



# Adapting to change

Minnesota's 2008-2012  
State Comprehensive  
Outdoor Recreation Plan





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## SCORP sets priorities

### The 2008-2012 State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP)

gives outdoor recreation decision-makers and managers a focused set of priorities and suggested actions to guide them as they make decisions about outdoor recreation.

The National Park Service requires this plan to maintain Minnesota's eligibility to participate in the Federal Land and Water Conservation Fund (also known as the LAWCON or LWCF) program.

## Goal and four strategies

The SCORP Advisory Group set a single, important goal for 2008-2012: Increase participation in outdoor recreation by all Minnesotans and visitors.

Changing demographics, economics, land use, environment and culture will require changes in how outdoor recreation areas are planned, designed, funded, developed, managed and promoted. As the state's population increases, we will need an increased investment in land, resources and infrastructure—but outdoor recreation competes for our time and money with many other societal needs and priorities.

We must recognize and adapt to change and diverse needs in order to effectively encourage greater participation in outdoor recreation by all Minnesotans and visitors to our state.

Outdoor recreation in Minnesota is important for both societal and personal reasons: It is a major generator of economic activity and an essential component of the state's tourism industry, and it can play an important role in improving the health of both individuals and the community.

Four interconnected strategies will help increase participation in outdoor recreation:

- Acquire, protect, and restore Minnesota's natural resource base, on which outdoor recreation depends. This includes obtaining prime outdoor recreation areas throughout the state prior to anticipated land use changes.
- Develop and maintain a sustainable and resilient outdoor recreation infrastructure.
- Promote increased outdoor recreation participation through targeted programming and outreach.
- Evaluate and understand the outdoor recreation needs of Minnesotans and the ability of Minnesota's natural resources to support those needs.



## SCORP Advisory Group

This plan was developed with the assistance of an advisory group that included outdoor recreation and natural resource leaders from local, regional, state and federal government; non-governmental organizations; the recreation industry; and the University of Minnesota. Several of the advisory group's members also served on the 2003-2008 SCORP advisory group. Staff members from various divisions and units of the Department of Natural Resources served as either members of the advisory group or as support staff for the SCORP planning effort.

Participants were selected to represent a broad spectrum of outdoor recreation perspectives and experience. Each advisory group member brought a unique viewpoint and experience to the discussion.

### The purpose of the advisory group was:

- To provide information, suggestions, opinions and comments about the proposed focus of SCORP: decreased outdoor recreation participation and related issues and implications.
- To review and comment on specific draft documents.
- To help develop and evaluate public involvement efforts.
- To develop specific SCORP priorities based on the focus.

The advisory group met several times from March 2007 to September 2007 to review the survey information developed since the last SCORP, discuss and evaluate previous SCORP priorities and recommend new or modified priorities, suggest specific recommendations for addressing the priorities and review and comment on drafts.

A list of the advisory group members is included in the appendix.



### Outdoor Recreation Activities of Minnesota Adults

(population 20 years and older, participating annually)

Activity	Percent of population
Walking	54%
Boating of all types	43%
Swimming or wading all places	41%
Driving for pleasure on scenic roads	37%
Picnicking	36%
Fishing of all types	30%
Biking outdoors of all types	29%
Visiting outdoor zoos	27%
Camping of all types	26%
Visiting nature center	25%

Source: 2004 Minnesota Outdoor Recreation Participation Survey

### Top 10 outdoor recreation activities

Some of Minnesota's popular activities, like walking, are within a 30-minute drive of many participants' homes. Others, like driving and camping, are popular tourist activities. Minnesota has more boating and fishing participation than any other state.

## Challenges for outdoor recreation in Minnesota

The advisory committee reviewed outdoor recreation trends and issues, including:

### *Natural resource base*

The first priority of the 2003–2008 SCORP was to protect and restore the natural resource base on which outdoor recreation depends. Development pressures continue to affect natural resource areas in several rapidly urbanizing areas of the state, especially lake regions and the “ring” counties surrounding the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area. Several large, privately owned industrial forest land areas that have historically provided a range of public outdoor recreation activities as well as timber resources are in danger of being subdivided and sold.

Minnesota has a great deal of federal-, state- and county-owned or administered land, but most of it is in the northern third of the state and does not offer close-to-home recreational opportunities for most of the state’s population. About two-thirds of all recreation use occurs within a half-hour drive from home, according to the *2004 Outdoor Recreation Participation Survey of Minnesotans*. This points out the need for outdoor recreation land near areas of higher population density and growth. Protecting an adequate land and resource base to support future outdoor recreation needs is still a high priority.

### *Sustaining existing facilities*

The previous SCORP called for sustaining existing outdoor recreation facilities for future generations. We still need to invest in the outdoor recreation infrastructure to ensure that it is accessible, safe, energy efficient, economical to operate and maintain and flexible enough to accommodate changing needs.

### *Healthy lifestyle*

The 2003–2008 SCORP noted the connection between outdoor recreation and a healthy lifestyle. If anything, this connection is even more relevant today. A 2006 survey by the United Health Foundation found that while Minnesotans are generally healthier than people in the rest of the country, there has been a 132 percent rise in the obesity rate of Minnesotans since 1990.

### *Connecting people and nature*

The 2003–2008 SCORP identified the need to expand nature-based outdoor recreation experiences for young people by providing “near-by” access to nature and allowing time for frequent unstructured play and exploration. This theme was developed and expanded by Richard Louv in his book, *Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder*. Reconnecting children and the outdoors remains an important part of this SCORP. This SCORP expands the theme to include reconnecting many adult Minnesotans with the outdoors.

### *Population changes*

Minnesota’s population has increased in recent years and at the same time has become older, more culturally and ethnically diverse and more concentrated in urban and urbanizing areas. These changes mean that who participates in outdoor recreation, what activities they participate in, where they participate, why they participate and when they participate also have changed.

Participation rates in some activities, such as fishing and hunting, are declining. At the same time, participation rates in other activities, such as ATV-riding and kayaking, are increasing. The DNR’s recent statewide outdoor recreation surveys give us updated information about outdoor recreation participation by adults, as well as about facility adequacy and management concerns of outdoor recreation providers.

“I like to play indoors better, ‘cause that’s where all the electrical outlets are.”

San Diego fourth-grader, quoted in *Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder* by Richard Louv.

## Outdoor recreation study

Over the last five years, Minnesota has studied outdoor recreation across the state. The results of this research were used as a foundation for the issues highlighted in SCORP. Information from the research is available at the Department of Natural Resources website, [www.mndnr.gov](http://www.mndnr.gov). Click on “About the DNR” and “Department Reports” for these publications:

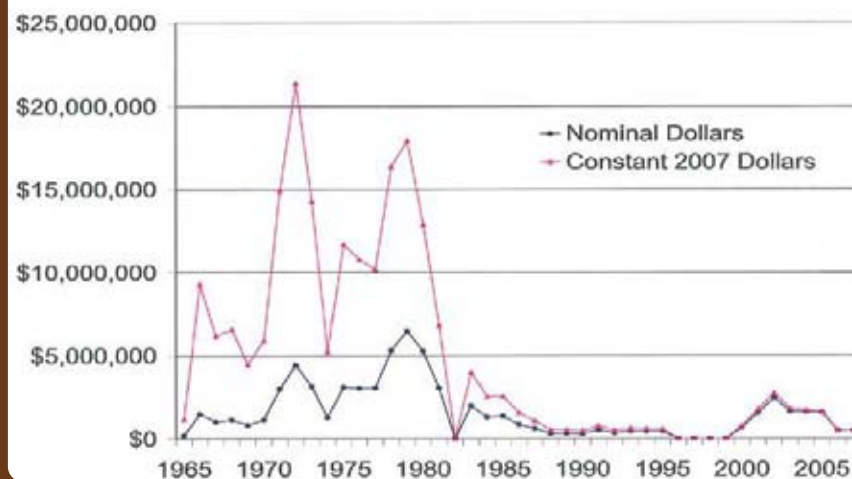
- *2004 Outdoor Recreation Participation Survey of Minnesotans* by Tim Kelly, Office of Management and Budget Services, Department of Natural Resources.
- *2004 Outdoor Recreation Facility Survey and Management Concerns of Minnesota Cities, Counties and School Districts* by Ron Sushak, Office of Management and Budget Services, Department of Natural Resources.
- *Ten Year Forecasts of Minnesota Adult Outdoor Recreation Participation, 2004-2014* by Tim Kelly, Office of Management and Budget Services, Department of Natural Resources.

