

# Minnesota State Parks and Trails: Directions for the Future

## *Connecting People to Minnesota's Great Outdoors*



**Minnesota Department of Natural Resources  
Division of Parks and Trails**

June 9, 2011





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## Letter from the Division Director

In a career spanning multiple states and almost four decades, one day in late fall 2008 stands out more than any other for me: November 4<sup>th</sup>. This was a landmark day in Minnesota history. In an overwhelming show of support, over 56% of the state's residents voted "yes" on a constitutional amendment that dedicates funds to the environment and the arts. Known as the "Clean Water, Land, and Legacy Amendment," a substantial influx of dollars will be dedicated to four different funds over the next 25 years. Those funds include the Outdoor Heritage Fund, Clean Water Fund, Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund, and Parks and Trails Fund. Of particular interest to our organization is the Parks and Trails Fund, which will support parks and trails of regional or statewide significance.

The passage of dedicated funding couldn't have come at a better time. Though it is not a panacea, it should help shelter Minnesota's wonderful natural, cultural, and recreation resources from some of the negative effects of the economic downturn. Dedicated funding is an incredible gift the residents of the state have given those responsible for protecting the state's natural and cultural resources, but with it comes great responsibility.

The composition of our state's population is changing. We are becoming a more diverse and older population, though young people will continue to make up a substantial portion of the population. One of our greatest challenges will be connecting with – and staying relevant to – all of the residents of the state, especially young adults and families with children. They are the future of our state. How we engage, encourage, and teach them about our state's wonderful natural, cultural, and recreational resources is essential.

One way to address the opportunities and challenges we will face in the coming years is to undertake a thoughtful, deliberate process looking at what we are doing now and how we might do it differently in the future. Given both new sources of funding and continued economic uncertainty, it is important that we prioritize our work and continue to make wise use of taxpayer dollars. This document represents the results of that process.

The DNR mission statement and the Division of Parks and Trails vision statement create the foundations for this document; all desired outcomes, goals and strategies were developed to build off of and work toward achieving them.

*Directions for the Future* not only addresses the opportunities and challenges mentioned above, it also addresses the trends identified by the DNR in *A Strategic Conservation Agenda 2009-2013* and *Adapting to Change: Minnesota's 2008-2012 State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP)*. Of particular interest to the Division of Parks and Trails is the trend on changes in outdoor recreation participation, outlined in the *Conservation Agenda*. Related, *SCORP* identifies a single goal in its most recent edition: Increase participation in outdoor recreation by all Minnesotans and visitors.

As you may know, young adults and their children are not as engaged in nature-based outdoor recreation as the generation before them. That is, on a per capita basis, outdoor recreation participation is declining. If you play this out for a generation or two, it does not bode well for the future of outdoor recreation, or the protection of natural and cultural resources more broadly.

There are many benefits to people engaging in nature-based outdoor recreation. In addition to the physical and cognitive benefits, those who spend more time outdoors are more likely to develop a sense of stewardship for the environment. In a nation whose collective waistline is expanding and where early-onset diabetes is becoming more prevalent, spending more time outside may be just what

the doctor ordered. The benefits of nature-based outdoor recreation are numerous, but those benefits will not be realized if outdoor experiences aren't shared from one generation to the next. The work of the DNR, the Division of Parks and Trails, and their partners is essential to addressing the decline in outdoor recreation. Among other opportunities and challenges, increasing outdoor recreation participation is a specific focus of this plan.

Broadly speaking, *Directions for the Future* focuses on six core areas:

- Outdoor Recreation
- Conservation Education
- Outreach, Marketing, and Communications
- Partnerships
- Natural and Cultural Resources
- Internal Business and Innovation

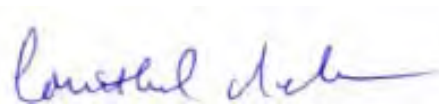
Each of these areas is important for meeting the department's mission and our division's vision, and rarely does any of these areas work in isolation. For example, strong partnerships are critical to delivering exceptional outdoor recreation opportunities, just as conservation education is essential for engaging the public about natural and cultural resources. The many responsibilities of the division are tightly intertwined.

From these six core areas, three strategic directions were developed for the Division of Parks and Trails. These strategic directions, based on input received from hundreds of individuals and groups, are:

- Connecting people to the outdoors.
- Accelerating management of our natural, cultural, and recreational environments.
- Investing in our partnerships, processes, and people.

The pages that follow will describe how these strategic directions were developed, and how we will implement them through work plans and our biennial budget process.

Thank you for your interest in and continued commitment to Minnesota's natural and cultural resources, and the exceptional recreation opportunities throughout the state.



Courtland Nelson, Director  
Division of Parks and Trails

## Acknowledgments

Many people, both within and outside of the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, contributed significantly to the development of *Directions for the Future*. In addition to Division of Parks and Trails staff, state park friends groups, state trail associations and many others, contributors included:

### University of Minnesota

- Mae Davenport, Forest Resources
- Ingrid Schneider, Forest Resources
- Mary Vogel, Center for Changing Landscapes

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- Parks and Trails Council of Minnesota
- Minnesota Recreational Trail Users Association (MRTUA)

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## Executive Summary

### The Legacy Amendment and Legislative Mandate

In November 2008, Minnesota voters passed the Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment, which established four dedicated funds from an increase in the state sales tax, including a Parks and Trails Fund to support parks and trails of regional or statewide significance. As part of the legislation that allocated the first two years of Legacy funding, the Minnesota State Legislature directed the Division of Parks and Trails to develop a ten-year strategic state parks and trails plan [*ML 2009, Chap. 172, Art. 3, Sec. 2(e)*]:

*The commissioner shall develop a ten-year strategic state parks and trails plan considering traditional funding and the funding available under the Minnesota Constitution, article XI, section 15. The plan shall incorporate the 25-year framework developed by the University of Minnesota Center for Changing Landscapes.*

### Setting the Direction for the Next Ten Years

The Legacy Amendment mandate presents an opportunity to develop the division's direction over the next ten years, establishing priorities and broader strategies to protect and manage the resource base, develop and maintain recreational facilities, and better serve existing customers and reach out to new ones.

### Statewide Perspective

*Directions for the Future* provides direction across the range of activities of the division, and focuses on the high-level guidance for the next ten years of operations, maintenance, capital investment and other decision-making. It also provides an overview of the division's priorities and responsibilities.

### Addressing Key Trends: Changes in Outdoor Recreation Participation

Analyzing trends from different service providers and at different spatial scales can be a challenge, but one thing is clear: At the state and national level, outdoor recreation participation is declining on a per capita basis. After some 50 years of growth after World War II, nature-based recreation turned a corner in the 1990s and is now exhibiting declining participation on a per-capita basis. Some areas of outdoor recreation are exhibiting growth (e.g. kayak sales, bicycle use for adults) and others are leveling off after periods of growth (e.g. OHV sales).

Most importantly, we understand that young adults and families with children are not participating at the same levels previous generations did. "Lack of time" is often mentioned as a barrier to outdoor activities for families and individuals who lead busy, active lives. An important implication of the decline in childhood visitation is the effect it may have on later-life visitation. If this plays out for a generation or two, the future of outdoor recreation and the protection of natural and cultural resources may be in jeopardy.

In addition, Minnesota's population is generally becoming older, more urban and more diverse, and so demands for recreational opportunities will continue to change as well. *Directions for the Future* offers strategies for increasing outdoor recreation participation, providing a diverse outdoor recreation system, and conducting research to understand Minnesota's diverse recreation needs. An expanded discussion of trends that impact the department and the division is included as an appendix in this document.



### Three Strategic Directions

During the first phase of the planning process, division and department staff and key stakeholders developed a comprehensive set of goals and strategies built off of six desired outcomes for the division. From this set of goals and strategies, the division identified its priorities for the next ten years. These prioritized goals form the following Strategic Directions that will guide the division. More detail on the Strategic Directions can be found on the following pages and on page 54.

#### **Connecting People to the Outdoors**

Understanding people's motivations for recreating outdoors and developing strategies to help them overcome barriers to outdoor recreation participation are critical components of this strategic direction. The division will provide opportunities that help people connect with the natural world; recreational and educational activities that enrich their experiences and increase their appreciation and understanding of the outdoors.



#### **Accelerating Management of Our Natural, Cultural and Recreational Environments**

People often choose to visit Minnesota State Parks and Trails because of their settings; unmatched natural and cultural resources, and high quality recreation facilities. To maintain this level of quality, the division must do more to manage its natural, cultural and recreational environments. This will involve acquisition, development, operations, maintenance, renewal and rehabilitation.



#### **Investing in Our Partnerships, Processes and People**

The division accomplishes its work through partnerships with other agencies, local government units, non-profits, recreation clubs, private citizens, and others; via processes that effectively utilize resources; and through the talents of its employees. Investments in these areas produce dividends across all aspects of the division's work, and provide improved service delivery and increased promotion of opportunities available.



### Funding the Strategic Directions

The Division of Parks and Trails has a variety of funding sources that contribute to its operations and capital budgets. A Division of Parks and Trails budget analysis was recently completed as required by the Minnesota State Legislature [ML 2009, Chap. 172, Art. 3, Sec. 6, Subd. 3] regarding the adequacy of funding for State Parks, State Trails, State Recreation Areas (SRA's), state forest trails and recreation areas<sup>1</sup>. That budget analysis is included as an appendix in this document.

The general finding of the budget analysis is that in order to meet current needs and standards for operating and maintaining the existing parks and trails system, the division would need an additional \$6 million a year above and beyond its FY 2010 funded operations budget. Capital budget levels, likewise, have not been adequate to fully maintain and continue development of the state park and trail system.

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<sup>1</sup> In addition, the *Long-Range Budget Analysis of Land Management Needs* – including Public Water Access sites – was completed in December 2010.

The addition of Parks and Trails Legacy Funds has translated directly into higher service levels – additional conservation education programs and extended staffing at contact stations and visitor centers, for example – and has enabled DNR to make in-roads into the deferred maintenance backlog. Legacy funds have also increased awareness and motivation to participate in recreation opportunities through increased programming, marketing, and media coverage. This has led to increased park and trail visitation and increased revenue. Legacy funds, however, cannot replace traditional funding sources. For more on funding sources and the outlook for implementing the strategic directions, please see page 59.

### **Responding to the Division’s Funding Outlook**

Moving forward, the division will need to react to the changing levels and mix of its funding sources. The introduction of Legacy funds, the decline in General Fund support, fluctuating capital bonding allocations, and changing values in revenue-funded dedicated accounts all contribute to the need for the division to evaluate how it funds activities and needs across the system. Some activities or expenses may need to be shifted to other sources of funding to ensure stable sources for high priority functions while maintaining fund integrity. Other functions may need to be curtailed or no longer be conducted.

The division will need to consider other actions to adjust to future budget realities while continuing to support current and create new opportunities for visitors and manage its resource responsibilities. The division will examine its fee structure as a method for increasing revenue, while taking into account the impact of fees on affordability and efforts to attract new users.

Some actions the division has already taken may need to be expanded, such as consolidating management of state parks, state trails and other units in the system and reducing the overall number of worksites the division maintains. Other actions the division has piloted include consolidating administrative functions to free staff for more public contact activities, more visitor self-service approaches (e.g. camping self-registration, web and mobile device-based information services), and additional work with partners and volunteers to deliver new and enhance existing recreation and conservation education opportunities.

Beyond adjustments to how it operates and maintains its units across the entire system, the division may need to consider prioritizing among the units it supports, including the decommissioning of some units from the system; either passing them on to be managed by another agency or local entity, or closing them entirely. Decommissions are addressed in more detail in the Parks and Trails Legacy Plan. The division already uses visitation, revenue collection, facilities (e.g. miles of trail, number of buildings) and other metrics to help set priorities for operations and maintenance funding among current units.

### **What Does this Mean for the Next Biennium?**

The Division of Parks and Trails is likely to face a cut in General fund support in the next biennium, and continued erosion in General fund support over the long term. General fund reductions in the short term have the potential to cause significant disruptions in providing services to the public, especially for operations at state parks, forest recreation areas, and state trails.

Legacy funds have helped enhance some division activities, especially resource management, interpretive programming, and outreach. However, Legacy funds are not intended to supplant existing funding. Therefore General fund-supported operational activities are being reduced, even while new efforts and programs supported with Legacy funds are launched.

The division will need to seek additional new funding to replace lost General fund support in order to continue to provide a high-quality recreation system. Without other funding, deep General fund

reductions in the near term or the sustained erosion of General funds over time will result in significant impacts to the state’s recreational system, including the end of some opportunities and experiences long enjoyed by visitors and the probability of mothballing some units entirely.

### Implementation – Carrying the Strategic Directions Forward

*Directions for the Future* will be implemented through other actions by the division; through its biennial budget requests, capital bonding and other legislative requests, division initiatives, and its program and unit-level workplans. The successful implementation of this document will be illustrated by its links to – and the progress made in – legislative cycles, rehabilitation and new construction projects, resource management and enhancements, participation in programs and special events, marketing and public affairs efforts, and the daily work of division staff providing high-quality service to park and trail visitors. For more information on implementation, please see page 64.

### Connections with the Parks and Trails Legacy Plan and the University of Minnesota’s Center for Changing Landscapes’ Framework

In addition to this document, the Legislature directed the DNR to complete a Ten-Year Strategic Coordination Plan and a 25-Year Long Range Plan – collectively, the “Parks and Trails Legacy Plan” – for state and regional park and trail systems. The legislature has also directed the Center for Changing Landscapes at the University of Minnesota to complete an Inventory and Framework covering the same spatial scale as the Parks and Trails Legacy Plan. All three of these products are due to the legislature in early 2011.

