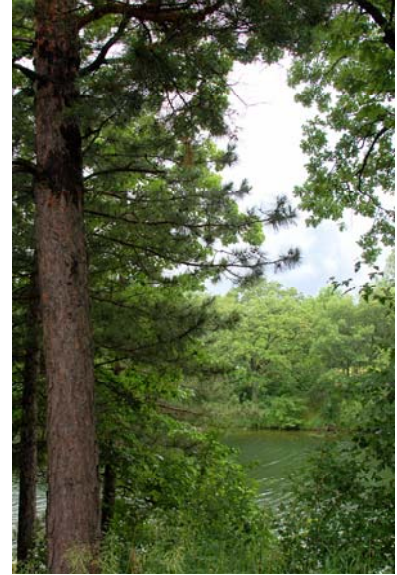
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Micropolitan Areas

Several working meetings were conducted in the undertaking of this project, and during those meetings comments and suggestions were made about this project. An effort was made to incorporate those comments and suggestions into this document and the inclusion of Bemidji and Willmar micropolitan areas is one example of such inclusion. As commercial centers surrounded by high amenity areas, these locations are experiencing, and will continue to experience, regionalized population growth.

This section includes an abbreviated discussion, but contains all information necessary to determine existing and projected land assets and related needs for each region.



Bemidji

Bemidji Micropolitan Region includes the high amenity areas found in Hubbard and Beltrami Counties as well as the growing regional center of Bemidji. This area is benefiting from its wealth of natural resources. This wealth is fueling, and will continue to fuel, rapid population growth. The area is defined by its natural resource heritage from the lumber industry to fishing and hunting, from dog sledding to “Curling Capital USA.”

The Bemidji Micropolitan Region is a summer tourist destination, and has a significant number of summer cabins and resorts which boost the seasonal population. Because of this seasonal influx, a function was applied to the state demographer’s data to get an estimate of summer population. This function was also applied to estimate the seasonal population of the Western Lakes and is based on information that was gathered regarding the seasonal population of the Central Lakes.

Population of the Bemidji Micropolitan Region

The Bemidji Micropolitan Region is expected to house 83,040 permanent residents by 2030 and an estimated 124,560 seasonal residents during the tourist season, this reflects a 43% increase in population from the 2000 census.

Table 6.1

Bemidji Micropolitan Region Population*			
County	2000 Census	2030 Projection	Percent Change
Beltrami	39,650	54,450	37%
Hubbard	18,376	28,590	56%
Bemidji Micropolitan Total Population	58,026	83,040	43%

* From Minnesota Population Projections 2000-2030, Minnesota Planning State Demographic Center, Martha McMurry, 2002.

Table 6.1a

Bemidji Micropolitan Region Population With Seasonal Adjustment*			
County	2000 Census	2030 Projection	Percent Change
Beltrami	59,475	81,675	37%
Hubbard	27,564	42,885	56%
Bemidji Micropolitan Total Population	87,039	124,560	43%

*An adjustment factor of 50% is utilized as a conservative estimate of the increase in seasonal residents. This number is roughly based on the estimates of seasonal residents in the Central Lakes Region. The census population was subtracted from the adjusted total population of the central lakes and the resulting number was divided by the census population for 2000 to give the percent increase in seasonal residents. In 2000 the increase was approximately 90% and in 2030 the projected increase is estimated at 75%. We are therefore comfortable using 50% as a conservative estimate of the increase in seasonal population for the Bemidji Micropolitan Region.

Existing Potential Regional Parklands - Bemidji Micropolitan Region

Bemidji is served by one significant park asset with Regional Park potential. The Three Island Lake County Park is comprised of an estimated 3,000 acres, and has miles of developed skiing and hiking trails as well as access to the Turtle River and Three Islands Lake. This existing park is a perfect candidate for integration into the Outstate Regional Park System. While Beltrami County and the residents of Bemidji are well served by Three Islands Park, Hubbard County's growing population has no acreage of potential Regional Parkland.