## The Land and Water Conservation Fund

The Land and Water Conservation Fund, created by Congress in 1964, has an important place in the history of the United States' outdoor recreation and conservation funding efforts. The program has assisted with the acquisition of about 7 million acres of parkland as well as more than 40,000 state and local recreation and natural area projects nationwide since it began.

Revenue for the Land and Water Conservation Fund comes primarily from offshore oil and gas lease receipts received by the federal government. Since offshore drilling for oil and gas depletes a valuable natural resource, Congress determined that it was appropriate to invest the proceeds from offshore leases to protect America's natural resources and provide land and facilities for outdoor recreation experiences.

**L&WCF Apportionments to Minnesota 1965-2007**



Source: Minnesota Department of Natural Resources

### Declining federal funding

In recent years, the Land and Water Conservation Fund appropriations have dwindled. Except for a brief resurgence from 2001 to 2005, funding has been minimal to nonexistent. In 2007, the annual apportionment to Minnesota was less than \$500,000. Prospects for future funding are uncertain.





The Land and Water Conservation Fund program has had a profound—although largely unappreciated—impact on the outdoor recreation infrastructure of Minnesota, with investments of more than \$68 million in the state's outdoor recreation system, most of it during the late 1960s to mid-1980s. State and local funds more than matched this amount. Adjusted for inflation, the total investment is in the hundreds of millions of dollars, funding projects in 68 state parks, recreation areas and waysides, 35 state forest campgrounds and recreation sites, 20 state scientific and natural areas, 16 public access sites, 12 wildlife management areas, seven state wild and scenic rivers, five state trails, four Minnesota Historical Society recreation sites, three University of Minnesota recreation sites and hundreds of local government park projects throughout the state.

The Land and Water Conservation Fund in Minnesota supports a state program and a local program, each getting 50 percent of the federal appropriation. The state program supports the acquisition and development of the State Outdoor Recreation System as defined in Minnesota Statutes, Chapter 86A. The local program, funded through the Outdoor Recreation Grant Program, Regional Park Grant Program and Natural and Scenic Area program, provides matching grants to local units of government and recognized Indian tribal governments for acquisition and development of outdoor recreation and natural areas.

Both programs use SCORP priorities to guide project selection through the Open Project Selection process.

- For the state program, DNR evaluates and selects projects based on SCORP priorities.
- For the local grant programs, DNR administers an annual competitive grant program and evaluates project proposals based on objective criteria derived from SCORP priorities.

Both state and local Land and Water Conservation Fund programs focus fairly narrowly on land acquisition, facility development and rehabilitation projects. SCORP addresses these topics, as well as a broad range of other issues facing Minnesota's outdoor recreation system. Some of those issues require actions not necessarily related to funding by a variety of public and/or private entities.



**Goal: Increase  
Participation**





## **Goal: Increase participation in outdoor recreation by all Minnesotans and visitors.**

There are many good reasons for individuals to take part in outdoor recreation, from physical and mental health to sociability to strengthening family ties. There also are significant benefits to communities, the state and society, ranging from adding to the state's economic base to increasing support for preservation and improvement of the state's natural resources.

Declining participation in some kinds of outdoor recreation and changing needs and interests in others mean that outdoor recreation providers can't simply offer outdoor recreation opportunities and expect participation to follow. To increase participation, we must be pro-active.

### ***Impact of outdoor recreation***

Participation in outdoor recreation contributes to the overall mental and physical health of the state's population. This is especially important in an era when electronics, from computers to televisions to game equipment, keep both adults and young people indoors and inactive.

The costs of a sedentary lifestyle include, among others, an increase in the number of people who are overweight or obese. In 2000, the national costs resulting from conditions related to people being overweight or obese were estimated at \$117 billion—with an estimated 300,000 premature deaths. A 2006 survey by the United Health Foundation found that while Minnesotans are generally healthier than people in the rest of the country, there has been a 132 percent rise in the obesity rate of Minnesotans since 1990—greater than the national increase of 110 percent.

The federal Centers for Disease Control estimates that in 2006, 20-24 percent of Minnesota adults were obese.

Obesity is a key predictor for many future health problems, including diabetes. Lack of adequate exercise—partially resulting from inadequate outdoor recreation facilities or opportunities—is often cited as a contributor to obesity.

Many young people are not getting enough exercise and face future health risks as a result. Outdoor recreation can be a part of a solution to this problem. To create more attractive outdoor recreation environments for young people, outdoor recreation providers must understand their interests. This might include linking outdoor experiences with the electronically connected and focused everyday world of many young people.

The economic health of the state relies on continued use and enjoyment of our outdoor recreation resources. Availability of a wide range of outdoor recreation opportunities is one of the factors most often cited as contributing to the state's perceived high quality of life. Participating in outdoor recreation may correspond to a greater interest in and support for measures to protect land, facilities and resources necessary to ensure those same activities for future generations.

### ***Motivations and constraints***

People have a number of reasons for taking part in activities outdoors. According to the DNR's *2004 Outdoor Recreation Participation Survey*: "Foremost among them

is, simply, to enjoy nature. Next in ranking is exercise and feeling healthier, which reflects a traditional association between recreation and a healthy lifestyle. Outdoor recreation is frequently a means to build bonds with family and friends, and the social affiliation aspects of recreation are ranked highly. Recreation is also commonly used as a means to escape the pressures of modern life, to experience some silence and quiet.”

Outdoor recreation is important in the lives of Minnesotans. A majority—57 percent—believe outdoor recreation is a “very important” part of their life and another 25 percent believe it is “moderately important.”

If most Minnesotans think outdoor recreation is important, what stands in the way of their taking part in it more often? Constraints cited in the survey include:

- **Time.** People simply don’t have enough leisure time to take part in the outdoor activities they like as often as they want. Lack of time was the most often cited reason for respondents’ limiting outdoor recreation.
- **Outdoor pests.** Minnesota, Land of 10,000 Lakes, is also the land of poor drainage—prime habitat for outdoor pests. Not wanting to fight off the mosquitoes, black flies and other pests is right behind lack of time as a reason for limiting outdoor activities.
- **Cost and effort.** Recreation activities generally involve expenses, travel and preparation. Most state residents can’t just walk out the door and take part in an outdoor activity.
- **Lack of a companion.** People take part in activities outdoors as a way to share experiences with family and friends. Especially for those who live alone, lack of companions is a major constraint.

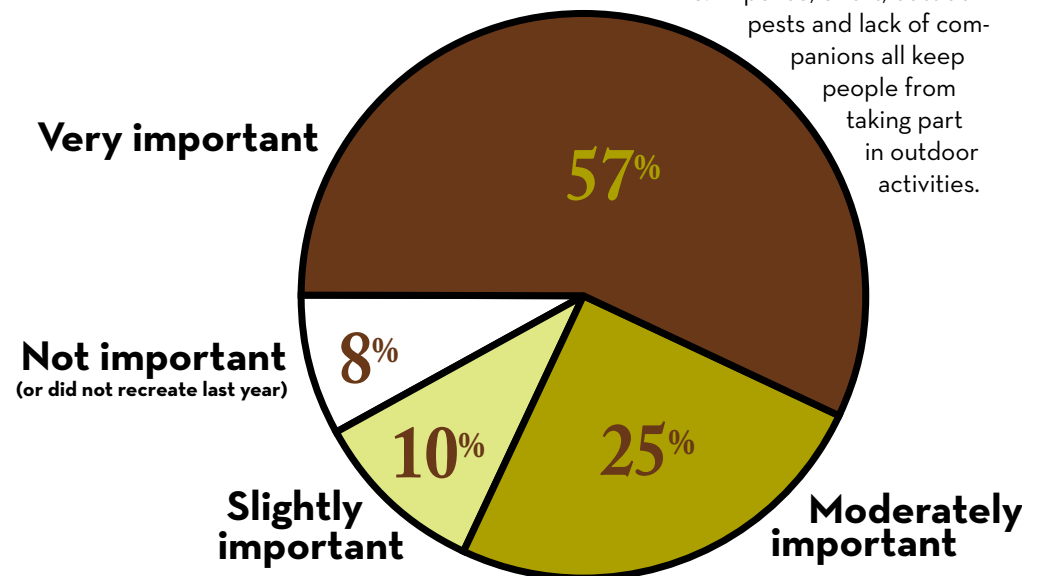
### *Changing demographics*

Minnesota’s demographics are changing as the population is increasing. The large Baby Boom sector of the population is reaching retirement age and will exert a continuing—and perhaps increased—influence on outdoor recreation demand. Younger residents have different preferences for outdoor recreation activities than their parents and grandparents. Immigration of people from other parts of the United States and from other countries is changing the ethnic and cultural mix of the state’s population.