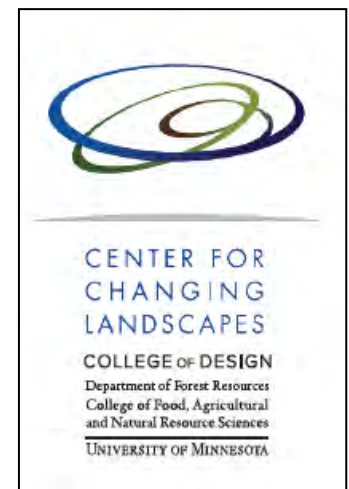
Throughout the *Directions for the Future* planning process, efforts to connect these planning processes were made. This document is an input into the Parks and Trails Legacy Plan, like the Metropolitan Council’s *2030 Regional Parks Policy Plan* and the Legislative Commission on Minnesota Resources’ *Greater Minnesota Park Inventory*.

The division recognizes the valuable recommendations that are an outcome of the Parks and Trails Legacy planning process, and the University of Minnesota’s Inventory and Framework. The elements relevant to the division’s state-level responsibilities have been incorporated into *Directions for the Future*, and the division will use them as it implements the plan. Please see “The Framework: Planning Priorities” on page 10, “Implementation” on page 64, and “Trends that Impact the Department and the Division” in Appendix D.

Connections to the Parks and Trails Legacy Plan and the Center for Changing Landscapes’ Framework have been illustrated in the document by the icons above.

More information on the Parks and Trails Legacy Plan may be found here:  
<http://www.legacy.leg.mn/funds/parks-trails-fund/plan>

More information on the Center for Changing Landscapes’ Framework may be found here:  
<http://ccl.design.umn.edu/mnpat.html>



## Mission and Vision Statements

***Our mission is to work with citizens to conserve and manage the state's natural resources, to provide outdoor recreation opportunities, and to provide for commercial uses of natural resources in a way that creates a sustainable quality of life.***

***Our vision is to create unforgettable park, trail, and water recreation experiences that inspire people to pass along the love for the outdoors to current and future generations.***

Minnesota Department of Natural Resources Mission Statement  
*Our mission is to work with citizens to conserve and manage the state's natural resources, to provide outdoor recreation opportunities, and to provide for commercial uses of natural resources in a way that creates a sustainable quality of life.*

### ***About the DNR Mission Statement***

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources works to integrate and sustain the interdependent values of a healthy environment, a sustainable economy, and livable communities. DNR's integrated resource management strategy shares stewardship responsibility with citizens and partners to manage for multiple interests.

DNR protects the state's natural heritage by conserving the diversity of natural lands, waters, and fish and wildlife that provide the foundation for Minnesota's recreational and natural resource-based economy (M.S. 84, M.S. 97A). DNR manages natural lands such as forests, wetlands, and native prairies; maintains healthy populations of fish and wildlife; and protects rare plant and animal communities throughout the state. DNR manages the state's water resources, sustaining healthy waterways and ground water resources.

DNR provides access to enrich public outdoor recreational opportunities, such as hunting, fishing, wildlife-watching, camping, skiing, hiking, biking, motorized recreation, and conservation education through a state outdoor recreation system that includes parks, trails, wildlife management areas, scientific and natural areas, canoe and boating routes, and other facilities (M.S. 86A).

DNR supports natural resource-based economies, managing state forest lands for multiple forest values (M.S. 89), ensuring the maximum long-term economic return from school trust lands (M.S. 127A), and providing other economic opportunities in a manner consistent with sound natural resource conservation and management principles.

### Division of Parks and Trails Vision Statement

*Our vision is to create unforgettable park, trail, and water recreation experiences that inspire people to pass along the love for the outdoors to current and future generations.*

## Introduction

### The Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment

On November 4, 2008, Minnesota voters were asked the following question when they took to the polls:

*Shall the Minnesota Constitution be amended to dedicate funding to protect our drinking water sources; to protect, enhance, and restore our wetlands, prairies, forests, and fish, game, and wildlife habitat; to preserve our arts and cultural heritage; to support our parks and trails; and to protect, enhance, and restore our lakes, rivers, streams, and groundwater by increasing the sales and use tax rate beginning July 1, 2009, by three-eighths of one percent on taxable sales until the year 2034?*

***The “largest conservation ballot measure in history.”***

***The amendment increased the general sales and use tax by three-eighths of one percent to 6.875%.***

***14.25% of overall proceeds will be available in the Parks and Trails Fund, to be spent only to support parks and trails of regional or statewide significance.***

The next day, news organizations around the state reported that the Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment had passed. According to The Trust for Public Land, the Legacy Amendment is the largest conservation ballot measure in history. With more than \$ 5.5 billion earmarked for land and water conservation, the constitutional amendment nearly doubles the previous largest conservation ballot measure, New Jersey's Constitutional Amendment in 1998. That measure dedicated \$2.94 billion in sales tax to the Garden State Preservation Trust.

The amendment increased the general sales and use tax rate by three-eighths of one percent (0.375%) to 6.875% and dedicates the additional proceeds as follows:

- 33% to the Outdoor Heritage Fund, to be spent only to restore, protect, and enhance wetlands, prairies, forests, and habitat for game, fish, and wildlife (approximately \$80 million in FY 2010 and \$91 million in FY 2011);
- 33% to the Clean Water Fund, to be spent only to protect, enhance, and restore water quality in lakes, rivers, streams, and groundwater, with at least 5% of the fund spent to protect drinking water sources (approximately \$80 million in FY 2010 and \$91 million in FY 2011);
- 14.25% to the Parks and Trails Fund, to be spent only to support parks and trails of regional or statewide significance (approximately \$35 million in FY 2010 and \$39 million in FY 2011);
- 19.75% to the Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund, to be spent only for arts, arts education, and arts access, and to preserve Minnesota's history and cultural heritage (approximately \$48 million in FY 2010 and \$54.5 million in FY 2011).<sup>i</sup>

***The commissioner shall develop a ten-year strategic state parks and trails plan considering traditional funding and the funding available under the Minnesota Constitution, article XI, section 15. The plan shall incorporate the 25-year framework developed by the University of Minnesota Center for Changing Landscapes.***

Of greatest relevance to this planning effort is the third item above, the Parks and Trails Fund. The Minnesota State Legislature's Conference Committee Report H.F. 1231 appropriates money from constitutionally dedicated funds, and provides for policy and governance for each of the funds.

Laws of Minnesota for 2009, Chapter 172, Article 3, Section 2(e)

*The commissioner shall develop a ten-year strategic state parks and trails plan considering traditional funding and the funding available under the Minnesota Constitution, article XI, section 15. The plan shall incorporate the 25-year framework developed by the University of Minnesota Center for Changing Landscapes.*

Purpose

Beyond fulfilling the legislative mandate, this document was developed in order to keep pace with the rapidly changing environment in which the Division operates. It is intended to help the division succeed by sharpening the focus on goals and priorities, while improving performance and accountability.

Scope

Legislation dictates that the lifespan of this document is ten years. As with the most recent Division of Parks and Recreation Strategic Plan, two-year workplans will be built off of this forward-looking document (see *Implementation*). These workplans will be tied to the DNR Strategic Conservation Agenda, Minnesota's State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP), and the state's biennial budget cycle.

Objectives

Specifically, planning objectives include the desire to:

- Improve organizational performance by sharpening the focus on key goals and priorities.
- Stimulate forward-thinking in order to better anticipate and respond to change.
- Inform management planning, policy development and day-to-day decision making.
- Foster shared leadership via an open exchange of information and ideas.
- Communicate Parks and Trails' agenda to clients, colleagues and cooperators.
- Maintain high-quality programs, facilities and service delivery.

Planning Process

Developing this document is a multi-part process. Most importantly, it involves engaging key stakeholders, DNR staff, division leaders, and the public to create desired outcomes, goals, and strategies that will steer the division over the next ten years. The planning process

is designed to be inclusive of diverse perspectives, and incorporates the latest trend information, recreational user data, and the expertise of DNR staff.

#### Status of New Division

On December 2, 2008, DNR Commissioner announced the integration of the divisions of Parks and Recreation and Trails and Waterways into a new division focused on outdoor recreation. The integration was a proactive response to a need for broader strategies to better serve existing customers and reach out to new ones. It was also a purposeful response to documented research that shows a decline in outdoor recreation participation, particularly among young adults and families with children. Further, it built a solid foundation from which the department can respond to opportunities presented by the Legacy Amendment, which designates dedicated funding to parks and trails initiatives, among others.

***The integration was a proactive response to a need for broader strategies to better serve existing customers and reach out to new ones.***

To facilitate this integration process, a Transition Team was named to recommend the best organizational design for the new division. Before providing recommendations for an organizational design, the Transition Team developed a Strategic Framework for the new division which includes mission and vision statements, guiding principles, desired outcomes, and main strategies. On September 14, 2009, the Commissioner approved the division's high level organizational design.

### Guiding Principles

The State Parks and Trails Transition Team developed a set of principles to direct the integrated division's work. These principles provide the broad philosophy that guides the division in all circumstances, irrespective of changes in goals, strategies, type of work, or the top management. These principles are fundamental to the way the division operates.

***We provide exceptional customer experiences that are fun, enjoyable, and satisfying.***

#### ***Leadership for Lasting Impact***

- We honor and uphold the public trust.
- We act with integrity and hold ourselves accountable to the highest professional and ethical standards.
- We provide exceptional customer experiences that are fun, enjoyable, and satisfying.
- We provide affordable and accessible experiences for everyone.
- We are environmental stewards – we make good decisions that provide recreational opportunities and conserve natural and cultural resources.
- We seek to be respected and recognized leaders in our field.

***We work together with respect and a positive spirit across the rich diversity of people, communities, and cultures.***

#### ***Collaboration in the Spirit of Excellence***

- We work together with respect and a positive spirit across the rich diversity of people, communities and cultures.
- We partner and collaborate to fulfill our mission and vision.
- We support each other's work at all levels.
- We trust each other to do our jobs and give freedom to act within the legal and ethical codes that govern us.
- We play an important role in delivering department priorities, processes and decisions as part of a greater organization.

***We empower a diverse workforce committed to excellence, integrity, and quality work.***

#### ***Dedicated to Becoming Our Best***

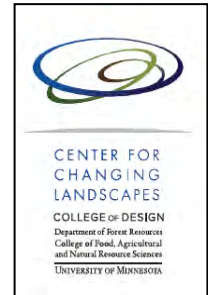
- We communicate openly and honestly with each other.
- We are committed to developing a workforce that is highly engaged, productive, safe and healthy.
- We empower a diverse workforce committed to excellence, integrity, and quality work.
- We believe in the value of learning – for our customers, staff and as an organization.
- We welcome and reward innovation and creativity.
- We use applied research, technology and processes to deliver results.



## The Framework: Planning Priorities

***The Minnesota Legislature tasked the Center for Changing Landscapes with creating a long-range framework for an integrated statewide parks and trails system.***

The Minnesota Legislature tasked the Center for Changing Landscapes at the University of Minnesota with “creat(ing) a long-range framework for an integrated statewide parks and trails system.” The Center for Changing Landscapes has developed an Inventory of existing recreation opportunities, and a Framework that responds to trends, gaps, and needs. The Framework also identifies opportunities for enhancing, developing, and linking assets.



Tools related to the Inventory include published social science research since 2000, while deliverables include regional profiles, inventory summary, maps and spreadsheets. Draft regional profiles and county maps may be found here:

<http://ccl.design.umn.edu/mnpat.html>

Tools related to the Framework include trends summaries, Recreation Location Quotients (RLQs), maps, and spreadsheets. Deliverables include a demographic summary (e.g. “State Demographic Trends” on p. D-1), trends summary (e.g. “Ten-Year Forecasts of Minnesota Adult Outdoor Recreation Participation and Highlights of Recent Outdoor Recreation Research” on p. D-3), and planning priorities and opportunities. From the perspective of the University of Minnesota’s Department of Forest Resources, the planning priorities “for an integrated statewide parks and trails system” are to:

1. Manage adaptively to ensure long-term sustainability with respect to the protection of natural and cultural resources, the facilitation of high quality recreation experiences, and the advancement of stewardship behaviors among Minnesotans.
2. Maintain a variety of complementary outdoor recreation settings and linkages among those settings.
3. Evaluate access in light of the statewide, regional, and local supply including the abundance, quality and distribution of parks and trails.
4. Create, monitor, and sustain opportunities through careful consideration of recreation settings, activities, experiences, benefits, and constraints.
5. Address population dynamics based on demand and access.
6. Monitor and meet the needs of multiple population subgroups.
7. Monitor and assess across three setting components:
  - a. The natural environment
  - b. The social environment
  - c. The built and managed environment

***All of these priorities are applicable and complement the Ten-Year Strategic Plan’s Desired Outcomes, Goals, and Strategies and Strategic Directions.***

While some of these planning priorities go beyond the administration and management of the state-level outdoor recreation system (e.g. “Evaluate access...), all of the priorities are applicable and complement the Desired Outcomes, Goals, and Strategies (p. 35) and Strategic Directions (p. 54).