Table 6.2

Existing Park Space for Bemidji Micropolitan*					
County	Park Name	Acreage	Reference	2000: Acres per 1000	2030: Acres per 1000
Beltrami	Three Island Lake County Park	3,000	1,2	76	55
Hubbard		0	1,2	0	0
	Total Acreage	3,000		52	36

*Criteria for regional parks explained in: Legislative Commission on Minnesota Resources Greater Minnesota Regional Park Criteria, Final Report, 2005.

Reference 1: "Examples of Regional Parks Outside the Twin Cities Metro Area," Wayne Sames, MN DNR, 2003.

Reference 2: Legislative Commission on Minnesota Resources Greater Minnesota Regional Park Criteria, Final Report, 2005

Table 6.2a

Existing Park Space for Bemidji Micropolitan With Adjustment					
County	Park Name	Acreage	Reference	2000: Acres per 1000	2030: Acres per 1000
Beltrami	Three Island Lake County Park	3,000	1,2	50	37
Hubbard		0	1,2	0	0
	Total Acreage	3000		34	2

Regional Parkland Needs for the Bemidji Metropolitan Region

Because of the size of Three Islands Park there is little need for additional acreage in the region in terms of population. For equitable reasons there is a need for additional acreage in Hubbard County. When the seasonal population is included there is also a small need for additional lands to be acquired by 2030 to adequately provide for the estimated needs of the region.

Table 6.3

Acreage Needed to Meet 25 acres per 1000 Guideline for Bemidji Metropolitan Region		
	2000 Census	2030 Projection
Total Acreage of Regional Recreation Open Space Needed	1451	2076
Extra Acreage Necessary (Total)	0	0

Table 6.3a

Acreage Needed to Meet 25 acres per 1000 Guideline for Bemidji Metropolitan Region With Adjustment		
	2000 Census	2030 Projection
Total Acreage of Regional Recreation Open Space Needed	2176	3114
Extra Acreage Necessary (Total)	0	114

The List of Tables (Appendix A) includes a breakdown of estimated Regional Parkland needs by county.

Proposed Regional Park Search Locations

The following map (15) identifies the areas of highest amenity value in the Bemidji Metropolitan Region as determined by proximity to hills, trees, and water. Such features provide for recreational opportunities and are important in determining locations of the new Regional Parks. The second map (16) identifies existing public land ownership, which is important in building large hubs of protected open space. Both maps are marked with a purple line, this purple line signifies a proposed Regional Recreational Resource District (RRRD) which will be further discussed in Part B.

Lands in Public Ownership

Bemidji Micropolitan

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Legend

County Ownership

Includes Memorial Forests, County Parks and Recreation Lands, and Other Lands not in Management Units

State Ownership

State Forest
 State Park
 State Recreation Area
 Wildlife Management Area
 Other State Owned Land Including Water Access Sites, Fish Management Areas, Easements, Wild and Scenic Rivers, and Other Lands

Federal Ownership

National Forest
 National Parks and Monuments
 National Wildlife Refuges
 Waterfowl Production Area
 Other Lands Including Scientific and Natural Area Peatlands, Bureau of Land Management Lands, Trust Lands, and others.

Reservation Lands
 Wild and Scenic River District
 Water Bodies
 Proposed Regional Recreation District
 Study Area
 County Boundary
 MCD Boundary