Outdoor recreation providers must adapt to these changing needs and demands, reassessing how outdoor recreation areas are planned, designed, developed, managed, maintained and promoted.

### **Outdoor recreation is an important part of Minnesotan’s lives—but there are constraints**

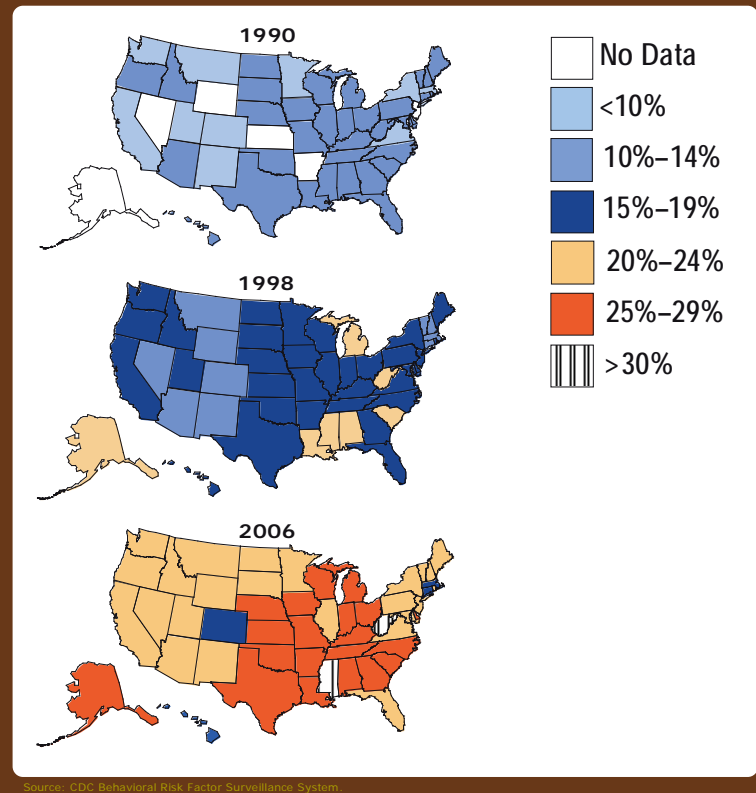
Outdoor recreation is at least moderately important to the vast majority of Minnesotans, but they often don’t feel they have enough time to participate as often as they’d like. Expense, effort, outdoor pests and lack of companions all keep people from taking part in outdoor activities.



Source: 2004 Minnesota outdoor participating survey

## Obesity Trends\* Among U.S. Adults BRFSS, 1990, 1998, 2006

(\*BMI ≥30, or about 30lbs. overweight for 5'4" person)



### Obesity is increasing

Although Minnesotans are generally healthier than residents of many other states, the obesity rate is increasing—one study found a 132 percent increase from 1990 to 2006. Obesity is a factor in an array of health problems, including diabetes. Outdoor recreation is one way for people to stay active and prevent obesity.

A projected overall increase in the state's population suggests an overall increase in demand for outdoor recreation. The population increase will not be evenly distributed throughout the state, but likely will be focused in the growth corridor running from the Brainerd lakes area southward along the Mississippi River through the Twin Cities and toward Rochester. Increases also are expected in other regional growth centers and around some of the high-amenity lake regions of the state. A few rural areas are likely to continue losing population. Some newly developed communities are moving quickly to acquire enough land and develop adequate facilities to meet present and future needs for outdoor recreation.

Population in older core cities—Minneapolis and St. Paul—and older suburbs is increasing, after years of decline. These communities must replace or renovate older facilities or recreation programming to meet the needs and demands of an ever more diverse clientele.

Older people may desire a different mix of outdoor recreation opportunities than those designed for a younger clientele, creating a need for changes in outdoor recreation facilities and programs. For example: Healthy but non-strenuous activities such as walking may become more important.

Recent immigrants may have experienced different kinds of outdoor recreation—or may have little information about the activities available. Their use patterns can be different than those for which many facilities have been designed. Providers must be pro-active in understanding the outdoor recreation needs of people who have recently moved to Minnesota and adjust facilities and programs to meet those needs as well as the needs of other users.

Several constraints—including lack of time, concerns about safety and security, lack of appropriate knowledge or skills and a preference for other leisure options—affect Minnesotans' participation in outdoor recreation, according to a recent DNR survey. Outdoor recreation providers can't eliminate many of these constraints, but they can help Minnesotans and visitors cope with them more effectively by offering appropriate information and support.



# Strategies





### Strategy #1

**Acquire, protect and restore Minnesota's natural resource base, on which outdoor recreation depends. This includes obtaining prime outdoor recreation areas throughout the state prior to anticipated land use changes.**

There are a number of pressures on Minnesota's natural resource base:

- Minnesota's fast-growing population is putting pressure on the land base and the natural resources that support many types of outdoor recreation, especially in several of the fastest growing areas of the state.
- Large tracts of privately owned industrial forest land historically available to the public for certain outdoor recreation activities are threatened by subdivision into smaller parcels and divestment.
- High-value natural and scenic areas need protection.
- Shore lands and some existing outdoor recreation areas are under increasing development pressure.
- Invasive species, plant and animal diseases, forest fires, floods, water pollution and related factors all threaten the natural resource base. Their negative impacts may be magnified by land-use changes, industrial and commercial practices, climate change and recreational use itself.

All of these pressures, plus the high cost of acquisition, have made it more difficult for outdoor recreation providers to find and procure adequate land to accommodate present and projected needs.

Funding for outdoor recreation land acquisition and resource protection has not kept up with the need. Some historical sources of funding, such as the state's Future Resources Fund and the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund, are either no longer available or have been significantly reduced.

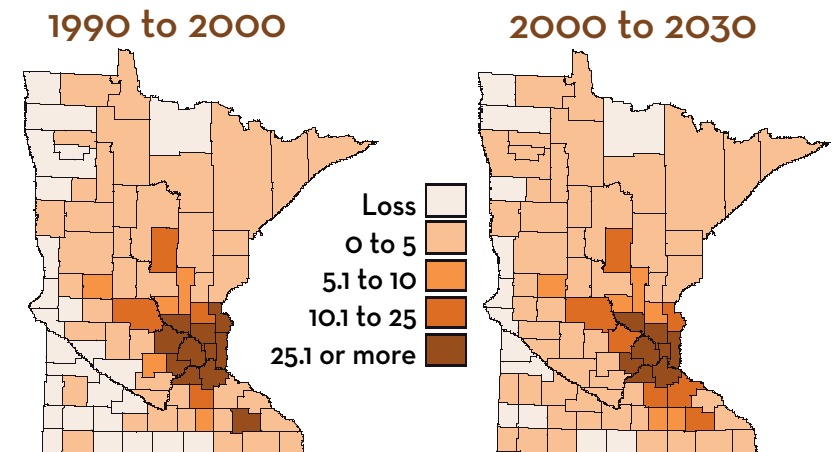
## Strategy 1 action priorities:

- The state should establish stable and adequate funding mechanisms that meet the long-term (25 years) acquisition, restoration and natural resource management needs of public and private outdoor recreation lands and waters. (“State” here means all levels of government, in cooperation with the private sector, including NGOs.)
- State government should accelerate investment in acquiring land for the State Outdoor Recreation System and in funding assistance to local governments to acquire and protect lands and resources for outdoor recreation. (The State Outdoor Recreation System means the areas and facilities owned and managed by the State of Minnesota and the Minnesota Historical Society as defined in Minnesota Statutes, Chapter 86A.)
- Local units of government in areas of rapid population growth and land-use changes should adopt programs to evaluate, regulate, fund and provide incentives for land and natural resource protection.
- The acquisition of land in rapidly growing areas, in areas that protect water quality and in areas with key threatened habitats should be top priority.