## Minnesota State Parks and Trails – Division Responsibilities

### What is the Outdoor Recreation System?

“The outdoor recreation system shall consist of all state parks; state recreation areas; state trails established pursuant to sections 84.029, subdivision 2, 85.015, 85.0155, and 85.0156; state scientific and natural areas; state wilderness areas; state forests; state wildlife management areas; state aquatic management areas; state water access sites, which include all lands and facilities established by the commissioner of natural resources or the commissioner of transportation to provide public access to water; state wild, scenic, and recreational rivers; state historic sites; state rest areas, which include all facilities established by the commissioner of transportation for the safety, rest, comfort and use of the highway traveler, and shall include all existing facilities designated as rest areas and waysides by the commissioner of transportation; and any other units not listed in this section that are classified under section 86A.05. Each individual state park, state recreation area, and so forth is called a ‘unit’”.

*Minnesota Statutes*, section 86A.04

The Division of Parks and Trails, is part of the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. The department is organized into four regions, with a Central Office located in St. Paul and regional offices located in Bemidji, Grand Rapids, St. Paul, and New Ulm.

The division has 451 full-time employees and 666 part-time employees spread between park units, 15 area offices, 4 regional offices, and the division’s central office (see *Appendix A: Figure 2*). Within the four regions, the division is organized into ten districts (see *Appendix A: Figures 3 – 12*).

The Division of Parks and Trails administers and manages a number of different units, as defined by the Outdoor Recreation Act and Minnesota Statute. Those units include state parks; state recreation areas; state waysides; state trails; state water access sites; state wild, scenic, and recreational rivers; state boater waysides; and state forest campgrounds, trails, and day-use areas.

State statute directs the outdoor recreation system to “(1) preserve an accurate representation of Minnesota’s natural and historical heritage for public understanding and enjoyment and (2) provide an adequate supply of scenic, accessible, and usable lands and waters to accommodate the outdoor recreational needs of Minnesota’s citizens” (86A.02).

The division also administers or co-manages a number of other state or federally designated units – including state scientific and natural areas (SNAs), national historic landmark districts, and others – within its units.

As mandated by Minnesota Statute 85.32, the division also administers and manages 32 water trails (4,397 miles of canoe, kayak, and boat routes). In addition, the division administers a number of programs, many of which provide funds to other organizations to provide outdoor recreation opportunities.

## Units Managed by the Division

### ***State Parks, Recreation Areas, and Waysides***

The Division of Parks and Trails manages 67 state parks, 8 state recreation areas, and 8 state waysides (see *Appendix A: Figure 1*).

According to *Minnesota Statutes*, section 86A.05, the purpose of state parks is to protect and perpetuate areas of the state that illustrate and exemplify Minnesota's unique natural resources, and to provide for the use, enjoyment and understanding of such resources without impairment for the enjoyment and recreation of future generations. "Park use shall be primarily for aesthetic, cultural, and educational purposes, and shall not be designed to accommodate all forms or unlimited volumes of recreational use." Some forms of recreation are more appropriate in a state recreation area, a state forest, or elsewhere (*Minnesota Statutes*, section 86A.05 subd. 2c).



State recreation areas provide a broad selection of outdoor recreation opportunities in a natural setting which may be used by large numbers of people. To be authorized as a state recreation area, a unit must contain resources that permit intensive recreational use by large numbers of people. "Physical development shall enhance and promote the use and enjoyment of the natural recreational resources of the area" (*Minnesota Statutes*, section 86A.05 subd. 3c).

State waysides are usually smaller in scale than either state parks or state recreation areas, and typically have more limited facilities. Picnic tables and sanitation facilities are the most common amenities, though some also include hiking trails and fishing opportunities. Five of the state eight waysides are situated along the North Shore; two are located in the Minnesota River Valley; and one is northwest of Alexandria

Overall, these units encompass 274,136 acres and represents less than ½ of 1% of all the land in Minnesota. About 45,292 acres of land within state parks, SRAs and state waysides are not owned or managed by the division.

### Facilities

The state park system includes a wide variety of recreational use and visitor service facilities including:

- 4,652 campsites
- 286 horse campsites
- 111 group camps
- 76 camper cabins
- 1,278 miles of trail
- 70 picnic areas
- 33 beaches
- 33 fishing piers and docks
- 32 visitor centers
- 57 water access sites
- 495 miles of roads
- 72 bridges
- 1,600 buildings

Each unit of the state park system provides a mix of recreation and educational opportunities suited to its natural and cultural resource base.

### Visitors

In 2009, there were 8,926,000 visits to the state park system, including nearly 1,082,000 campers and other overnight guests. Eighty-four percent of the visitors are Minnesota residents. Some 30% of all Minnesotans visit a state park at least once each year.

Nine of the 35 most-visited Minnesota tourism attractions are in state parks. Places like the Mississippi River headwaters in Itasca State Park, Fort Snelling, and the scenic state parks along Minnesota's North Shore of Lake Superior are major attractions for people from within Minnesota, neighboring states, and throughout the country.

According to the 2007 Minnesota State Parks Research Summary Report, the most popular activities for visitors to state parks are hiking/walking, observing/photographing nature, sightseeing, and picnicking. Water-based activities, such as swimming, fishing and boating, are also popular at many state parks.

The state park system consistently provides quality experiences for visitors, earning a "satisfied" or better ranking from 95% of visitors. Visitor satisfaction has increased since the Division of Parks and Recreation began measuring the indicator in the late 1980s. The 2007 results have the highest satisfaction on record. The many repeat visitors to state parks also illustrates that people are happy with their experience and choose to come back. State park visitors visit a state park on average 4 times a year.



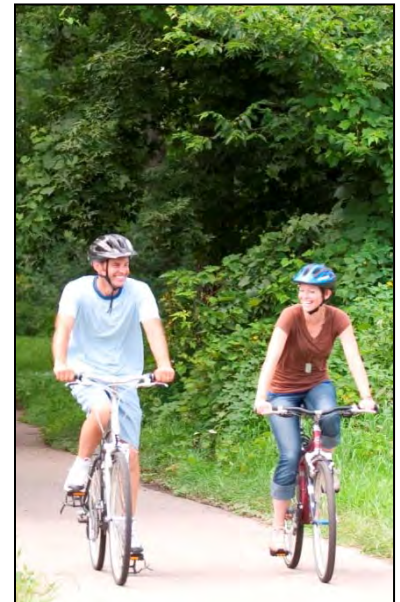
The state park system is also a significant economic boost to local communities. Visitor spending while on trips to state parks contributed over \$233 million to the economy statewide in 2010. This represents money spent at local businesses for items like gasoline and groceries as well as for lodging and dining out. The figure does not include money collected by state parks for park entrance fees, camping fees, or any other park fees.

### Issues

Although a well-established system, state parks, state recreation areas, and state waysides face several ongoing issues. Private lands within many units remain to be acquired, lands needed for resource protection and restoration efforts as well as to support additional visitor use. Continued funding is also needed for facilities – to rehabilitate or replace older facilities, and to add new facilities and amenities to keep pace with changing visitor interests. Maintaining adequate staffing to support outreach efforts, provide new programs and continue high value customer service to visitors is also an ongoing need.

### State Trails

Minnesota’s State Trail system includes over 25 legislatively authorized trails in MS85.015, 21 of which are wholly or partially developed. Many state authorized trails are in varying stages of completion. There are 1,270 miles of multiple-use trails, of which 541 miles are paved. Most of the state trails are on abandoned railroad grades, and accommodate both non-motorized and motorized uses, particularly snowmobiling. The primary spring, summer, and fall uses of state trails are biking, hiking, horseback riding, and in-line skating. During the winter, the primary uses are snowmobiling and cross country skiing.



MS 84.029 authorizes the Commissioner to acquire abandoned railroad right-of-way for use as recreational trails and MS 86A.04 includes these as State Trail Units of the Outdoor Recreation System. Although the state trail system is primarily used for non-motorized recreation and snowmobiling, there are several state trails authorized under MS 84.029 that are used primarily for motorized recreation.

Many communities have local or regional trail systems which complement the state trail system, and link communities to state parks and trails. Twelve existing state trails are directly connected to at least one state park; sixteen have authorized corridors that will connect to at least one state park.

State trails are an important tourism draw in areas where the trails are more fully developed. Community revitalization is evident in southeastern Minnesota as a result of the Root River State Trail, in north central Minnesota along the Paul Bunyan State Trail, and in many other areas of the state. Communities with trails can expect to generate \$300,000 to \$1.5 million of economic activity between Memorial Day and Labor Day. Overall, Minnesota State Trails contribute \$5 million annually to Minnesota’s tourism economy between Memorial Day and Labor Day.

### Issues

One of the primary issues facing the state trail system is its aging infrastructure. Many of the paved trail surfaces are over 20 years old, and in need of resurfacing. In addition, over 100 bridges are over 100 years old, many of which are in need of repair or replacement. With about 600 miles of paved trails and nearly 300 bridges in the state trail system, resurfacing trails and rehabilitating or replacing bridges will be an ongoing need (*Note: This figure does not include GIA trails, state forest, or state park bridges*).

Another issue for the state trail system is its rate of growth. A division budget analysis completed in 2009 indicated an average of 60 miles of new state trail have been authorized each year over the past 10 years. Only half of the currently authorized system is developed. Available funding has not kept pace with the authorizations, and acquisition of land within corridors that have multiple private owners can take decades to complete. As new land is acquired and developed, operation and maintenance costs increase, along with long term infrastructure needs.

Minnesota State Trail mileage for various trail types and uses:

- Total.....1,270 miles
- Paved trails.....541 miles
- Natural surface.....780 miles
- Horseback trails.....469 miles
- Groomed ski trails.....87 miles
- Snowmobile trails.....1,014 miles

### **State Forest Campgrounds, Trails, and Day-Use Areas**

Originally developed and managed by the DNR Division of Forestry, state forest campgrounds, trails, and day-use areas provide recreation opportunities within state forests. Camping opportunities available in state forests include campgrounds, individual campsites, group campsites, horse campsites, and dispersed camping.

Unlike many state parks, state forest campgrounds do not have resident managers, organized nature programs, or modern facilities such as showers and flush toilets. They are semi-modern areas, designed to furnish the basic needs and provide opportunities for recreationists to pursue a variety of unstructured outdoor activities.



Of the 58 state forests in Minnesota, 22 offer designated campsites. Thirteen of those 22 offer accessible campsites. There are eight horse campgrounds with a total of 273 horse campsites.

Opportunities for trail use, non-motorized or motorized, abound in state forests. The non-motorized trail system includes 390 miles of hiking trail, 284 miles of horseback trails, 250 miles of mountain biking trails, and 170 miles of cross-country skiing trails. State forest motorized recreation trails include 1,001 miles of off-highway vehicle (OHV) trail including 776 miles of combined all-terrain vehicle and off-highway motorcycle trail (ATV/OHM), 143 miles of single-track OHM trail, and 27 OHV trail miles, including off-road vehicles (ORV).

Nineteen state forests have day-use areas. Picnic tables, drinking water, garbage cans and toilets are common features found in these areas. Many of the day-use areas are located on lakes or rivers, and provide boating access, swimming and other forms of water recreation.

#### Issues

State forest recreation areas provide important opportunities for several types of recreation, but operations and maintenance activities for these sites are significantly underfunded. Additional operations funding would provide enhanced service and security for visitors, and increase revenue collection (although unlike revenue at other units, revenue collected at forest recreation areas is not retained by the division). With additional funding, opportunities to improve facilities and add amenities for forest recreation area users could also be explored.

### **State Public Water Access Sites**

The DNR provides and maintains a statewide system of public water access (PWA) facilities which give the public the opportunity to access and enjoy the state's lakes and rivers. The PWA Program was created by the Minnesota Legislature in 1947 to provide and maintain a statewide system to ensure public access to high-quality recreation opportunities. The Outdoor Recreation Act of 1975 included PWAs as a component of the outdoor recreation system.



Major components of the PWA program include public water accesses, and Lake Superior small craft harbor and protected accesses. Minnesota has nearly 3,000 PWAs, of which 1,595 are owned and operated by DNR and the remaining by county, city, township, and federal agencies. DNR often partners with other government units, typically providing engineering and site development while federal, state, and local government partners donate the land and provide long-term operations and maintenance. About fifty percent of the DNR operated sites have docks and about twenty percent have toilets.

PWAs are generally open year round, 24 hours daily unless otherwise posted. Most sites have concrete launch ramps to serve trailered boats, but some sites on smaller rivers and lakes are carry-in only. Toilets and docks are typically located on the busier sites; DNR consistently receives requests to add these popular amenities to more existing accesses. A combination of fencing, trees, or other vegetative buffers are often provided between an access and the neighboring property to reduce encroachments and complaints. Sites are not staffed on a daily basis, but general maintenance activities are regularly performed.

The Lake Superior small craft harbors and protected access program provides safe access to Lake Superior for recreational and small commercial watercraft. The system currently consists of 11 facilities offering a variety of opportunities from full-service marinas to small craft harbors with protected access.

Activities to manage the statewide system of PWAs fall into three broad categories:

- **Acquisition and Initial Site Development:** Acquisition and initial site development include all activities and time spent on purchasing land in order to create or expand an existing PWA site as well as all activities and time spent on planning and initial development of such sites.
- **Restoration:** Restoration includes all activities and time spent on rehabilitation and/or renewal of existing PWA sites.
- **Management and Maintenance:** Management and maintenance include all activities and time spent on day-to-day facility operations and maintenance, resource management, internal and external partnerships, disseminating information, and customer service related to existing PWA sites.