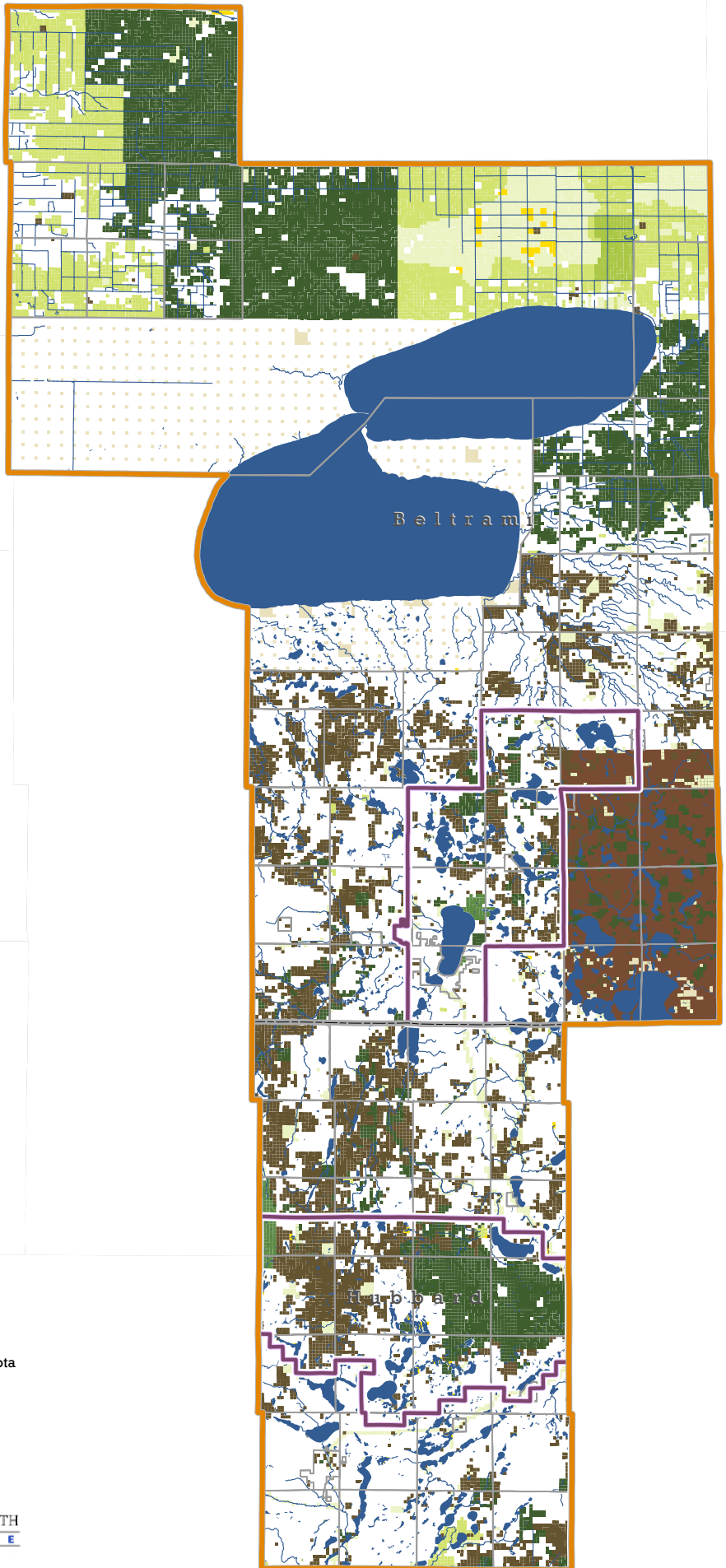
MAP 17 OF 20



Prepared April 2007
 Data Sources: Minnesota Department of Natural Resources,
 Minnesota Department of Transportation, University of Minnesota
 Borchert Map Library