## Background

Minnesota has the fastest growing population of the Midwest states—the population is expected to grow by about 1.3 million by 2030. Most of this expected population increase will take place within the existing seven-county Twin Cities metropolitan area, which will put an increased strain on existing outdoor recreation areas within the region. The “Regional Parks Policy Plan” prepared by the Twin Cities Metropolitan Council indicates that an additional 15,000 acres of regional park and trail land will be needed by 2030 to meet the needs of almost a million additional residents. This does not take into account the parallel need for new local parks and trails that are not part of the regional system.

### Density change (change in people per square mile of land area per decade)



\*Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, and Minnesota Department of Administration, State Demographic Center, Minnesota Population Projections 2000-2030.

### Greater population density

Population growth in Minnesota is expected to continue to concentrate in the Twin Cities metropolitan area. Increasing density, changes in use and the high cost of acquisition are making it harder to preserve land for outdoor recreation activities.





The Paul Hugo Farms Wildlife Management Area, located in the middle of the City of Hugo in northwestern Washington County, provides waterfowl hunting and great habitat—all within the Twin Cities metropolitan area.

The counties around the Twin Cities metropolitan area also will see significant increases in population and urbanization. Although the officially designated metropolitan area consists of seven counties, analysts have suggested that the real metropolitan area is made up of anywhere from 11 to about 20 counties. Wright, Sherburne, Isanti and Chisago counties, which lie immediately north of the official seven-county area and are sometimes referred to as “collar” counties, are expected to add 100,000 people by 2030. Some see the metropolitan area as an urbanizing corridor from the Brainerd Lakes region of central Minnesota along the Mississippi River through the Twin Cities and south to Rochester.

A recent study by the private firm Ameregis and the Department of Natural Resources, “Growth Pressures on Sensitive Natural Areas in DNR’s Central Region,” concluded that in what it defined as the 11-county metropolitan area (the seven core counties plus four counties immediately to the north), nearly three-fourths of the remaining sensitive natural areas may be threatened by development. Some of these areas could provide natural resource-based outdoor recreation such as fishing, birding, hiking and canoeing.

In many of these areas, land prices are quickly escalating and larger properties are rapidly being subdivided into smaller parcels. This makes it more difficult for local governments to acquire the larger acreages needed to meet the future outdoor recreation needs of a growing population.

A recent analysis by the Department of Natural Resources Local Grants Unit indicated that an additional 10,000 acres of land will need to be acquired in the growth corridor outside the seven-county metropolitan area in order to meet the same regional park acres/person standard used in the metropolitan area. A recent report by the Department of Forest Resources, University of Minnesota, “Regional Parks for Minnesota’s New Urban Areas,” identifies several new “urban complexes” throughout the state and estimates that an additional 26,750 acres of regional park land will be needed by 2030 to meet the same standard as in the Twin Cities metropolitan area. The study proposes establishment of Regional Recreation Resource Districts, which would protect outdoor recreation opportunities through a public/private structure similar to New York’s Adirondack Park District.



Local park and trail acquisition needs within the rapidly urbanizing areas adds considerably to all of these figures.

Much of the population increase will be in or associated with the major growth corridor, but additional increases are taking place in various high-amenity areas throughout the state, including those with high concentrations of lakes, rivers and forest land. This has led to increased development of shore land, increasing impacts on water quality and concerns about maintaining public access opportunities. We will need to make more effort to protect some of the remaining undeveloped lake and river shoreline for public access and outdoor recreation use.

In recent years, some of the large acreage of privately owned forest industry land has been subdivided into smaller units and sold to other private entities for development, private hunting land, etc. Large areas that have been available to the public for hunting, fishing, hiking, snowmobiling and other activities may be closed to such use in the future. State and local governments and non-profit organizations are working with private industrial forest owners to try to keep some of these lands available for public use through easements or other mechanisms.

Land with high natural resource or scenic value needs protection. This may include in-holdings within state parks, fish and wildlife habitat areas, state scientific and natural areas, large contiguous blocks of forest land, bluff lands or other lands that provide scenic vistas.

In already urbanized areas, land that might be used for outdoor recreation is often expensive and limited in parcel size. Land previously used for industrial or commercial purposes sometimes can be reclaimed for outdoor recreation use; several areas along the Mississippi River in the

Twin Cities have been acquired for this purpose. Outdoor recreation land close to where people live is essential—almost 70 percent of outdoor recreation occurs within a half-hour drive from home. To meet the outdoor recreation needs of young people, we need outdoor recreation areas in the urban core.

Existing outdoor recreation lands face threats. Uses other than public outdoor recreation have been proposed for some existing park areas. Public facilities, such as municipal well buildings, water retention ponds, roads, utility lines, etc., may be placed in or routed through park areas because it is easier and cheaper than other alternatives. Development encroaching on outdoor recreation land can lead to trespass situations, illegal vegetation cutting or pressure to discontinue recreational uses such as hunting. Rising land prices and operational costs have led many private providers—including golf course owners, resort owners and organizations that operate private day or summer youth camps—to sell their property for development.

All of these population and development pressures have made it more difficult for outdoor recreation providers to procure adequate outdoor recreation land to accommodate present and projected needs.

Outdoor recreation areas need to be protected from the detrimental effects of invasive species, plant and animal diseases, forest fires, floods and water pollution—a need that is increasing rapidly. We need to study and evaluate how these threats to the natural resource base might be magnified by such factors as land use changes, industrial and commercial practices, climate change and recreational use itself.

### Prior Lake: Acquiring scarce land for recreational use

In an effort to protect some of the last undeveloped shoreline in its community, the City of Prior Lake acquired land on Pike Lake, a shallow, natural environment lake with surrounding wetlands and wooded areas that provide critical habitat to a variety of wildlife and plant species. (Prior Lake, from which the city gets its name, is largely surrounded by residential development.)

In 2007, aided by grants from the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund and the state Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund and Remediation Fund, the city purchased about 30 acres with almost 2,800 feet of shoreline. In addition to the wildlife habitat benefits, the area will provide a number of close-to-home, nature-related outdoor recreation opportunities, including walking, canoeing, fishing and nature study, and will protect a portion of a stream that flows into the Minnesota River.

Funding for maintaining and increasing outdoor recreation lands and facilities has not kept pace with the need. The federal Land and Water Conservation Fund program, which has provided over \$68 million for state and local outdoor recreation projects in Minnesota during the last 40 years, has provided less than \$500,000 each of the last two years. During the 1970s, the program provided as much as \$6 million in some years—the equivalent of almost \$20 million in today's dollars. At the state level, the Future Resources Fund, which provided hundreds of millions for state and local outdoor recreation projects since the 1960s, was abolished a few years ago. Funding for state grant programs for local outdoor recreation projects has been reduced and can support only a fraction of the requests. Local governments find it difficult to generate the funds needed to acquire increasingly expensive land for local outdoor recreation areas.

Funding for outdoor recreation resources competes with other high priority state needs, such as education, transportation and health, for available state and local funding. Outdoor recreation advocates must show that investing in Minnesota's natural resource base and associated outdoor recreation resources now will benefit the people of the state in the long term.

Ideally, this strategy will result in a system of public and private land and water resources that will provide adequate opportunities to meet the outdoor recreation needs of Minnesotans now and in the future.





### Strategy #2

#### Develop and maintain a sustainable and resilient outdoor recreation infrastructure.

Minnesota needs adequate outdoor recreation facilities that are accessible, meet health and safety requirements, are energy efficient, make use of recycled and recyclable materials, are designed to conserve water and minimize runoff, incorporate other features to attain greater levels of sustainability and allow for flexibility of use and easy maintenance.