According to state statute, water access sites shall be established to provide public access to rivers and lakes which are suitable for outdoor water recreation and where the access is necessary to permit public use. To be authorized as a state water access site, the body of water to which access is being provided – and surrounding lands – must be able to withstand additional recreational use

without undue damage to the environment, or undue risks to the health and safety of water users. Further, public access to the body of water must either be nonexistent or inadequate. (86A.05).

Funding for the Public Water Access Program is primarily from two state accounts and two federal accounts, respectively: the Water Recreation Account and Game and Fish, and Sport Fish Restoration (USFW) and Boat Safety (Coast Guard). External partnerships include local government units, local fishing and sportsman clubs, lake associations, lake improvement districts, etc.

### Issues

The main challenges facing the public water access program is the ability to acquire land on priority lakes and rivers for new accesses and the need for renewing existing facilities. With approximately 5,500 fishable lakes in Minnesota, only about 1,800 have public access. The ability to acquire land to expand existing sites or develop new sites has been increasingly difficult. As lake shore property becomes more populated with summer cabins and year round residents, the cost to purchase land for access sites has risen substantially.

The increase in the size of boating equipment, including vehicles, boats, trailers and motors, has amplified the demand for modern or renewed launch facilities to include longer and wider ramps and parking spaces, wider turning radius, and amenities such as docks to aid in launching and retrieval.



### **State Wild, Scenic, and Recreational Rivers**

The Minnesota Wild and Scenic Rivers Act directs the state to establish wild, scenic, and recreational rivers to protect and maintain the natural characteristics of rivers and streams which, together with adjacent lands, possess outstanding scenic, recreational, natural, historical, and scientific values. It is in the interest of present and future generations to retain these values, and the policy of the state to preserve and protect these rivers (86A.05 and 103F).

There are seven Wild and Scenic Rivers in Minnesota including the Cannon, Kettle, Minnesota, Mississippi, North Fork Crow, Rum, and St. Croix. All of the rivers but the St. Croix are state designated Wild and Scenic Rivers; the St. Croix is federally designated, of which the Lower St. Croix National Scenic Riverway below Stillwater is cooperatively managed by Minnesota, Wisconsin, and the National Park Service.



Through the direction of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, the Division of Parks and Trails has acquired 135 scenic easements and 47 fee title acquisitions on 5,887 acres of land. The Water Trails program develops and maintains a river recreation development manual, river recreation sites, and monitors recreational use issues on designated river segments. All designated wild and scenic rivers are also designated water trails.

The division has renewed its efforts to develop a sustainable scenic easement monitoring and enforcement program. The division is currently working to enhance citizen and landowner relationships, conduct regular site visits, and improve technologies that create efficiencies for program administration.

#### Issues

Additional funding is needed to implement this program fully. The division is working to identify funds for and assign locally-based parks and trails staff to conduct regular site visits. Further, there is a large backlog of fieldwork needed to create baseline property reports for all easement parcels. These baseline property reports are the foundation for all future monitoring.

Only 23 percent of the easement acquisition areas identified in MN Rules 6105 (WSR Rules) have been acquired. At this time, there is no funding or program capacity for new scenic easement acquisitions. Since the passage of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, other state, regional, and local programs have implemented conservation programs that fulfill similar goals as that of the division. A comprehensive analysis of how those efforts have complimented the wild and scenic rivers program is needed.

## **Water Trails**

In 1963, Minnesota Statute 85.32 established the “canoe and boating route” program. The division manages 4,397 miles of “water trails” for canoeing, kayaking, boating and camping on the North Shore of Lake Superior and on 31 rivers statewide.

The division provides and maintains hundreds of facilities related to the water trail system statewide, including 579 public water accesses, 417 campsites, 333 rest areas, and 124 portages. Many of these facilities are managed cooperatively with local units of government that have land holdings

on water trails, but most of the remote sites are managed solely by the division. Twenty-seven state parks have a water trail adjacent to them, and numerous land-based trails intersect or follow water trails. Seven water trails are also designated wild and scenic rivers.

The division provides maps and online river level reporting; signs and buoys, obstruction removal, and enforcement; and community technical assistance in the form of facility design, installation, and community water trail development guidance.

### Issues

Some water trails have numerous facilities with an aging infrastructure. Some lack facilities to support or enhance recreation. The division needs to continue to work with local units of government to install and maintain quality facilities. The waterways themselves are prone to natural and man-made obstructions, which can be hazardous to recreationists. Regular maintenance of 4,397 miles of often remote water is an ongoing challenge.

There are many people that are not aware of the water trail program. The division will increase outreach efforts; build user groups’ organizational capacity and incorporate their input into program management; and continue to improve online resources such as “real-time” river level gauge interpretation, downloadable geospatial maps, customized trip planning resources, and public input surveys.



## Major Programs

### ***Natural and Cultural Resources***

State residents and visitors choose to visit Minnesota state parks, state trails, state recreation areas, water trails and other units managed by the Division of Parks and Trails in large part because of their settings; unmatched natural and cultural resources, and high quality recreation facilities. Division staff improve the quality of native plant communities, wildlife habitat and regional landscape integrity, enhancing recreation experiences and raising awareness of Minnesota's natural and cultural heritage. Staff protect, preserve and restore representative examples of the natural and cultural landscapes of the state. Over 280 federal or state endangered, threatened, special concern, and rare species occur on division-administered lands, as well as more than 80 types of important native plant communities. The division also manages 66 historic districts, sites and landmarks on the National Register of Historic Places. There are over 800 archaeological and cemetery sites on lands the division manages.



Management activities include prescribed fire in prairie and woodland communities, native plant community restoration, hardwood and pine reforestation, invasive species control, archaeological investigations, and repair of visitor impacts. These activities are crucial to ensure that important natural and cultural features on state park and trail lands are maintained at a high quality level. The division actively manages 13,000 acres of land each year.

### ***Outreach: Conservation Education, Public Affairs, Marketing, and the Web***

Broadly, the purpose of this section is to connect people to the outdoors through conservation education, public affairs, marketing, and the web. Conservation education opportunities are presented in a variety of ways, from guided experiences like naturalist-led talks, special events and outdoor skills building programs to self-guided experiences such as interpretive trails, kiosks, exhibits, and brochures.

The division currently reaches approximately 21% of state park visitors with conservation education programming. State trails, state forest trails, public water accesses and water trails hold great potential for connecting with new, diverse audiences. Reaching new visitors and extending conservation education opportunities across the outdoor recreation system are key efforts for the division.

In addition to its conservation education responsibilities, the outreach section focuses on the development of publications and internet content; statewide media relations and news releases; targeted advertising strategies, products, and services; customer service training; and conducting and analyzing market research. Creating awareness and motivation through public affairs and marketing is essential to the division's work, as is analyzing the motivations and barriers to outdoor recreation, and developing strategies to help people overcome those obstacles.



### **Acquisition, Development, Rehabilitation, and Renewal**

Plans and priorities for acquisition, development, rehabilitation, and renewal vary by the type of unit and are based on Minnesota statutes, individual state park or trail management/master plans, division initiatives, and available funding. The following descriptions illustrate the general plans and priorities of the division.

#### Acquisition

##### *State Parks and State Recreation Areas*

One of the division's goals is to provide for a state park system which preserves appropriate representations of Minnesota's landscape regions and meets future demands for state park resources, environmental education and recreational opportunities. The division assesses the needs of each park through long term management plans. The division will continue to acquire key parcels to protect unique natural and cultural features within state park system, and buffer the parks from outside development.



Decisions on which lands should be part of the state park system are based on statutory obligations, the *Minnesota State Park System Land Study*, and state park and state recreation area management plans. The division maintains a priority list for future acquisitions. The list evolves as new parcels are added to the statutory boundary of a park or the status of a parcel changes when more information is evaluated. During a funding cycle, the funding proposal list may be revised due to failed negotiations or another priority parcel may be identified.

If the site is very critical to the state park or trail system and current funds are committed to other projects; if it is urgent to acquire a site immediately; or if the acquisition has specific challenges, the division may work with outside organizations like the Parks and Trails Council of Minnesota. The Parks and Trails Council assists the division by acquiring critical parcels and holding them until the division is able to pursue the acquisition.

##### *State Trails*

State trails are established to provide recreational travel routes connecting units of the outdoor recreation system or the national trail system; provide access to or passage through areas which have significant scenic, historic, scientific, or recreational qualities; reestablish or permit travel along a historically prominent travel route; or provide commuter transportation (Minnesota Statutes Chapter 86A.05, Subd. 4).

The acquisition of state trail lands is focused on the parcels required to complete authorized state trail corridors or parcels that represent solutions to operational issues. As with state



park, land acquisition priorities for the state trail system is guided by statutory obligations and trail specific management plans.

Some of the general criteria for state trail corridor land acquisition found in all state trail management plans include:

- Corridors that minimize or avoid acquisition of high quality agricultural lands.
- Corridors that avoid or minimize impact on wetlands.
- Corridors that avoid negative impacts on rare and endangered species, and avoid fragmentation or disturbance to significant plant communities identified by the Minnesota County Biological Survey.
- Consideration to the placement of trail corridors adjacent to public land to provide additional buffers.
- Corridors that provide access to scenic and historic amenities.
- Corridors that provide a good recreational experience for all users.

### *Water Recreation*

The acquisition of public water access lands is focused on providing motorized and non-motorized access to Minnesota's largest lakes and rivers, lakes and rivers with no current public access and property necessary to address operational issues on existing water access facilities.

Public water access land acquisition includes lands for motorized watercraft access; canoe and kayak accesses, portages and campsites; boater waysides; and for the authorized Lake Superior Safe Harbors. These efforts have immediate, tangible benefits to boaters, anglers, hunters and other outdoor recreation enthusiasts who pursue their outdoor recreation interests via public water access sites and facilities.



As with state parks and state trails, land acquisition priorities for public water access are guided by statutory obligations. Specific water access site selection criteria include but are not limited to: lake size and shape; water clarity; fish and wildlife characteristics of the lake; physical characteristics of the parcels; proximity to population centers; proximity to areas of concentrated use; and whether the location is in high demand from the metropolitan area.

### Development, Rehabilitation, and Renewal

#### *State Parks and State Recreation Areas*

Based on the niche of the state park, it may have little or no development, or it may provide numerous types of facilities for the use and enjoyment of its visitors. Where state parks have facilities available, protecting the public's health, safety and welfare is critically important. It is also important to protect the state's investment and continue to provide high quality facilities that will encourage use and visitation. Therefore, rehabilitation and renewal of existing state park and state recreation area facilities is necessary on a regular basis. Such



rehabilitation and renewal can take many forms: accessibility improvements; site and building renovation; energy improvements; utility upgrades; campground and group camp improvement; erosion control projects; and historical facility renewal and adaptation to new uses. In select cases, new facilities may be constructed as replacements if a new location or structure provides lower cost, greater use, energy efficiency, or a safer environment.

Developing new facilities which provide access to the outdoors and can facilitate introductory outdoor recreation experiences is also desirable. These facilities will better serve an aging and more culturally diverse population, and will help reverse the trend in declining participation rates in many areas of outdoor recreation. Examples of these facilities include new camper cabins; campgrounds with state-of-the-art campsites; self-registration plazas; fishing piers and shore fishing sites; archery ranges; and nature play areas.



Development projects involving new buildings and major building renovations will meet or exceed the state of Minnesota's Sustainable Building Guidelines. Among other goals, the guidelines focus on achieving the lowest possible lifetime costs, encourage continual energy conservation improvements, and create and maintain a healthy environment. For more information on the State of Minnesota Sustainable Building Guidelines, please see: <http://www.msbq.umn.edu/>.

Development projects will also incorporate American Disabilities Act (ADA) accessible features. According to Title II of the ADA, "public entities must ensure that newly constructed buildings and facilities are free of architectural and communication barriers that restrict access or use by individuals with disabilities." Further, state and local governments "shall operate their programs so that, when viewed in their entirety, they are readily accessible to and usable by the individuals with disabilities." For more information on Title II of ADA, please see: <http://www.ada.gov/t2hlt95.htm>.

Two state parks that will likely undergo some new development in the near term are Lake Vermillion and Soudan Underground Mine. These parks, adjacent to one another in northeast

Minnesota, will be managed jointly by a single financial and operational structure going into the future. The goal for the development of the combined park area is to provide active lifestyles and engage increasingly diverse users in a growing appreciation for outdoor activities. Development of the two parks will include: utility and roadway infrastructure; day use areas; hiking, biking, and snowmobile trails; a boat launch area; a lake lodge; an outdoor skill building areas; a mine heritage center; three camping areas, camper cabins, yurts, and boat-in campsites; and administrative offices.



### State Trails

The DNR has nearly 600 miles of paved trails and thousands of miles of natural surface trails developed at different times over the past several decades. The department also has over 100 recreational bridges that are over 100 years old and well over 200 recreational bridges of varying ages. Both the trail surface and the bridges along those trails require periodic rehabilitation or replacement. Enhancing safety is the highest concern, though protecting the state's investment, providing accessibility for all users, preventing erosion and other resource impacts, and maintaining high levels of use are all priorities. Typical projects include bridge renewal and replacement; paved and aggregate trail resurfacing; culvert replacements; erosion control projects; trail realignments and accessibility improvements. Providing safe, accessible, energy-efficient recreational facilities will have direct impact on user satisfaction.