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Scenic Amenities






Bemidji Micropolitan

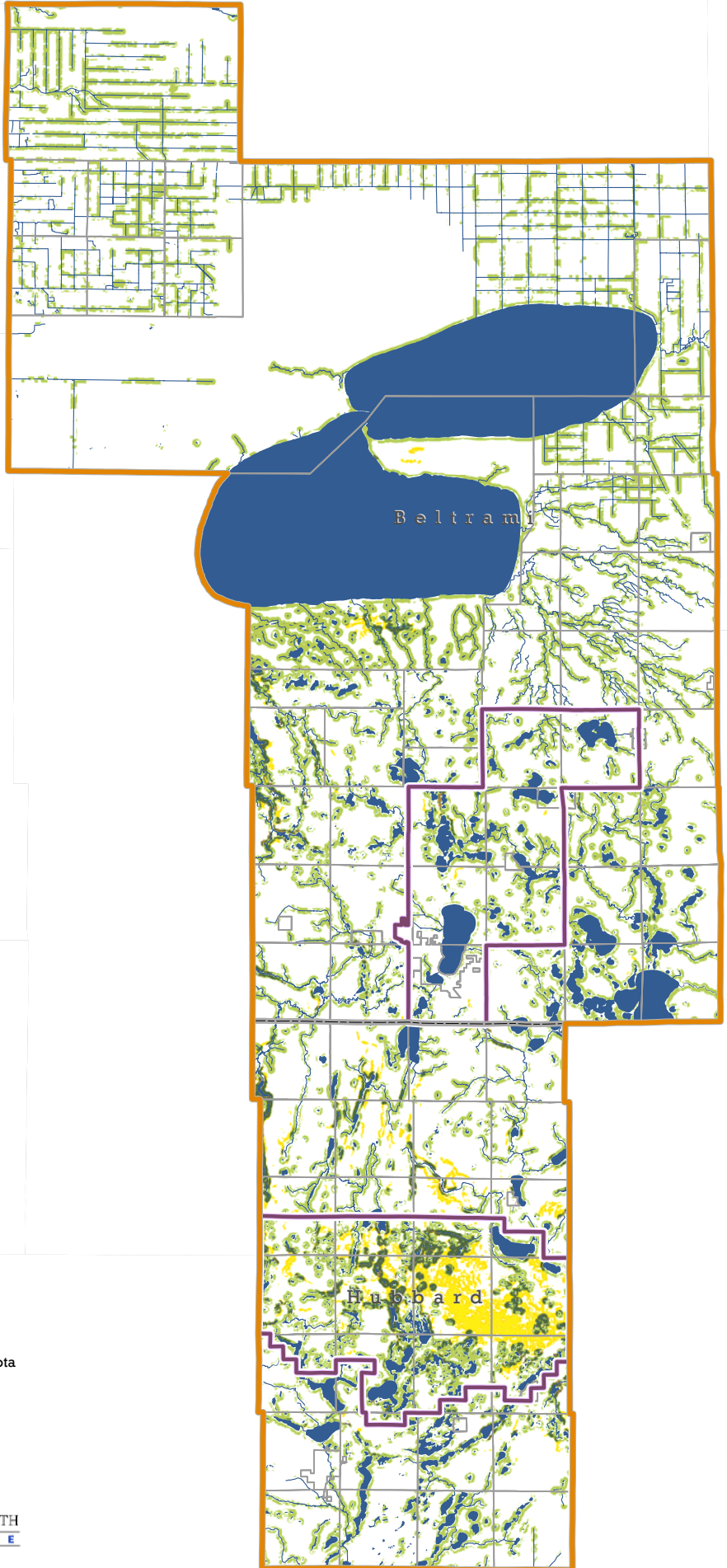
A Regional Park System for
Minnesota's New Urban Areas

Legend

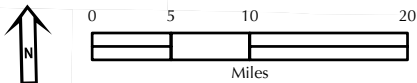
Scenic Amenity Value

-  Near water, Non-forested, Rough
-  Near water, Forested, Flat
-  Near water, Forested, Rough
-  Forested, Rough, Dry

-  Study Area
-  Proposed Regional Recreation District
-  County Boundary
-  MCD Boundary
-  Water Bodies



MAP 18 OF 20



Prepared April 2007
Data Sources: Minnesota Department of Natural Resources,
Minnesota Department of Transportation, University of Minnesota
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Willmar

Willmar is one of the fastest growing non-metropolitan cities in Minnesota due to its diverse economy, wealth of recreational lakes, and function as a commercial hub for West Central Minnesota. Kandiyohi County comprises the Willmar Micropolitan Region, and the countywide population is expected to increase by 16% between 2000 and 2030. This 16% figure is misleading as it is a county-wide population increase. There is significant intra-county migration within Kandiyohi, from the agricultural areas to the higher amenity areas as farmers retire and agricultural labor needs decrease.