Much of the older outdoor recreation infrastructure does not meet these standards. As older facilities are replaced and new recreation facilities are designed and developed, or as renovations to existing facilities are made, there will be opportunities to make major improvements, but this will require new investment.

Outdoor recreation designers and managers should be encouraged to share information about innovative and successful projects with each other, and to adopt the best ideas for their own facilities.



### Wright County: Restoring a natural habitat

Robert Ney Memorial Park in Wright County was established in August 1970. Today, with the purchase of an additional 137 acres in 2005, the Robert Ney Memorial Regional Park Reserve is 827 acres—the third largest park in the county (behind Lake Maria State Park and Stanley Eddy Regional Park). It adjoins a 260-acre State Wildlife Management Area on its south border; together they constitute a 1,087-acre open space for wildlife habitat and wetland protection that residents of the region can enjoy.

During 2004 and 2005, Wright County established native plant communities in the park, restoring 125 acres to native prairie, big woods and wetlands, and created an educational trail to encourage responsible use by visitors. The project has created habitats for many species of wildlife, including white-tailed deer, turkey, pheasant, waterfowl, eagles and a variety of songbirds. Over the long-term, the restoration of native habitats should improve the water quality in nearby Lake Mary.

The restoration effort was supported by the Minnesota DNR Local Grant Program and contributions from the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

### Strategy 2 action priorities:

- Maintain and adequately fund current infrastructure, including improvements for safety, accessibility and energy efficiency.
- Sustain environmental infrastructure (water resources, native habitat, plants and animals.)
- Develop, identify and adopt “best practices” and policies that support outdoor recreation priorities and share them on the Minnesota Recreation and Park Association’s Best Practices website.
- Address funding needs for sustainable development, redevelopment and capital asset management.

## Background

Along with providing an adequate land and resource base to accommodate outdoor recreation, we must ensure that public facilities are in place to accommodate accessible recreational activity and meet health and safety requirements. New and renovated facilities should be energy-efficient, make use of recycled and recyclable materials, be designed to conserve water and minimize runoff, and incorporate other features to attain greater levels of sustainability. Facility design should allow for flexibility of use and easy maintenance.

Much of the outdoor recreation infrastructure in Minnesota was developed during the second half of the last century, although some areas (notably state parks) retain significant infrastructure that was originally constructed in the 1930s and 1940s. A large part of this infrastructure has been renovated or replaced over the past several decades, but still there are facilities across the state that don’t meet current design standards for safety, energy efficiency and accessibility.

Most new facility development incorporates principles of universal design and meets accessibility standards, but there still are shortcomings and many older facilities have not been brought into full compliance. Improvements have been

made in assuring access to outdoor recreation for all people, but there is work yet to be done and, with large numbers of the Baby Boom generation reaching retirement age in the next decade or so, greater attention is likely to be focused on accessibility.

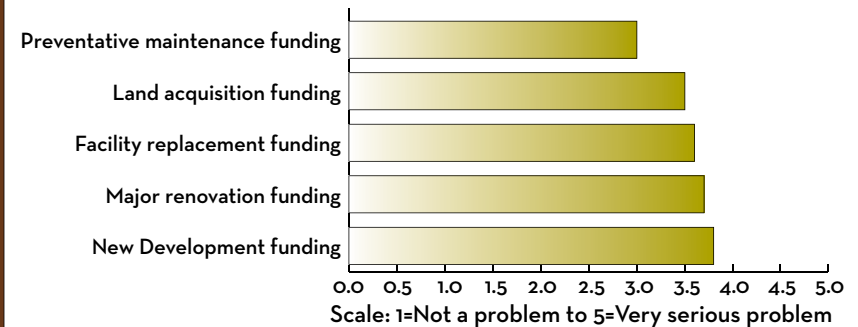
Many users of outdoor recreation facilities are concerned about safety and security—some say they are reluctant to use some outdoor recreation areas because of perceived safety concerns. Parents may be cautious about letting their children use neighborhood park areas without adult supervision. Whether the fears are realistic or based on inaccurate perceptions, they discourage use of outdoor recreation areas. How we locate, design and manage outdoor recreation facilities can affect the real or perceived safety of those areas. Improved enforcement, response to vandalism, security lighting, education, community support and funding all help address both the reality and the perception of safety.

As older infrastructure is replaced and new outdoor recreation areas are developed, we have the opportunity to not only improve the safety, health and accessibility aspects of outdoor recreation facilities, but also to build them in a more sustainable manner. Design possibilities include:

- Low-maintenance and recycled or recyclable materials.
- Energy-efficient building design.
- Energy-efficient lighting and solar cells.
- Easy-to-clean and vandal-resistant materials, which can reduce maintenance costs.
- Reduced water use with more efficient showers, toilets and faucets.
- Minimizing water runoff by reducing the impermeable surface area around facilities and/or by use of water gardens or similar features.

Several outdoor recreation areas have incorporated principles of universal and environmentally friendly design, showing just what can be done. Outdoor recreation designers and managers should be encouraged to share information about innovative and successful projects and adopt the best ideas for their own facilities.

### Problems facing outdoor recreation facility providers (Cities, Counties, and School Districts)



Source: 2004 Outdoor Recreation Facility Survey of Minnesota Cities, Counties, and School Districts

Maintaining and upgrading Minnesota's outdoor recreation facilities is essential, but much of the older infrastructure doesn't meet current standards for accessibility, energy efficiency and conservation.





### Strategy #3

## Promote increased outdoor recreation participation through targeted programming and outreach.

Lack of adequate time, cost and effort required are three of the most common reasons given by Minnesotans for lower levels of participation in outdoor recreation. Better information and marketing for outdoor recreation opportunities close to home may help address these issues.

Safety is a concern for some potential users. Outdoor recreation providers need to increase safety for users where there are real concerns—and to actively educate the public about inaccurate perceptions of safety.

Pests are another common constraint to participation, but equipped with information and the proper equipment, visitors can enjoy the outdoors with minimal annoyance.

A generational shift in nature-based activities seems to be taking place, according to the DNR's *Ten Year Forecasts of Minnesota Adult Outdoor Recreation Participation 2004-2014* and other studies. Younger adults—ages 16-44—are participating less in outdoor recreation and their rates of participation continue to decline. Those 45 and older are participating at a consistent level. This is true for activities that include national park visitation, national wildlife watching and national and Minnesota hunting and fishing.

The outdoor recreation system in Minnesota is a continuum of settings (land and facilities) ranging from the urban tot lot to national forest wilderness areas. The private sector also provides a range of outdoor recreation facilities for use by the public, including golf courses, downhill ski facilities and resorts. All of these settings were created to address the wide range of outdoor recreation activities Minnesotans enjoy and want.

Public and private outdoor recreation providers must work together to create and maintain an integrated outdoor recreation system that meets the needs of the public—at the same time ensuring that natural and cultural resources are protected. Continuing to improve coordination and communications among these various providers will be an important factor in addressing the SCORP priorities and encouraging active participation in the outdoor recreation system in Minnesota.

### Strategy 3 action priorities:

- Provide young people, those from diverse cultural communities or new immigrant communities and seniors with more opportunities to participate with peers and family in nature-based outdoor recreation experiences through schools, community centers, senior citizen centers and youth programs.
- Support nature education initiatives to ensure “no child left inside.”
- Increase outreach and education on the benefits of outdoor recreation to individuals, families, and culturally diverse communities (e.g. helping visitors and residents prepare for natural pests in outdoor settings).
- Identify and address constraints to outdoor recreation, including economic issues, facility design, public awareness and safety and security concerns.
- Develop a coalition or council of public and private entities (similar to the California Roundtable on Recreation, Parks and Tourism) to promote outdoor recreation involvement in Minnesota.
- Provide better access to outdoor recreation areas for people for whom limited mobility, cost, distance from the recreation areas or other factors limits participation.

### Ramsey County: A natural habitat for children

In 2006, Ramsey County’s Tamarack Nature Center in White Bear Township set aside a half-acre of mature forest, shrub layer and open field to create what has become known as The Wild Place. The nature center staff wanted to see how children would play in an unaltered natural area. After observing both the kids and the adults, the staff decided to enclose the area with a split-rail fence—which makes all the difference. Adults relaxed and stopped hovering. Children now explore with freedom and abandon, cooperative play comes naturally and children spend hours building forts, climbing trees and playing with nature as their only tool. The nature center is questioning the long-held “stay on the trails” mentality that prevents the kind of unstructured exploration and significant experiences enjoyed by previous generations.