Expanding state trail opportunities available by developing new segments of authorized state trails is also desirable, as is developing new opportunities in state forests for off-highway vehicle (OHV) riders. Research has indicated that OHV riders are looking for more park-like amenities, so providing some of those amenities may encourage more families to get out and enjoy outdoor recreation together.

### Water Recreation

Water access sites provide access to public waters for a variety of recreational opportunities including fishing, boating, bird watching, and hunting and gathering. Sites can serve as demonstration sites of best management practices (BMPs) for aquatic invasive species (AIS) prevention and storm water control, and can provide interpretation to educate users and lakeshore owners about those BMPs. Improvements to these sites will also include the installation of universal design components (ADA accessible). Providing safe, accessible, ecologically sound water access facilities has a direct impact on user satisfaction and such use help support local economies.

Aquatic invasive species represent a serious threat to Minnesota's waters. Once established, AIS are costly to manage and become perpetual problems. Unintended transport on boats and other water related equipment is believed to be the primary means of their spread. Therefore, preventing the spread is focused on people and their habits.

A sign titled "HELP STOP AQUATIC HITCHHIKERS!" with a boat icon and a list of instructions for preventing aquatic invasive species. The sign is brown with white text and a red octagonal icon of a boat. The text includes: "To avoid spreading aquatic invasive species BEFORE launching ... BEFORE leaving: • Remove aquatic plants and aquatic animals • Drain lake or river water away from the landing • Dispose of unwanted live bait in the trash It's the Law ... Do Not: • Transport aquatic plants, zebra mussels, or other prohibited species on public roads • Launch a watercraft or place a trailer in the water if it has aquatic plants, zebra mussels, or other prohibited species attached • Transport watercraft without draining water, removing the drain plug, and opening water-draining devices Minnesota Department of Natural Resources".

**HELP STOP AQUATIC HITCHHIKERS!**

To avoid spreading aquatic invasive species  
**BEFORE launching ... BEFORE leaving:**

- **Remove** aquatic plants and aquatic animals
- **Drain** lake or river water away from the landing
- **Dispose** of unwanted live bait in the trash

**It's the Law ... Do Not:**

- Transport aquatic plants, zebra mussels, or other prohibited species on public roads
- Launch a watercraft or place a trailer in the water if it has aquatic plants, zebra mussels, or other prohibited species attached
- Transport watercraft without draining water, removing the drain plug, and opening water-draining devices

Minnesota Department of Natural Resources

Fishing piers and shore fishing sites are another way to provide access for all to enjoy Minnesota's public waters, and can serve as a gateway to other fishing, boating and other outdoor recreation experiences. The installation and improvement of fishing piers and shore fishing sites continues to be a priority for the division.

Small craft harbors and marinas also provide access, as well as offer overnight stays and refuge for the boating public. They also serve tourism, recreation and economic revitalization needs.

### ***Planning, Research, and Evaluation***

The planning section provides a variety of services and products for the division and the public. Among other activities, planning helps the division to address current trends and design processes that engage the public and key stakeholders. Planning supports division decision making through research and analysis.

Planning assistance is provided at all levels, from strategic to operational. The types of products developed include strategic plans; system plans; biennial workplans; unit management plans and amendments; Environmental Assessment Worksheets; and legislative studies.

The planning section also provides technical assistance to local units of government and other agencies regarding state park, state trail, and water recreation planning issues; facilitates the rules revision process; and provides meeting facilitation services.

### **Grant Programs**

In addition to the administration and/or management of the above units or programs, the division administers and manages a number of other programs, including:

#### ***Boating Infrastructure Grant Program***

This program provides grant funds to construct, renovate, and maintain tie-up facilities such as slip spaces and docks with features for transient boaters (boaters who stay 10 days or less) in vessels 26 feet or more in length. The program will fund design, dredging, materials, labor and other associated costs.

#### ***Clean Vessel Act Grant Program***

These grants fund the construction and installation of sewage pumpout facilities and floating restrooms, to purchase pumpout boats, and for educational programs for recreational boaters. The program provides financial assistance to reduce the disposal of gray waters and human body waste from boater activities into our waterways.

#### ***Cross-Country Ski Grant-in-Aid Program***

The goal of this program is the creation and maintenance of local ski trails at the initiative of local trail organizations and local units of government. Annual funding is \$200,000 from the ski pass dedicated account. The DNR works collaboratively with ski stakeholders such as the Minnesota Nordic Ski Association.

#### ***Federal Recreational Trail Program***

The program provides matching grants up to \$150,000 to units of government for projects to develop and maintain recreational trails and trail-related facilities for both non-motorized and motorized uses. Grants are funded from federal gas tax revenues to the Federal Highway Trust Fund attributed to recreational use.



***Fishing Pier Grant Program***

The goal of the program is to improve fishing opportunities, especially to meet the needs of children, elderly, people with disabilities and those without a boat. The DNR enters into cooperative agreements with the local units of government who provide the accessible walkway/path, accessible parking space and 20 years of ongoing maintenance while the state constructs the shore fishing site or provides the fishing pier.

***Land and Water Conservation Fund (LAWCON) Program***

Minnesota allocates one half of each annual apportionment of the federal funds to state agencies for statewide facilities. The other half is used to supplement state funding for three grant programs available to local units of government through the DNR's Local Grant Initiatives Program: Outdoor Recreation Grants, Regional Park Grants, and Natural and Scenic Areas Grants.

***Local Trail Connections Program***

The program provides matching grants up to \$100,000 to units of government for local projects that provide trail connections between where people live and desirable locations, such as community centers, schools, and parks. Grants are funded by legislative appropriation from in-lieu-of-sales tax on lottery tickets.

***Natural and Scenic Area Grant Program***

The purpose of the program is to increase, protect and enhance natural and scenic areas. The program provides matching grants to local units of government for up to 50 percent of cost of acquisition. Eligible projects include fee title acquisition and permanent easement acquisition. Minimal betterment activities are eligible as part of the proposed acquisition project and include interpretive, educational or boundary signing and protective fencing.

***Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) Grant-in-Aid Program***

The program currently manages 43 grants to local government units providing 948 miles of grant-in-aid OHV trails. The DNR works collaboratively with local units of government, club volunteers and stakeholder groups. Some of those stakeholder groups include the All-terrain Vehicle Association of Minnesota (ATVAM), Amateur Riders Motorcyclist Association (ARMCA), Minnesota 4-Wheel Drive (MN4WD), and the Minnesota Motorized Trail Coalition (MMTC).

***Parks and Trails Legacy Grant Program***

The purpose of the program is to provide grants to local units of government to support parks and trails of regional or statewide significance. Funding for this grant program is from the Parks and Trails Fund created by the Minnesota Legislature from the Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment passed by the voters in 2008. Eligible projects include acquisition, development, restoration, and maintenance of park and trail facilities that are of regional or statewide significance.

***Regional Park Grant Program***

The purpose of the program is to increase and enhance regional outdoor recreation facilities in areas outside the seven county Twin Cities metropolitan area. The program provides matching grants to public regional park organizations for up to 60 percent of the cost of acquisition, development, and/or redevelopment costs of regional parks. Eligible projects include park acquisition and/or development/redevelopment of regional park facilities including trails, picnic shelters, playgrounds, boat accesses, fishing piers, swimming beaches and campgrounds.

***Regional Trail Program***

The program provides matching grants up to \$250,000 to local units of government for trail projects outside the metropolitan area that are of regional significance. Grants are funded by legislative appropriation of in-lieu-of-sales tax on lottery tickets.

***Snowmobile Grant-in-Aid Program***

The goal of the program is the creation and maintenance of locally initiated trails that are financially assisted by the state. The program provides funding mostly for maintenance and grooming, though capital improvement and development grants for snowmobile trails are also available. Annual funding for this program is \$8.4 million from the snowmobile dedicated account.

Other Division Programs

***Adopt-a-River Program***

The program encourages volunteers to “adopt” a section of a lake, river, wetland, ditch or ravine to ensure its long-term health by doing annual cleanups. The program assists volunteers by supplying a ‘how-to’ kit, free bags and gloves, recognition materials and other assistance, as needed.

***Horse Trail Pass Program***

A horse trail pass is required on horse trails within state parks, state forests, state trails, and state recreation areas. Funds from the pass must be used for equestrian projects in the places where the pass is required. The DNR works with the Equestrian Advisory Group on program implementation.

***Lake Superior Safe Harbor Program***

Safe, or small craft, harbors provide access to and use of Lake Superior by recreational water craft and small commercial vessels. The DNR works with willing local partners, local units of government, and the US Army Corps of Engineers to plan, design and develop safe harbor and marina facilities.



## **Trends that Impact the Department and the Division**

Many changes are occurring in the state and throughout the country that will affect the department and the Division of Parks and Trails' ability to pursue its mission and vision. Several important trends are summarized below.

### **State Demographic Trends**

The Minnesota State Demographic Center offers projections of the state's demographic composition through 2035. The reports point to significant growth in Minnesota's population, generally on par with national averages. By 2015, the state's population is projected to reach 5.7 million, a 10 percent increase from 2005. By 2035, the state is expected to reach 6.5 million residents, a 24 percent increase from 2005. Three noteworthy trends characterize this growth overall. Minnesota's population is aging, increasingly urban, and becoming more diverse.

#### ***An Aging Population***

All age brackets are expected to experience a population increase, or remain stable, through 2035. The majority of Minnesota's population growth, however, will occur in the older age brackets. By 2035, Minnesota's over 65 population will increase by 125 percent and large percentages of this cohort will live in Minnesota's urbanized centers. Between 2005 and 2035, projections indicate the numbers of older residents in the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area will more than quadruple.

Older people tend to recreate less overall and the activities they participate in change. It is important for the division to identify what activities and experiences remain popular with its older visitors, and what facility changes may be necessary to continue to accommodate these visitors. An aging population also directly impacts the division as more and more employees move into retirement age. Replacing the skills and experience of retiring workers is an important task for the years ahead.

#### ***An Increasingly Urban Population***

The State Demographic Center projects Minnesota's population will increasingly live in urban areas through 2035. While the core counties of the Minneapolis-St. Paul area will only experience modest population increases, the Twin Cities' suburban areas and the Rochester and St. Cloud regions will experience more substantial growth. Moreover, growth in metropolitan areas far outpaces growth in nonmetropolitan areas, at 28 percent and 15 percent, respectively. In total, 83 percent of population growth in Minnesota is expected to occur in urban areas.

Metropolitan area residents tend to participate less than non-metro area residents in most nature-based outdoor recreation activities, including visiting state parks and trails. The division needs to consider how to connect or reconnect people with places and opportunities to learn skills and have experiences that will build lifelong state park and trail users.

#### ***A Diversifying Population***

While the Twin Cities will remain the most diverse region of the state, all regions will become more racially and ethnically diverse between 2005 and 2035. Statewide, Minnesota's total population of racial and ethnic minorities is expected to grow by 112 percent. Comparatively, Minnesota's white population is expected to only grow by nine percent. By 2035, a quarter of all Minnesotans are projected to be nonwhite or Latino, compared to 14% in 2005.

Racial and ethnic minority populations tend to participate less in most nature-based outdoor recreation activities, including visiting state parks and trails. In 2007, only 2.8 percent of state park

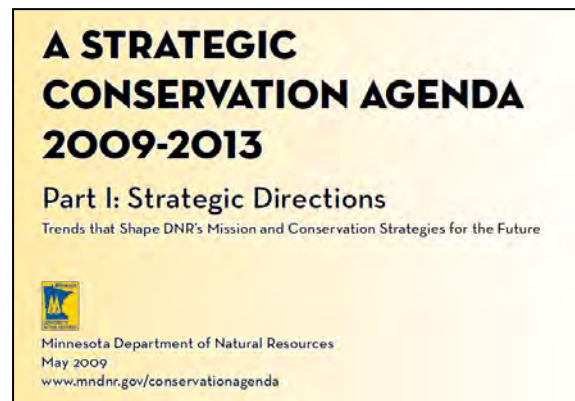
visitors identified themselves as non-white and/or Hispanic/Latino, while representing over 14 percent of the state's residents. The division will reach out to these groups and learn what opportunities and experiences they may seeking, and what barriers they may face in visiting state parks and trails.

### A Strategic Conservation Agenda

Minnesota's natural, cultural, and scenic resources – and our ability to protect and manage them for future generations – are being shaped today by three key trends. These trends are detailed in *A Strategic Conservation Agenda, 2009-2013* and they include:

- Changes in Outdoor Recreation Participation
- Changes Related to Energy and Climate
- Landscape Changes Related to Growth and Development

A fourth fiscal-related trend will also be included here: Changes in General Fund Allocations. Each of these trends will be briefly outlined below, followed by an expanded discussion of outdoor recreation.



### ***Changes in Outdoor Recreation Participation***

In both the state of Minnesota and the nation more broadly, outdoor recreation participation is declining on a per capita (i.e. per unit of population or per person) basis. One of the main reasons for these declines is that young adults and families with children are not participating at the same levels as they used to. In addition, Minnesota's population is generally becoming older, more urban and more diverse, and so demands for recreational opportunities will continue to change as well.

### ***Changes Related to Energy and Climate***

Concerns about energy security, the cost of fuel, and climate change have led to new national and state standards for energy efficiency and conservation-based alternatives to fossil fuels. These standards, in turn, alter how the department conducts its operations and manage its land and water resources. The DNR is using a three-pronged strategy to address climate change through mitigation, adaptation and monitoring. Planned adaptations include the creation of wildlife corridors, improved habitat connectivity and expanded habitat buffers.