Table 7.1

Willmar Micropolitan Region Population			
County	2000 Census	2030 Projection	Percent Change
Kandiyohi	41,203	47,680	16%

Existing Potential Regional Parklands - Willmar Micropolitan Region

Willmar does not have any parks that meet the criteria of Regional Parks or Parks with Regional Park Potential.²⁷ Although there is no acreage that meets the criteria Willmar Micropolitan Region does have some significant recreational assets. Assets such as public beaches on several large recreational lakes or the Glacial Lakes Trail can be incorporated into the regional park system.

Table 7.2

Existing Park Space for Willmar Micropolitan Region*					
County	Park Name	Acreage	Reference	2000: Acres per 1000	2030: Acres per 1000
Kandiyohi		0	1,2	0	0
	Total Acreage	0		0	0

*Criteria for regional parks explained in: Legislative Commission on Minnesota Resources [Greater Minnesota Regional Park Criteria](#), Final Report, 2005.

Reference 1: "Examples of Regional Parks Outside the Twin Cities Metro Area," Wayne Sames, MN DNR, 2003.

Reference 2: Legislative Commission on Minnesota Resources [Greater Minnesota Regional Park Criteria](#), Final Report, 2005.

Regional Parkland Needs for Willmar Micropolitan Region

Since there is no existing parkland in the region that meets the criteria, Willmar needs to remedy a large current deficiency and acquire lands to ensure adequate assets as the region grows.

²⁷ See Table 7.1.

Table 7.3

Acreage Needed to Meet 25 acres per 1000 Guideline for Willmar Micropolitan Region		
	2000 Census	2030 Projection
Total Acreage of Regional Recreation Open Space Needed	1,030	1,192
Extra Acreage Necessary (Total)	1,030	1,192

The List of Tables (Appendix A) includes a breakdown of estimated Regional Parkland needs by county.

Proposed Regional Park Search Locations

The following map (17) identifies the areas of highest amenity value in the Willmar Micropolitan Region as determined by proximity to hills, trees, and water. Such features provide for recreational opportunities and are important in determining locations of the new Regional Parks. The second map (18) identifies existing public land ownership, which is important in building large hubs of protected open space. Both maps are marked with a purple line, this purple line signifies a proposed Regional Recreational Resource District (RRRD) which will be further discussed in Part B. This proposal suggests development of at least one Regional Recreation Park within the boundaries of each proposed Regional Recreation Resource District, therefore the boundary of the RRRD also serves as the search area for the Regional Park.




Lands in Public Ownership

Willmar Micropolitan Area






A Regional Park System for Minnesota's New Urban Areas

Legend






County Ownership




 Includes Memorial Forests, County Parks and Recreation Lands, and Other Lands not in Management Units