The Ramsey County Parks and Recreation Department and the White Bear Lake Area School District teamed up to provide Early Childhood and Family Education and School Readiness experiences at Tamarack Nature center through a program called My Nature Preschool. The cornerstone of the program is frequent access to the natural world, making it a part of children’s—and parents’—everyday lives.

*Adapted from a summary provided by Marcie Oltman, Director of the Tamarack Nature Center*

### Background

Since the last SCORP, several efforts towards better integration of outdoor recreation efforts have been initiated or expanded.

- The Minnesota Recreation and Parks Association, made up of park and recreation professionals, teamed up with the state Department of Natural Resources to sponsor a series of workshops on “Best Practices for Parks and Outdoor Recreation.”

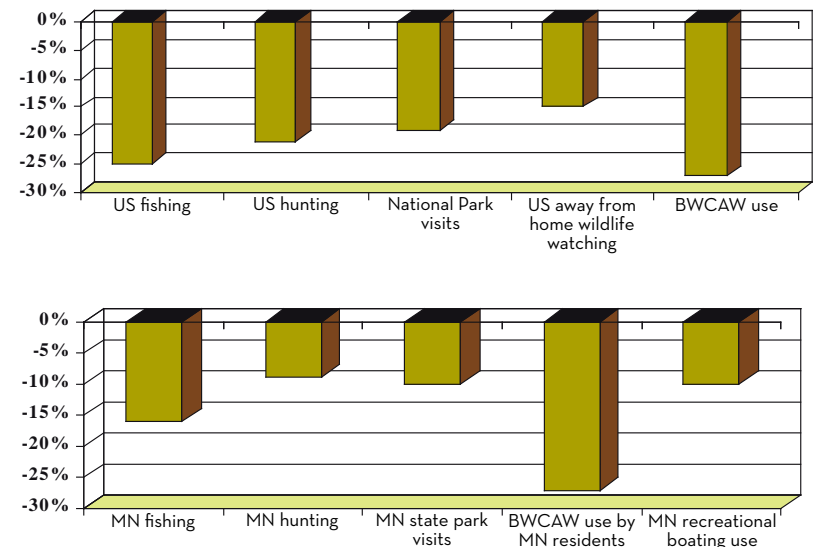
The workshops gave participants a variety of innovative, dynamic practices and tools used by practitioners to ensure Minnesota’s parks and outdoor recreation areas meet the needs of all Minnesotans and are managed as efficiently and effectively as possible. Hundreds of people from federal, state, regional and local government agencies and the private sector participated. Funding was provided through the state Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund.

- The Trust for Public Land has coordinated a series of meetings with representatives from the Twin Cities metropolitan area regional park implementing agencies, counties outside the metropolitan area that are developing regional park systems, the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission, the Department of natural Resources, and other non-profit organizations to foster better communication and coordination.
- The Minnesota Recreation and Park Association holds an annual Natural Resources Workshop that brings together state, regional and local park professionals to discuss the latest information about managing natural resources.
- Department of Natural Resources staff and staff from non-profit organizations provide expertise and advice to regional and local park agencies about identification, control and management of various invasive species through seminars, on-site inspections, informational materials, demonstrations, etc.

- Twin Cities Public Television, in cooperation with the Department of Natural Resources, developed and aired a program about the benefits and constraints of participation in outdoor recreation.
- The University of Minnesota, Department of Natural Resources and other interested organizations have collaborated on a number of surveys, focus groups and other efforts to learn more about outdoor recreation characteristics and trends.

#### Indicators of Trends in Nature-Based Recreation

Per-Capita change in number of participants or visitation/use, US and Minnesota, 1996 to 2006



Sources: USFWS and U.S. Census Bureau, National Survey of Fishing, Hunting and Wildlife-Associated Recreation, National Park Service visitation records ([www2.nature.nps.gov/stats/](http://www2.nature.nps.gov/stats/)), MNDNR data on certified hunters and anglers, park visitation from Division of Parks and Recreation, and Regional boating studies. BWCW use data compiled from USFS records of May-September quota group permits.

In the past 10 years, participation in a number of outdoor recreation activities has declined, both nationally and in Minnesota, at the same time that population and population density is increasing.



## Strategy #4

### Evaluate and understand the outdoor recreation needs of Minnesotans and the ability of Minnesota's natural resources to support those needs.

We must understand how human activities influence, or are influenced by, the natural resource base and the physical infrastructure for outdoor recreation—especially as we encourage more Minnesotans to participate in outdoor activities.

Surveying outdoor recreation users, outdoor recreation providers and the general public is one way to better understand these issues. Another is to monitor and evaluate land and infrastructure resources. Investment in master and site plans guides managers in developing facilities that are appropriate for the land and resource base and well used by visitors.

Continued support for research efforts is critical for determining the outdoor recreation needs of the public and the provision of areas and facilities that adequately address those needs in a sustainable manner.



### Strategy 4 action priorities:

- Conduct ongoing research on outdoor recreation trends and use patterns and associated benefits to human health and to state and local economies.
- Develop and use indicators to monitor visitor-caused impacts on outdoor recreation resources and facilities.
- Research the effects of outdoor recreation on mental, physical and spiritual health.
- Identify constraints to outdoor recreation activities and determine how to negotiate them.
- Conduct research on the likely positive and negative impacts of increasing the use of innovative technologies within outdoor recreation settings and programs.



### Background

There are many questions we need to answer about participation in outdoor recreation:

- What land base is needed to support outdoor recreation?
- How does the geographical distribution of that land base affect outdoor recreation use?
- How might natural resources be affected by intensity of use or changes in use?
- What facilities and infrastructure investments are needed to accommodate and attract outdoor recreation users?
- What designs for outdoor recreation facilities can minimize adverse environmental impacts?
- How can we improve safety and accessibility of outdoor recreation facilities?
- What changes are taking place in regard to outdoor recreation uses and demands?

The Department of Natural Resources has done a number of surveys through the years, often in coordination with the University of Minnesota or other partners. Many of these are focused on specific outdoor recreation activities or user groups, such as fishing, boating, state park use and trail use. A statewide survey of outdoor recreation participation completed in 2004 was the department's first overall participation survey in roughly 20 years. A facility adequacy survey of park and recreation area managers was done at the same time to get information on the types of outdoor recreation facilities they felt were not adequate to meet user needs.

On the national level, various outdoor recreation-related surveys are conducted by public agencies or private entities, including the National Survey of Fishing, Hunting and Wildlife Associated Recreation (U.S. Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service), the National Survey on Recreation and the Environment (U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service) and the Outdoor Industry Association surveys.

Monitoring and evaluating land and infrastructure resources also addresses questions about outdoor recreation. For example, lake and stream water-quality monitoring can track changes over time that might result from recreational use or land use; invasive species are monitored to determine their impact on native species; long-term operations and maintenance schedules are developed to try to prolong the useful life of outdoor recreation facilities; and site inspections of outdoor recreation facilities are conducted to evaluate safety and accessibility.