### ***Landscape Changes Related to Growth and Development***

Over the next 20 years, Minnesota is projected to grow by more than one million people. The resulting landscape changes will challenge the department's efforts to restore and maintain fish and wildlife habitat, and provide clean water, high quality outdoor recreational opportunities and sustainable economic uses of natural resources.

### ***Changes in General Fund Allocations***

Tight economic conditions, particularly as a result of the 2008-2009 recession, forced state legislatures around the nation to reexamine how they allocate funds to their various state agencies. With incomes shrinking, property values decreasing, and citizens spending less money in the commercial and retail arenas, tax revenues are down. For agencies funded by the General Fund, this means that there is less money available to pursue their missions and provide services to Minnesota citizens.

### State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan

*Adapting to Change: Minnesota's 2008-2012 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan* (SCORP) is Minnesota's outdoor recreation policy plan. It gives those who administer and manage the state's outdoor recreation facilities a focused set of priorities and suggested actions to guide them as they make decisions about the state's outdoor recreation system.

Based on the changes in outdoor recreation participation seen in the state and nation more broadly, the SCORP Advisory Group set one overarching goal for 2008-2012: Increase participation in outdoor recreation by all Minnesotans and visitors.

According to SCORP, 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.



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.

The Division of Parks and Trails must adapt to these changes and stay in tune with the diverse needs of the state's residents and visitors to effectively encourage greater participation in outdoor recreation. Outdoor recreation is important for both societal and personal reasons: It is a major generator of economic activity and a critical component of the state's tourism industry. It can also play an important role in improving the health of both individuals and the community.

### Ten-Year Forecasts of Minnesota Adult Outdoor Recreation Participation and Highlights of Recent Outdoor Recreation Research

The Policy, Research, and Planning section of the DNR's Office of Management and Budget Services (OMBS) improves natural resource management and leadership through the application of science, planning and integrated decision making. One of the ways in which the section is able to accomplish this is through research and outdoor recreation use studies.

In 2005, OMBS published *Ten-Year Forecasts of Minnesota Adult Outdoor Recreation Participation, 2004 to 2014*. The forecasts are based on extrapolations of available recreation activity trend information and population projections. Examining Minnesota-specific trend data, most activities have decreasing activity participation rates in the ten-year projections with a single exception: off road all-terrain vehicle (ATV) driving. Between 1994 and 2004, ATV recreational vehicle registrations almost

doubled every five years. Extrapolating this over the next ten years creates a huge increase, an increase that may or may not be realized.

Looking at national-level trend data, like Minnesota, the projected participation rate changes are generally negative. Certain activities, however, are projected to have stable participation rates (e.g. golfing, downhill skiing/snowboarding, and walking/hiking), while a few have a projected increase in participation rates (e.g. camping and running/jogging).

On a per-capita basis, most projections are for decreases, meaning that the typical Minnesota adult will invest less time in outdoor recreation than in the past. The only exception is when Minnesota-specific trend data are considered with ATV riding included, which leads to no per-capita change.

Since the *Ten-Year Forecasts* were published in July 2005, OMBS and its partners have conducted several outdoor recreation-focused studies of non-motorized trails, state parks, fishing and hunting licensing rates, recreational boating, and forest recreation. Not all of the activities that the division supports are included here. In some areas, more research into visitor use is needed. The following represents some of the highlights of the research conducted to-date:

### **Non-motorized Trails**

During the 1990s, the DNR studied ten trails and is currently in the process of revisiting some of those studies to assess trends. Two trail studies have been recently completed, one was completed six years ago, and three were completed in 2009. Generally, these surveys show that trail use is declining.

Trail-use trends are generally negative for both state trails and Twin Cities regional trails. The use declines tend to be larger for the “tourist trails” (e.g. Paul Bunyan, Heartland, Root River, and Harmon-Preston Valley), although declines on some local-use trails (e.g. Gateway and regional trails in Twin Cities) are comparable. One reason offered for the broad downward trend in use is the expansion of trail opportunities and resulting spread of trail use among more trails.



The Douglas State Trail is different; it has a sizable increase in use. The reason(s) for the Douglas increase is unknown, but speculation centers on three factors: a recent community fitness public-relations campaign, expansion of suburban development along the trail, and attractiveness of the trail to potential users. When first studied in the 1990s, the surface of the Douglas was in poor condition, and users rated the Douglas the lowest of all the trails. The surface was repaved prior to the recent study and, trail users now rate it favorably and similar to the other trails.

Specific trends in the character of trail use, based on the Paul Bunyan and Heartland state trails, include the following:

- The decline in use on weekends/holidays exceeded that on weekdays.
- In-line skating exhibited the largest decrease in use, followed by biking. Walking/jogging showed the smallest decrease, and actually increased 4% on the Paul Bunyan.
- Tourist use on state trails declined more than that of local use (local use is defined as users who live within ten miles of the trail).
- Children and teens (under 19) had the steepest decline in use on state trails, while adults over 40 had the smallest decline.

### **State Parks**

In 2007, the DNR and the University of Minnesota conducted research on Minnesota State Parks in a fashion parallel to studies conducted in 2001. In addition to this recent trend information, some trend data are available to the late 1980s.

Total park use (including overnight use) has been stable over at least the last 10 years. Since population grew over the last decade, declines are occurring on a per-capita basis. In the 1980s (and probably earlier), state (and national) park attendance showed per capita gains, which gave way to losses in the mid 1990s.

The overall quality of park visitor experience is at a 20-year high. In addition, since 2001, visitor satisfaction with 22 items (e.g., landscape, staffing, facility, service items) for making a park outing enjoyable has stayed the same or increased for 21 of those items, and the only item that showed a decline had a wording change in the surveys.

Since 2001, parks gained visitation from the Baby Boom generation, and lost visitation among young adults and their children. This pattern of age-related change is not restricted to park visitors nor to Minnesota; it extends broadly to nature-based recreation in Minnesota and around the nation.



### **Fishing and Hunting Licensing Rates for Minnesota Residents**

Overall licensing rates have decreased since 2000. Each region and gender have decreased. The largest regional drops are in the urban and urbanizing areas (metro and northwest of metro). Females show larger decreases than males.

The pattern of change by age class is uneven, with younger age classes (16 to 44) showing a larger decrease and older age classes (45+) showing a smaller decrease or even an increase among some license activities. The oldest age class (65+) is on the increase; this is occurring at the national level, too. Also notable is the relatively small decrease of young anglers (16 to 24) and the increase of young hunters (12 to 15).

The decline in licensing rates was sharpest in the first part of the decade. Since 2005, the decline has ended, with both fishing and hunting license rates staying steady. Even though the overall rate has stabilized since 2005, the relative age-class patterns remain, with those under 45 showing declines (albeit at a slower rate) that are balanced by the increases of older adults (45+).



### **Recreational Boating**

Most of the DNR's boating trend information comes from regional studies, which began in the 1980s. The regional studies involve aerial boat counts and boater surveys on the major boating lakes.

In spite of increases in boat registrations, lakeshore development, and population, overall boating use in the four regional studies and on the lower St. Croix River has remained stable since the 1980s. Lake Minnetonka experienced a decline in use from 1984 to 2004.

Trip satisfaction is high and has changed little since 1998 in the North Central (NC) region. Problems with other boaters do occur, but they are neither numerous nor severe. The leading problem (jet skis) has not changed over time. Also stable over time are perceptions of congestion and crowding; the large majority of boaters believe the waters are not crowded or congested.

Public accesses continue to be used increasingly by riparian residents and resorts/private campgrounds on the lake. Accesses are serving a broader market today than in the past. Boaters give high marks to accesses, and this is little changed since 1998 in the NC region. A leading problem with accesses across studies is their perceived small size (e.g., parking lot, launch ramps).

In terms of boating trip characteristics, the main activity has continued to shift from fishing to pleasure boating. Craft types continue to be larger, more substantial, and are equipped with larger motors. In the 1980s, the average boat size was 16 feet and the motor was 50 horsepower. Today, the average boat size is 18 feet and the motor is 100 horsepower. Pontoons are rapidly becoming the craft of choice for riparian residents.

Currently, Minnesota ranks first in the nation for boats per capita (there is one boat for every six people) and boating is the second most popular recreation activity by adults in Minnesota (walking is ranked first). Further, Minnesota ranks second in the nation for anglers per capita and third for total number of boats per capita.



### **Forest Recreation**

As of September 2009, three forest-area studies have been completed by the Minnesota DNR and its partners: Foot Hills (2004); Land O' Lakes and Finland (2007-08). The forest recreation studies are designed to determine the type and quantity of recreation activities in the area, as well as the characteristics, experiences and opinions of visitors to the area. The studies are the means to learn about the characteristics of outdoor recreation in Minnesota State Forests.

Each recreation study examines a "forest area", which is a large swath of public forestland interspersed with private land. There no formal boundaries for the areas. The forest





recreation studies are designed to determine the type and quantity of recreation activities in the area, as well as the characteristics, experiences and opinions of visitors to the area.

In terms of visitor activities, the forests are used differently from one another. Hunting and off-highway Vehicle (OHV) riding dominate use in the Foot Hills and Land O'Lakes state forests, while the Finland area is dominated by camping and hiking/walking. There is relatively little OHV activity in the Finland area (8% of use), while OHV riding comprises some 25% of use in the other two areas.

The overall quality of visitor experience is quite positive, with nearly 90% giving "excellent" or "good" ratings.

In the surveys, visitors are asked whether they support or oppose 26 possible forest management actions. Across the various forest-user groups, there is moderate to high agreement on supporting/opposing the 26 actions, except for comparisons with the OHV group, which is different than all other groups. Overall, OHV riders would choose a different future for the forests than the other groups. For example, OHV riders want more campground amenities (e.g., toilets, picnic tables) and more motorized opportunities. The other user groups are neutral or lean toward opposition on these actions. In addition, OHV riders are neutral toward the action of limiting forest development to protect remaining resources, while other user groups strongly support that action.

## Desired Outcomes, Goals, and Strategies

Building off of the Parks and Trails Strategic Framework developed by the Transition Team, six content teams developed a draft set of goals and strategies for the new division. The content teams were organized around the following six long-term desired outcomes:

***The purpose of drafting goals and strategies is to articulate the division's main areas of work and responsibilities.***

1. We provide exceptional outdoor recreation opportunities.
2. We offer outstanding conservation education experiences through natural, cultural and recreation resource programming and outdoor skill building opportunities.
3. We position the division as the primary gateway to the outdoors through our outreach, marketing, and communications efforts.
4. We maintain and develop strong and meaningful partnerships.
5. We protect and conserve natural and cultural resources.
6. We pursue effective, sustainable and innovative approaches in our business practices.

The purpose of drafting goals and strategies is to articulate the division's main areas of work and responsibilities. The following Desired Outcomes, Goals, and Strategies are meant to be illustrative of these work areas and responsibilities.

***Strategic Directions were developed for the division based on input from a number of groups and individuals. These directions represent the priorities of the division in the near-term.***

“Strategic Directions” were developed for the division based on input from a number of groups and individuals. These directions represent the priorities of the division in the near-term. The next section of this document discusses Strategic Directions.

### Defining Desired Outcomes, Goals, and Strategies

**Desired outcomes** are general and somewhat open-ended. They describe where you want to be at the conclusion of your planning timeframe. Desired outcomes are not specifically measured. (e.g. We protect and conserve natural and cultural resources.)

**Goals**, unlike desired outcomes, are less general and are created to fulfill desired outcomes. (e.g. Protect, perpetuate, and restore natural and cultural resources in division-managed units.)

**Strategies** are approaches that will be taken to achieve the goal(s). They are more specific than goals. (e.g. Manage invasive species to prevent their introduction and spread in division-managed units.)

## Core Area: Outdoor Recreation

***Outdoor recreation is a priority for the DNR and the Division of Parks and Trails.***

Outdoor recreation is a priority for the DNR and the Division of Parks and Trails. It is one of the three main components of the DNR's mission statement, and provides the "connective tissue" for integrating the divisions of Parks and Recreation and Trails and Waterways into the Division of Parks and Trails. Further, changes in outdoor recreation participation is one of the three driving trends identified in *A Strategic Conservation Agenda 2009-2013* and increasing outdoor recreation participation is the main goal of *Adapting to Change: Minnesota's 2008-2012 State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan*.

***Outdoor recreation is a major generator of economic activity and an essential component of the state's tourism industry.***

People choose to visit state parks, state trails, state recreation areas, water trails and other units managed by the division in large part because of their settings; unmatched natural and cultural resources, and high quality recreation facilities.

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

The Division of Parks and Trails administers and manages a number of different units, as defined by the Outdoor Recreation Act and Minnesota Statute. Those units include state parks; state recreation areas; state waysides; state trails; state water access sites; state wild, scenic, and recreational rivers; state forest campgrounds, trails, and day-use areas; and state boater waysides.<sup>2</sup>

As mandated by Minnesota Statute 85.32, the division also administers and manages 32 Water Trails (4,397 miles of canoe, kayak, and boat routes). In addition, the division administers a number of programs, many of which provide funds to other organizations to provide outdoor recreation opportunities.

For more information on the units and programs managed by the Division of Parks and Trails, please see *Minnesota State Parks and Trails – Division Responsibilities* beginning on page 11 of this document.

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<sup>2</sup> State boater waysides were added to the Division of Parks and Trails' administration and management responsibilities in 2009, but none have been developed to date.