State Ownership

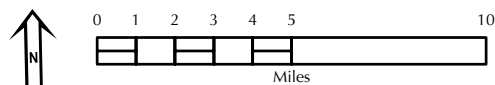
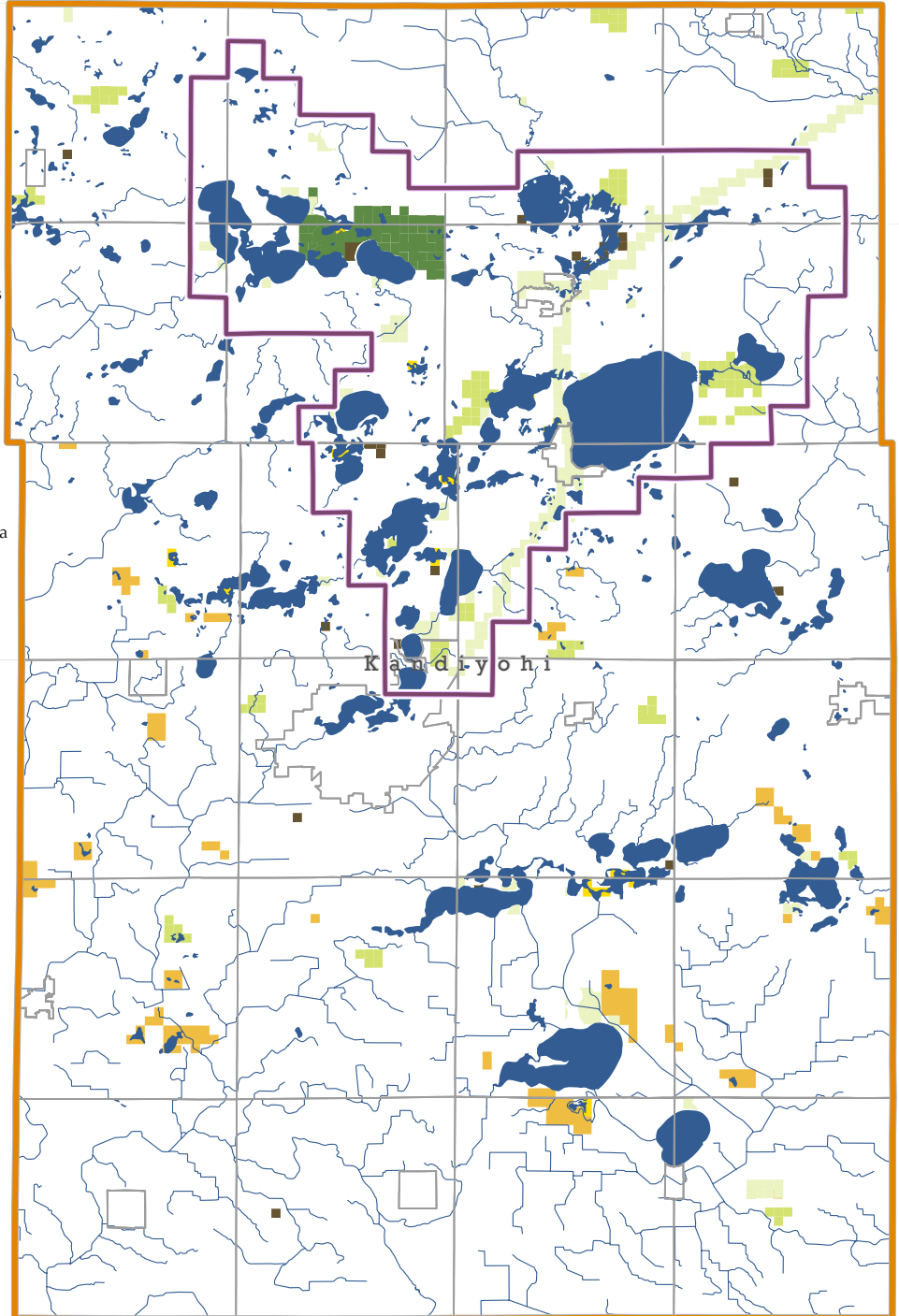
 State Forest
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 Proposed Regional Recreation District
 Study Area
 County Boundary
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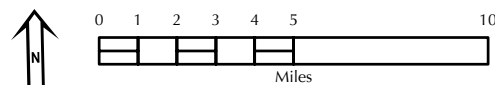
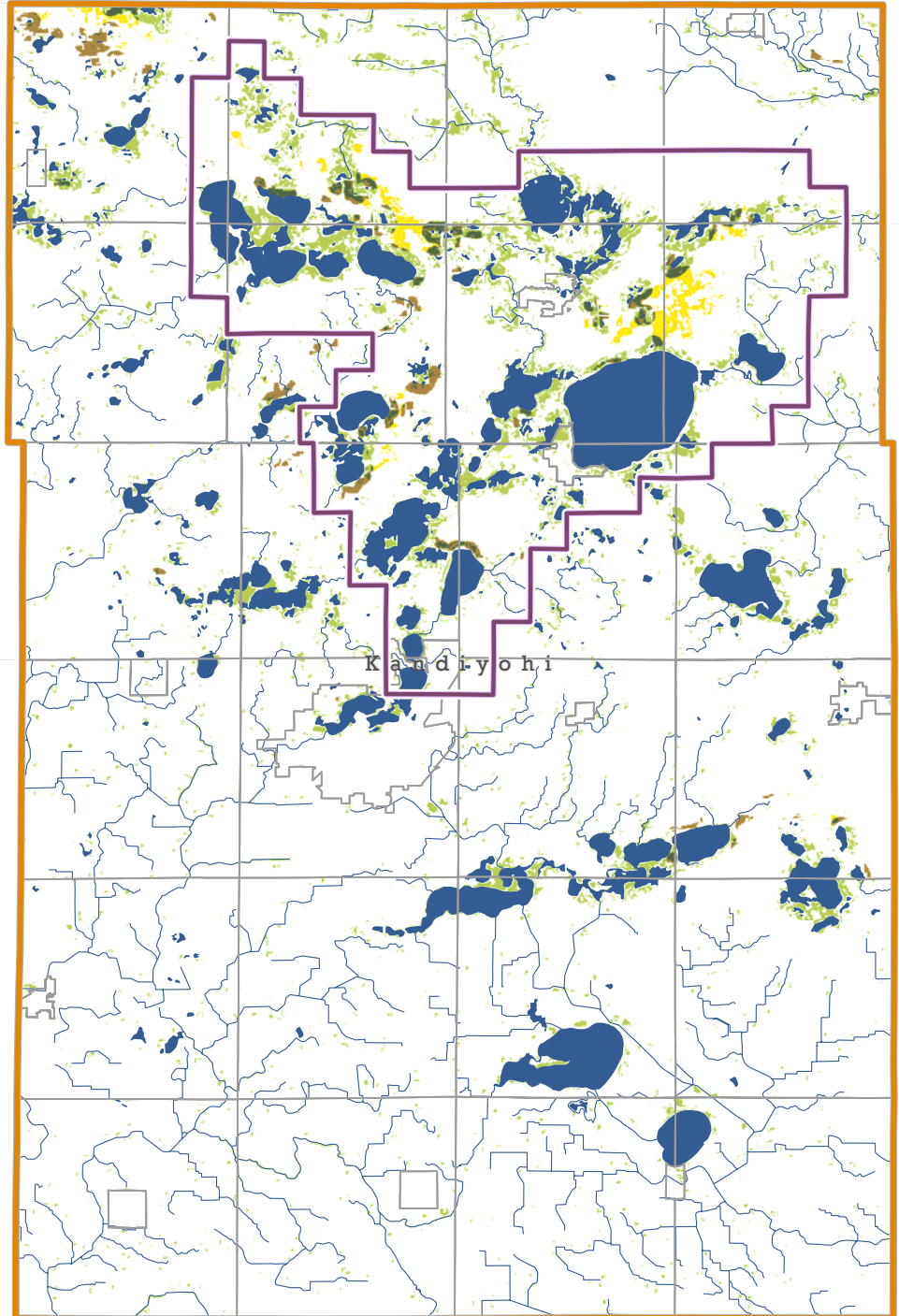
Scenic Amenities Willmar Micropolitan Area

A Regional Park System for Minnesota's New Urban Areas

Legend

Scenic Amenity Value

- Near water, Non-forested, Rough
- Near water, Forested, Flat
- Near water, Forested, Rough
- Forested, Rough, Dry
- Study Area
- Proposed Regional Recreation District
- County Boundary
- MCD Boundary
- Water Bodies



Prepared April 2007
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