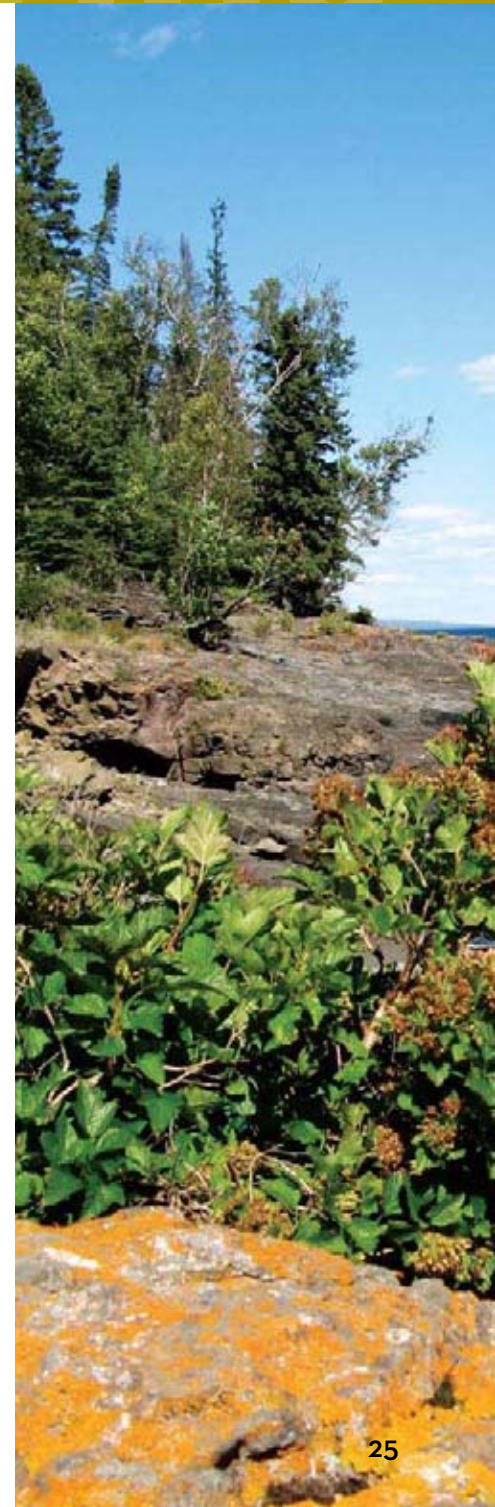
For individual outdoor recreation areas, development of master plans and site plans is an important process. Done correctly, these plans will help guide managers in developing facilities that are appropriate for the land and resource base and meet the outdoor recreation needs of the public, protecting environmentally sensitive areas, and providing a safe and accessible outdoor recreation experience.

Since the last SCORP, several efforts have been initiated or continued to better understand and evaluate the capacity of our natural resources and outdoor recreation infrastructure to support satisfying outdoor recreation opportunities. Examples include:

- Completion of the *2004 Outdoor Recreation Participation Survey* by the Department of Natural Resources.
- Completion of the *2004 Outdoor Recreation Facility Survey of Cities, Counties and School Districts* by the Department of Natural Resources.
- Completion of a two-year series of workshops on *Best Practices for Parks and Outdoor Recreation* and development of a related information website

co-sponsored by the Minnesota Recreation and Park Association and the Department of Natural Resources.

- Completion of the *Trail Planning, Design, and Development Guidelines* manual by the Department of Natural Resources.
- Annual Natural Resources Workshops for park professionals sponsored by the Minnesota Recreation and Parks Association.
- Completion of master plans and site plans by numerous state, regional and local government agencies.
- Site inspections by DNR grants staff of state and local outdoor recreation facilities to evaluate compliance with accessibility requirements.
- State Park survey and focus group discussions conducted by the DNR and University of Minnesota.







### **DNR: Using survey research to target groups**

Recent research, including DNR surveys, showed a continued decline in fishing participation rates and reduced participation by young people. Using this information, DNR staff developed several targeted programs, including:

- A new effort to contact “lapsed anglers” (anglers who had previously purchased a fishing license but did not do so in 2006) to encourage them to fish again. Lapsed anglers are more likely to buy a fishing license than someone who never has .
- Encouraging anglers to take the Angler’s Legacy pledge to introduce someone to fishing. The pledge is part of a national campaign based on research that suggests most people would go fishing if only someone would ask them.
- Sponsoring six digital billboards in the Twin Cities and helping with 16 billboards in other locations that provided a daily countdown to the fishing opener. The billboards reminded parents and grandparents to take their kids fishing by promoting a national campaign called Take Me Fishing.
- Training teachers and non-formal educators on a new DNR fishing and aquatic education curriculum.

Information provided by C.B. Bylander, outreach chief, DNR Fish and Wildlife Division.

A black and white photograph of a rural landscape. In the foreground, there is a field of tall, dry grass. A line of trees and shrubs runs across the middle ground. In the background, there are rolling hills under a bright sky. The text "Open Project Selection Process" is overlaid on the right side of the image.

# Open Project Selection Process



## Open Project Selection Process

The Open Project Selection process is a systematic approach for administering the Land and Water Conservation Fund financial assistance programs. It ensures equal opportunity for all eligible projects by establishing public notification of the availability of funding, application assistance, and an objective review system based on the priorities established in the SCORP.

The criteria and standards for prioritizing and selecting projects are based on the first three strategies and the associated priority actions in this document. The fourth strategy is not directly related to grant projects.

- For the state-level program, projects are solicited from managers of the State Outdoor Recreation System on a periodic basis. The State Outdoor Recreation System is established in the state statutes and includes an array of outdoor recreation areas and facilities owned and managed by the State of Minnesota and the Minnesota Historical Society.
- For grants to local units of government, project applications are solicited annually from cities, counties, townships and recognized Indian tribal governments. The Department of Natural Resources local grants staff asks potential grantees to submit application request forms before January 31 of each year. Final applications are due by March 31 of each year.



## Steps in Minnesota's Open Project Selection Process

### 1. Public Notification

- For the state-level program, potential grantees are contacted and made aware of the availability of funding (Minnesota departments of Natural Resources and Transportation and the Minnesota Historical Society).
- For grants to local units of government, the Department of Natural Resources local grants staff informs all potential project sponsors each November about the availability of funding. This is done through direct mailings, news releases and notice on the Department of Natural Resources website. Potential applicants can request application materials that include Minnesota's overall objectives for use of the funds, the types of areas and facilities eligible for funding and an explanation of how the open project selection process works. Potential applicants may obtain application materials by direct mailing, by visiting the DNR website at [www.mndnr.gov](http://www.mndnr.gov), or by calling the DNR public information number, (651) 296-6157 or (888) 646-6367.

### 2. Program Assistance

For grants to local units of government, DNR local grants staff assists potential applicants with the preparation of applications, including prerequisite requirements such as the need to hold a public hearing before submitting the proposal and the preparation of a proposed site plan.

### 3. The Priority Ranking and Project Selection System

Minnesota has an objective, two-part process to evaluate, rank and select state and local projects for Land and Water Conservation Fund dollars.

- The first part of the process is an evaluation based on SCORP strategies and the associated priority actions. A number of specific criteria derived from these priorities are included in the evaluation sheet used in reviewing each application. Only those projects closely meeting the SCORP priorities will move forward to the next evaluation step.
- In the second part of the evaluation, applications are evaluated on site-level design criteria, including accessibility, quality of design and safety. Other criteria include: quality of the application, level of local government commitment, environmental impact, etc. This evaluation ensures that projects selected for funding are viable, well designed and in conformance with current laws and standards.

There are separate selection processes for the state and local programs:

- On the state level, DNR local grants staff evaluates state outdoor recreation proposals and recommends top proposals to the Commissioner for final approval.
- For grants to local units of government, the DNR local grants staff evaluates and ranks project applications according to criteria outlined above and selects the top proposals for funding.

## State and Local Land and Water Conservation Fund Selection Guidelines

The state and local Land and Water Conservation Fund programs use the following selection guidelines to evaluate project applications. These guidelines are based on three of the four strategies and associated priority actions in this document. The fourth strategy, dealing with evaluation and research, does not include recommended actions related to Land and Water Conservation Fund grant projects.

## SCORP Priorities

The answers to the following questions, based on the priority actions for each strategy, will be used to evaluate project applications.

### Strategy 1:

Acquire, protect and restore Minnesota's natural resource base on which outdoor recreation depends. This includes obtaining prime outdoor recreation areas throughout the state prior to anticipated land use changes.

- Would the proposed project result in acquisition, protection or restoration of land or other natural resources that will provide or enhance public outdoor recreation opportunities?
- Is the proposed acquisition, protection or restoration project located in an area of rapid population growth?
- Would the proposed project result in acquisition of potential prime outdoor recreation areas that may otherwise be threatened by anticipated land-use changes?
- Has the local unit of government adopted programs to evaluate, regulate, fund and provide incentives for land and natural resource protection?
- Would the proposed project result in acquisition of land in areas that protect water quality?
- Would the proposed project result in acquisition of land in areas that protect key threatened habitats?

### Strategy 2:

Develop and maintain a sustainable and resilient outdoor recreation infrastructure.