**Desired Outcome:** *We provide exceptional outdoor recreation opportunities.*

**Goals and Strategies:**

**A. Provide a diverse and connected system for outdoor recreation.**

*Strategies:*

1. Design, develop, and manage a recreation system that is responsive to the needs and interests of the public.
2. Model energy efficiency and sustainable practices with division facilities and operations.
3. Maintain facilities to promote their longevity, and preserve their cultural and historical aspects.
4. Collaborate with partners to manage and expand an integrated system of outdoor recreation opportunities.
5. Provide a variety of ways for people to access Minnesota's natural and cultural resources, and have fun.
6. Make facilities safe and accessible for people of all abilities.
7. Provide facilities that are hubs of activity.
8. Offer close-to-home and destination outdoor recreation opportunities to encourage increased outdoor recreation participation.

**B. Create and sustain a system for outdoor recreation that evaluates and prioritizes acquisition and development opportunities, operations and maintenance needs, and available funding.**

*Strategies:*

1. Use a variety of tools to acquire and develop additional components of the outdoor recreation system, based on research findings and emerging trends.
2. Evaluate areas of mutual interest among internal and external partners for land acquisition, easements, research, management, and protection.
3. Partner with other organizations to explore connections and creative approaches for engaging the public in advocating for division policy and funding priorities.
4. Develop program-specific prioritization criteria for land acquisition efforts.
5. Link maintenance funding to new acquisitions, and research opportunities to include and account for future maintenance needs into original acquisition.
6. Develop criteria to review existing facilities for improvements needed to achieve the goal of utilizing existing capacity.
7. Complete a system-wide inventory and assessment of rehabilitation, operations, and maintenance needs and priorities.
8. Rehabilitate, operate, and maintain facilities to incorporate current best management practices, working with partners and local communities, where appropriate.
9. Review processes and procedures, and revise them to ensure compliance with applicable regulatory programs.

What is a “diverse and connected system for outdoor recreation”?

A diverse system for outdoor recreation is one that includes a variety of activities on different landscape types throughout the year.

Minnesota State Parks and Trails provide a host of outdoor recreation activities, both non-motorized and motorized, including camping, picnicking, hiking, biking, in-line skating, horseback riding, mountain biking, climbing, scuba diving, cross country skiing, dogsledding, wildlife viewing, geocaching, paddling, hunting, fishing, off-highway vehicle riding, and snowmobiling.

The units managed by the Parks and Trails Division provide year-around recreation opportunities which support Minnesota's quality of life and its state, regional, and local economies. Developing and sustaining a diverse park and trail system helps the DNR meet the needs of a variety of outdoor recreationists.

A connected system for outdoor recreation is one that links the units of that system together (e.g. linking a state park, a state trail, water access site, and water trail.) A connected system also links state units with local, regional or federal units, and links state units to local communities.

**C. Provide safe and memorable visitor experiences.**

*Strategies:*

1. Create an inviting environment that is fun, enjoyable, and satisfying for our guests.
2. Partner with other divisions, agencies, local governments, volunteer groups, and others to cooperatively provide and maintain recreation facilities.
3. Provide information, user education and interpretive services in many formats, including the use of the latest technologies.
4. Maintain high visitor satisfaction.
5. Ensure visitors are aware of and understand the rules, and that the rules are enforced.
6. Maintain identifiable staff presence at division-managed units to foster a safe and secure environment.
7. Review and modify rules as needed.
8. Develop and maintain partnerships with other enforcement providers.

**D. Conduct and utilize comprehensive research, planning, and evaluation.**

*Strategies:*

1. Conduct research and recreation use studies with partners to understand Minnesota's diverse recreation needs.
2. Use research and recreation use study results to help set priorities within programs to effectively operate and allocate resources, and provide visitor amenities.
3. Investigate revenue generating opportunities in light of the division's statutory mandates and programmatic directions.
4. Evaluate the cost/benefit and appropriateness of providing service upgrades to the current offerings or potential new activities.
5. Conduct strategic planning processes to provide direction and a framework for decision-making, ensure we meet the recreation needs of Minnesotans, and conserve natural and cultural resources.
6. Develop a system plan for the units managed by the division to identify the niche of each component in the system.
7. Develop unit management plans and plan amendments to guide the acquisition, development, operations and management of the state park, trail, and waterway system.
8. Evaluate and adapt on-going programs and activities, as needed.



## Core Area: Conservation Education

***The division's conservation education program mission is to create a sense of stewardship for Minnesota's natural and cultural heritage by illuminating the changing relationships between people and landscapes over time.***

***The division's conservation education program focuses its efforts on connecting people with the outdoors, with first-hand discovery, guided by resource professionals.***

The Outdoor Recreation Act (*Minnesota Statutes*, section 86A.02 subd. 2) establishing Minnesota's outdoor recreation system identified two overarching aims for the system: (1) preserve an accurate representation of Minnesota's natural and historical heritage for public understanding and enjoyment and (2) provide an adequate supply of scenic, accessible, and useable lands and waters to accommodate the outdoor recreational needs of Minnesota's citizens.

Contributing to the first aim, the division's conservation education program mission is: *To create a sense of stewardship for Minnesota's natural and cultural heritage by illuminating the changing relationships between people and landscapes over time.* State parks, state trails, state recreation areas, water trails and other units managed by the division provide an unmatched natural and cultural resource base for first-hand conservation education experiences.

The division's conservation education program focuses its efforts on connecting people with the outdoors, with first-hand discovery, guided by resource professionals. Conservation education opportunities are presented in a variety of ways: guided experiences such as naturalist-led talks, special events, and outdoor skills building programs; and self-guided experiences such as interpretive trails, kiosks, exhibits, brochures, and electronic media. The division currently reaches approximately 21% of state park visitors with educational services. State trails, state forest trails, public accesses and water trails also have great potential to connect with numerous and diverse audiences. Extending conservation education opportunities to more places throughout the system and to reach more visitors are key efforts for the division.



**Desired Outcome:** *We offer outstanding conservation education experiences through natural, cultural and recreation resource programming and outdoor skill building opportunities.*

**Goals and Strategies:**

**A. Plan and implement conservation education opportunities at division-managed units that promote natural, cultural and recreation resource stewardship.**

*Strategies:*

1. Inventory conservation education opportunities for division managed units – including resources, themes, and potential partners.
2. Investigate non-traditional interpretive topics, techniques, and partnerships to broaden the types of programs offered.
3. Develop a conservation education plan for the division that establishes priorities for the interpretive program and identifies messaging by scale (division-wide, region, area, unit) and by audience (target audiences, uses by activity, general public) and identifies the resources needed for implementation.
4. Implement a basic level of conservation education services for division-managed units following the guidelines of the division conservation education plan.
5. Increase self-guided conservation education services to expand the reach of interpretive programming to more division-managed units.
6. Investigate best practices and new methods for delivering conservation education messages at dispersed units.
7. Adopt emerging technologies to reach new and younger audiences such as through web and mobile device-based delivery of services.
8. Plan and design division facilities to support and deliver conservation education programming.
9. Develop tools and resources to encourage division staff to provide conservation education opportunities.
10. Utilize volunteers, guest speakers and special program series to add variety, interest and increase the number of programs offered.
11. Expand fee-based program offerings to add more educational opportunities.

**B. Expand outreach efforts to deliver conservation education opportunities beyond division-managed units.**

*Strategies:*

1. Develop relationships with local schools, recreation user groups, and local communities to assist in delivering conservation education programming outside of division-managed units.
2. Promote/cross-promote with other recreation and education providers about conservation education and skills-building events and opportunities.

What is outdoor skill building?

Outdoor skill-building programs help people learn skills that are important for participating in outdoor recreation experiences such as camping, canoeing, rock climbing, orienteering, snowmobile or ATV riding and safety. These skill-based programs are designed to increase people's experience with the outdoors and encourage greater participation in outdoor recreation activities. Increasing participation in outdoor activities goes hand-in-hand with fostering stewardship for the natural and cultural resource settings people are experiencing.

What does division-managed mean?

Division-managed units refer to those sites and facilities that are managed directly by the Division of Parks and Trails, including state parks; state recreation areas; state waysides; state trails; state water access sites; state wild, scenic, and recreational rivers; and state forest campgrounds, trails, and day-use areas.

Other sites that the division supports via partnerships or grants but is not directly responsible for managing – such as grant-in-aid snowmobile trails, local trails or recreation sites – are not included in this definition.

3. Participate in special events and community events.
4. Build relationships with organizations associated with underrepresented groups to help promote and deliver conservation education opportunities.
5. Adopt emerging technologies to reach new and younger audiences such as through web and mobile device-based delivery of services.
6. Partner with outdoor recreation equipment retailers and manufacturers to offer skill-building programming.

**C. Further efforts to accomplish division and department recreation and resource missions utilizing division-managed units as gateways to the outdoors.**

*Strategies:*

1. Incorporate departmental goals, priorities, key messages and initiatives in the division's guided and self-directed services where appropriate.
2. Encourage other divisions to utilize Division of Parks and Trails interpretive services, facilities, staff and resources as an effective way to deliver messages to the public.
3. Invite other department staff to supplement interpretive programs as guest speakers, and encourage division interpretive staff to share their talents as subject matter experts to other divisions.
4. Provide interpretive staff experience and expertise in designing and creating exhibits, displays, signs and audio/visual productions to assist staff in other divisions.
5. Utilize existing department conservation education programs to provide additional opportunities at division-managed units.





## Core Area: Outreach, Marketing, and Communications

***How the division reaches out to its visitors, parks friends groups, user groups, partners, the general public and others will help determine whether it is successful in achieving the DNR's mission.***

***Broadly speaking, these efforts are meant to connect people to the outdoors.***

Like the other five core areas, outreach, marketing, and communications are critically important components of the division's work. How the division reaches out to its visitors, parks friends groups, user groups, partners, the general public, and others will help determine whether it is successful in achieving the DNR's mission.

Outreach, marketing, and communication efforts are closely related to all aspects of the division's responsibilities, but they are particularly linked with conservation education. In order to fulfill the DNR's statutory mandate to "preserve an accurate representation of Minnesota's natural and historical heritage for public understanding and enjoyment," deliberate efforts to reach out, understand, and communicate with people – visitors and non-visitors alike – need to be made.

These efforts can take many forms: creating a variety of ways to communicate with and engage new and existing customers; doing research to better understand customer's wants and needs; maintaining a consistent focus on the quality of the division's online presence; and others. Broadly speaking, these efforts are meant to connect people to the outdoors.

In addition to having division staff dedicated to outreach, marketing, and communications, the division works hand-in-hand with the DNR Office of Communications and Outreach.

The following pages outline the division's goals and strategies in Outreach, Marketing, and Communications.



**Desired Outcome:** *We position the division as the primary gateway to the outdoors through our outreach, marketing, and communications efforts.*

**Goals and Strategies:**

**A. Increase outdoor recreation participation at department-administered facilities.**

*Strategies:*

1. Conduct and utilize research on customers changing wants and needs.
2. Expand use of social media.
3. Mobilize our existing customer base to mentor and encourage new users.
4. Remove obstacles to outdoor recreation participation that have been identified in recent research.
5. Consider the logistical and economic needs of the public when developing and designing opportunities.
6. Diversify programming in order to keep opportunities fresh and interesting.
7. Create a variety of ways to communicate directly with and engage new and existing customers.
8. Use advertising to connect with target audiences.
9. Establish a plan to cross-promote department products.

Underrepresented Groups, Including Young Adults and Families with Children

10. Integrate diversity training into division activities.
11. Build relationships with organizations associated with underrepresented groups to build awareness of outdoor recreation and conservation education opportunities.
12. Expand the visibility and presence of underrepresented groups in division outreach, marketing, and communication efforts.

Existing Customers

13. Maintain high visitor satisfaction.
14. Strengthen and revitalize loyalty marketing programs and develop new loyalty marketing programs, as appropriate.
15. Collect and act upon feedback from customers on current experiences and potential changes.



What does department-administered mean?

Department-administered facilities include division-managed units (see sidebar in Core Area: Conservation Education), but extend to those locations that the department supports via partnerships or grants including Grant-in-Aid snowmobile, ATV, and cross country ski trails; public water accesses; fishing piers; etc.

**B. Have an established, recognizable, and well-respected Division brand identity.**

*Strategies:*

1. Develop a brand identity, identity standards, and a positioning statement.
2. Integrate the division brand identity into all division outreach, marketing, and communication efforts.
3. Utilize the brand identity to improve the efficiency and direction of marketing.
4. Reinforce brand identity in interactions with customers.

**C. Instill an appreciation for natural and cultural resources, and encourage a stewardship ethic.**

*Strategies:*

1. Continue to promote fun, interesting and educational programs that encourage natural and cultural resource stewardship.
2. Market to increase awareness of, and encourage public involvement in, natural and cultural resource protection and restoration efforts.
3. Link merchandising themes to natural and cultural resource interpretation and education.
4. Identify under-utilized units, and enhance marketing efforts and outreach programs focused on their natural and cultural resources.
5. Expand stewardship-focused volunteer opportunities.

**D. Promote the sustainable actions being taken by the department and the positive benefits of outdoor recreation.**

*Strategies:*

1. Use programs, signage or other methods to highlight sustainable actions being taken by the department and to promote the health benefits of outdoor recreation.
2. Collaborate with tourism, health, and environmental-focused organizations to promote the sustainable actions being taken by the department, and the health benefits of outdoor recreation.