- Would the proposed project result in redevelopment, renovation or rehabilitation of current infrastructure, including improvements for:
  - Safety?
  - Accessibility?
  - Energy efficiency?
- Would the proposed project result in sustaining the environmental infrastructure, such as water resources, native habitat, plants, animals, etc.?

### Strategy 3:

Promote increased outdoor recreation participation through targeted programming and outreach.

- Would the proposed project provide more opportunities to participate with peers and family in nature-based outdoor recreation experiences through schools, youth programs, etc., for young people, people from diverse cultural communities or new immigrant communities and seniors?
- Would the proposed project help support nature education initiatives to ensure "no child left inside"?
- Would the proposed project address constraints to outdoor recreation such as economic issues, facility design, public awareness and safety or security issues?
- Would the proposed project provide better access to outdoor recreation areas for people for whom limited mobility, cost, distance from the recreation areas or other factors restrict participation?

# Minnesota's Outdoor Recreation System





## Minnesota's Outdoor Recreation System

Federal, state, regional and local governments and private non-profit or for-profit entities each have a different role to play in managing and maintaining the outdoor recreation system in Minnesota. The system includes everything from a simple neighborhood tot lot to state parks to national forests to private golf courses and ski runs.

### *Federal government*

The Chippewa National Forest, established in 1908, was the first national forest east of the Mississippi River. The Superior National Forest, established in 1909, contains the largest wilderness east of the Rocky Mountains and north of the Everglades. The Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness is the most heavily used of all federal wilderness areas.

In addition to these vast federal forest ownerships, which total more than 3.6 million acres, the federal government manages the relatively large Voyageurs National Park and several smaller units.

For more than 40 years, the federal government has had a funding partnership with the state and local governments in Minnesota through the Land and Water Conservation Fund program. The impact of this program on the outdoor recreation system in Minnesota has been significant. The program has provided funding to help acquire and develop most of the state parks, as well as numerous state scientific and natural areas, wildlife management areas, state trails, water accesses and state forest campgrounds. Hundreds of local governments have received grant assistance for local parks, trails and natural areas. Funding for this program has been minimal in recent years and has not approached the levels of the 1970s, when much of the investment was made. This reduced funding has limited federal support for Minnesota's outdoor recreation system.

Federal transportation funding has contributed significant funding through the years, particularly for state and local trail projects. State fish, wildlife and water access programs have benefited greatly through the years from federal funding programs that help the state acquire, restore and manage fish and wildlife habitat.

### *State government*

Itasca State Park, established in 1891, is one of the earliest state parks in the country. Many other state parks were established during the 1930s with help from the federal government through the Civilian Conservation Corps, Works Progress Administration and other federal Depression-era programs. The first state forest was created in 1900. Today, there are 58 state forests totaling nearly 4 million acres, providing many opportunities for camping, hiking, fishing, hunting, bird watching, canoeing, boating and other natural resource-based outdoor recreation. Later outdoor recreation investments in state owned and managed areas included wildlife management areas, state trails, water access sites, canoe and boating routes, and scientific and natural areas.

In 1963, the Minnesota Outdoor Recreation Resources Commission was created to help determine state outdoor recreation needs and guide state investments to meet those needs. A cigarette tax was enacted to help fund outdoor recreation investments through the state Future Resources Fund. The commission later became the Legislative Commission on Minnesota Resources and, more recently, the Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources. These commissions have recommended projects and programs for funding to the legislature for the past four decades, resulting in hundreds of millions of dollars of investment in both state and local outdoor recreation lands and facilities through direct appropriations and state matching grant programs. State dollars were matched by many millions more in federal and local government funds. The outdoor recreation system in Minnesota owes much of its existence to this multi-decade effort. Other major state investments in outdoor recreation acquisition and facilities have come primarily through state bonding and the state Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund, which uses a portion of the state lottery proceeds.

Maintaining this historic commitment to outdoor recreation investment by the state is a challenge. The Future Resources Fund recently was abolished during a state budget crisis. Use of the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund for outdoor recreation projects has been limited mostly to land acquisition and restoration; the fund may be used for facility development only in limited circumstances.

## ***Regional government***

The major regional outdoor recreation provider is the Twin Cities regional park, trail and park reserve system. The Metropolitan Council, a regional planning agency for the seven-county metropolitan area, is responsible for planning a system of regional parks, trails and park reserves. The Metropolitan Council provides state and regional funding for acquisition and development of the system through grants to nine county and city implementing agencies. The implementing agencies are responsible for operating and maintaining the facilities. The system, begun in 1974, now includes almost 50 parks and park reserves, six special recreation areas, more than 20 regional trails and about 52,000 acres of land throughout the seven-county area.

It is generally acknowledged that the real metropolitan area already extends beyond the statutorily defined seven-county area. Several “ring” counties are actively acquiring and developing regional parks and trails but, with the exception of some joint planning initiatives, they are not currently part of a coordinated regional system. In recent years, efforts have been made to increase communication among the various regional park and trail managers both within and outside of the official seven-county area.

## ***Local government***

Minneapolis and St. Paul have extensive park systems dating back to the 1800s, as do many of the older and larger cities throughout the state. As suburbs arose in the Twin Cities area in the 1950s and beyond, they acquired and developed increasingly extensive park and trail systems. Several counties outside the Twin Cities metropolitan area also began to acquire and develop county parks in the last half of the twentieth century.





These facilities primarily provide close-to-home outdoor recreation opportunities and often focus more attention on youth-related outdoor recreation, such as playgrounds, athletic fields, community centers, swimming pools or beaches. Many communities, however, also protect significant local natural areas that provide opportunities for natural resource-based activities such as hiking, skiing, fishing, boating and bird watching.

While most of these facilities have been acquired and developed with locally generated funds, a significant number have been assisted by state and federal grants through the years. These state and federal funds have provided a vital catalyst for encouraging and enabling local investment in these outdoor recreation areas and facilities.

## ***Private sector***

The private resort industry has been particularly important for water-related recreation such as fishing, canoeing, boating and swimming. Larger resorts also have incorporated golf courses, tennis courts and other facilities into their list of amenities. A few offer downhill and cross-country skiing opportunities in the winter. The private sector—apart from the resort industry—is a major provider of golfing and day-use downhill skiing opportunities. There are a few privately operated hunting reserves and horse riding stables. These private businesses are an important part of the larger tourism industry, one of the most important economic engines of the state.

Non-profit organizations also support outdoor recreation in the state. The Parks and Trails Council of Minnesota, a non-profit organization dedicated to supporting the state park and state trail systems, dates back to 1954. It has helped the state acquire about \$10 million of state park and trail land. Organizations such as The Trust for Public Land, Pheasants Forever, Ducks Unlimited and The Nature Conservancy have played key roles in supporting funding for state, regional and local parks and trails; protection and restoration of natural areas; wetlands protection; water quality; and other natural resource- and outdoor recreation-related purposes. On the local level, hundreds of non-profit organizations such as athletic associations, local service organizations and user organizations provide volunteers, donations of materials and equipment and funding to help support outdoor recreation facilities and programs.

## ***Academic institutions***

Academic institutions, particularly the University of Minnesota and other higher education institutions in the state university system, play an important part in educating future outdoor recreation professionals, conducting research related to outdoor recreation, offering information and expertise to outdoor recreation providers and participating in educational forums and efforts to inform the public about the benefits of outdoor recreation.

Many professionals currently working for both government and non-government outdoor recreation providers graduated from one of the state's academic institutions. This often results in strong and continuing professional ties between the providers and the academic institutions. The ongoing exchange of ideas and information between the practicing professionals and the academic professionals is a benefit to both. Collaboration in outdoor recreation research, in particular, has been very successful.

At the K-12 level, many schools still give students an introduction to outdoor recreation activities as part of physical education or intramural and extramural sports. Unfortunately, an increasing number of schools have had to reduce these activities due to budget constraints or other factors. The K-12 education structure will be a key player in helping young people learn the benefits of outdoor recreation and in encouraging healthy lifestyles and outdoor recreation habits that will, we hope, last a lifetime.



# Appendices



## Advisory Group and DNR Support Staff

### SCORP advisory group

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