**E. Have effective internal and external communications.**

*Strategies:*

1. Ensure timely, accurate, and up-to-date communications with employees and the public on division or department initiatives and informational items.
2. Maintain a consistent focus on the quality of the division's online presence and use of other technological tools for marketing.
3. Identify the primary messages the division and the department want to convey, and focus messages for quality delivery.
4. Involve field-level staff in outreach and marketing efforts.
5. Create and implement an internal communications and public relations plans for the new division.
6. Identify local points of information distribution statewide and consistently provide them with a supply of the division's primary marketing materials.

What is brand identity?

Brand identity is the outward expression of the brand, which includes its name and its visual representation. The brand's identity is its fundamental means of consumer recognition; it symbolizes the brand's differentiation from others.

In today's fast-moving society, brand identity is important because it can quickly and succinctly communicate an organization's product or service.

The development of a new brand identity for the Division of Parks and Trails would complement that of the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, and build off of existing brand identities, such as Minnesota State Parks.

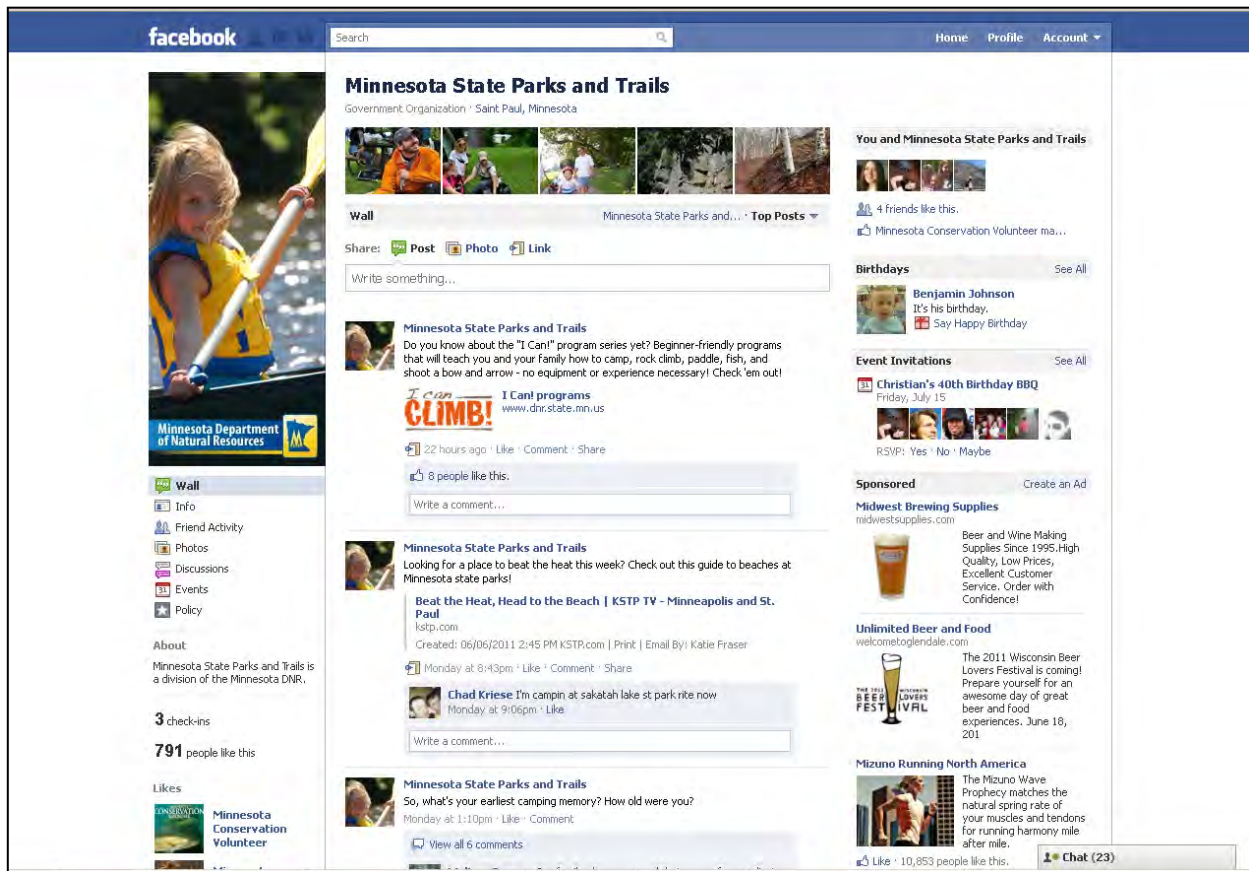
What are sustainable actions?

Here, sustainable actions refer to the DNR's ongoing efforts to reduce its environmental footprint. Examples include improving fleet energy efficiency, enhancing facility sustainability, encouraging environmentally responsible choices, and encouraging green purchasing.

**F. Enhance and expand the division’s marketing reach by developing new and strengthen existing partnerships.**

**Strategies:**

1. Identify organizations that provide or promote outdoor recreation, encourage them to utilize division facilities, and cross promote opportunities.
2. Identify charitable organizations and community groups conducting outdoor-based events and encourage them to stage events at division facilities.
3. Enhance partnerships with Chambers of Commerce and other local businesses to distribute Minnesota State Parks and Trails information and encourage use of facilities.
4. Partner with other agencies with similar missions/goals to provide extra programming at division facilities or bring Minnesota State Parks and Trails programs to their facilities.



## Core Area: Partnerships

***If it were not for partners, some of the facilities and services that the DNR provides or funds would not be available.***

In addition to its dedicated staff, the Division of Parks and Trails relies upon countless partners – including volunteers – to fulfill the DNR’s mission. In many cases, if it were not for the work or assistance of a partner or multiple partners, some of the facilities and services that the DNR provides or funds would not be available. A prime example of this is the division’s Grant-in-Aid (GIA) trail network.

The Division of Parks and Trails administers grants-in-aid to local units of government who partner with local volunteer clubs to maintain a number of different trail types: snowmobile, cross-country ski, off-highway vehicle, off-road vehicle, off-highway motorcycle, and all-terrain vehicle. The Minnesota Legislature delegated the responsibility of administering these cost-sharing programs for the development and maintenance of snowmobile trails to the DNR starting in 1973, with the snowmobile trail program. The purpose of the various GIA trail programs is to encourage maintenance, development, and acquisition of public, locally-controlled trails and areas.

In addition to local volunteer clubs, the division works with many other partners. Some of them include user and interest groups; conservation and recreation organizations; adjacent landowners; local units of government; the Legislature; chambers of commerce; resorts; non-profit organizations; outdoor industries and retailers; contractors; colleges and universities; American Indian tribes; local police and fire departments; other DNR divisions and bureaus; and other governmental agencies. Without the involvement of these groups and organizations, the Division of Parks and Trails would be unable to provide the amenities and consistently high level of customer service that has come to be expected of it.

***Desired Outcome: We maintain and develop strong and meaningful partnerships.***

### ***Goal and Strategies:***

- A. *Maintain and enhance existing partnerships to provide safe and convenient access to the state outdoor recreation system, and enhance the division’s ability to pursue its program responsibilities and initiatives.***

#### ***Strategies:***

1. Support viable local and statewide outdoor recreation user organizations.
2. Exercise management flexibility at multiple levels to sustain existing partnerships.
3. Participate in local initiatives that cross multiple jurisdictions.
4. Coordinate project priorities with partners.
5. Evaluate project outcomes with partners to enhance results.

**B. Develop new partnerships to provide safe and convenient access to the state outdoor recreation system, and enhance the division's ability to pursue its program responsibilities and initiatives.**

*Strategies:*

1. Look for opportunities within the division's operations to utilize partners where they have not been before.
2. Identify the potential for new partners outside of the division.
3. Investigate policies, rules or other barriers that may inhibit working with new partners.



## Core Area: Natural and Cultural Resources

***One of the overarching aims of the Outdoor Recreation Act is to preserve an accurate representation of Minnesota's natural and historical heritage for public understanding and enjoyment.***

The Outdoor Recreation Act (*Minnesota Statutes* section 86a.02 subd. 2) establishing Minnesota's outdoor recreation system identified two overarching aims for the system: (1) preserve an accurate representation of Minnesota's natural and historical heritage for public understanding and enjoyment and (2) provide an adequate supply of scenic, accessible, and useable lands and waters to accommodate the outdoor recreational needs of Minnesota's citizens.

The various units within the system have different levels of emphasis for these two overarching aims, including natural and cultural resource management. State parks are to be managed to preserve, perpetuate and interpret the natural features that existed at the time of Euro-American settlement, and other significant natural, scenic, scientific or historic features at the site. For state recreation areas, state trails, and other division-managed units, the mandate for natural and cultural resource preservation and restoration is less paramount or not a central part of the purpose for the unit.

Other statutes and laws affect some facility development, maintenance, and resource management activities, such as control of invasive species, protection of wetlands, management of conservation easements, and preservation of rare and endangered plants and animals. Additionally, federal and state laws guide the protection of cultural resources, including the National Historic Preservation Act, the Minnesota Private Cemeteries Act and the Minnesota Historic Sites Act.

As part of a larger resource management agency, the division also has a role to play in achieving the department resource management goals, including those set out in the department's *A Strategic Conservation Agenda*:

- Minnesota's natural lands and habitats will be conserved and enhanced.
- Minnesota's water resources and watersheds will be conserved and enhanced.
- Minnesota's fish and wildlife populations will be healthy and provide great recreation opportunities.

From these unit-specific mandates, department guidelines, and overarching laws and regulations, the division has devised a resource management program that guides the actions and activities for the management, protection, and restoration of the natural and cultural resources under its care.

***Desired Outcome:*** *We protect and conserve natural and cultural resources.*

**Goals and Strategies:**

**A. Protect, perpetuate, and restore natural and cultural resources in division-managed units.**

Strategies:

1. Document, preserve and perpetuate rare species.
2. Manage existing native plant communities to meet or exceed a high quality condition rank as defined by DNR Ecological Resources.
3. Manage invasive species to prevent their introduction and spread in division-managed units.
4. Manage wildlife populations to ensure species indigenous to the unit are preserved to the extent practical.
5. Document and preserve significant cultural resources.
6. Conduct resource assessments on proposed projects, operational actions, and special events being considered on division-managed lands which have the potential to significantly impact natural or cultural resources.
7. Transform non-native plant communities to native plant communities, in units with statutory mandates and selected sites in other units, excluding use areas or sites planned for development.
8. Restore wildlife species indigenous to the unit to the extent practical.
9. Restore historic structures and cultural landscape features associated with significant historic sites and historic districts.
10. Mitigate wetland impacts on division-managed lands by the restoration of wetlands on division or department lands whenever possible.
11. Integrate resource management responsibilities at all levels of division staff, enhanced through training and education opportunities and recorded via workplan requirements.
12. Measure, monitor, and document the effectiveness of resource management activities.
13. Incorporate natural and cultural resource protection and restoration opportunities into the division's land acquisition criteria and prioritization.

**B. Promote understanding and awareness of natural and cultural resources with visitors and the public to support division resource management efforts.**

Strategies:

1. Integrate resource information with division recreational & educational activities to enhance visitor experiences through opportunities to enjoy the natural features, wildlife and historic objects of the unit and insure that those resources remain unimpaired for future generations.
2. Protect and maintain natural and cultural resources associated with use areas to serve as examples of sound resource management for visitors to experience.
3. Inform visitors of environmental protection rules that protect resources and guide visitor use in division-managed units.

What are invasive species?

Department Operational Order #113 defines an invasive species as a nonnative species that causes or may cause economic or environmental harm or harm to human health; or threatens or may threaten natural resources or the use of natural resources in the state. Not all nonnative species are considered "invasive" and therefore not all non-natives found on state lands are actively managed. In addition to the department operational order, each division has developed guidelines for how it will prevent the introduction of invasive species to its units as well as identify and manage existing invasive populations.

What are secondary units?

A secondary unit is a unit of the outdoor recreation system located wholly or partially within the boundaries of another unit – such as a Scientific and Natural Area located within a state park. Secondary units can only be established when the purposes and objectives of the two units are consistent. Secondary units are administered by the managing agency that would otherwise be responsible for that unit, unless another management structure is provided in law or by agreement between the agencies managing the two units.



4. Communicate with visitors and the public about the division's resource responsibilities and programs through interpretive programming, signage, division web pages and other media.
5. Cooperate with private landowners to promote stewardship and protection of conservation easements where the division has administrative responsibilities.
6. Encourage volunteer stewardship of the state's natural and cultural resources.

**C. Coordinate and collaborate with other divisions and department efforts to achieve natural and cultural resource goals.**

Strategies:

1. Manage secondary units to the satisfaction of both administering divisions.
2. Communicate the division's expertise and contribution to departmental natural and cultural resource management efforts.
3. Assist other divisions, and regional management teams, in furthering departmental objectives related to restoration of natural and cultural landscapes.

**D. Cooperate with outside groups, other state agencies, and other units of government on natural and cultural resource efforts to achieve division and department goals.**

Strategies:

1. Enhance the cooperative relationship with the Minnesota Historical Society for the preservation and management of cultural resources on division-managed lands.
2. Manage resources at units with shared administrative responsibility to the satisfaction of both administering agencies.
3. Foster relationships with recreation facility and program partners /cooperators to further division's natural and cultural resource goals.
4. Support research that investigates key issues concerning natural and cultural resource management for division-managed units.
5. Continue and refine processes for consulting with the Minnesota Indian Affairs Council, tribal governments, and the State Historic Preservation Office about resource management activities.

**E. Address impacts of climate change on the division's natural resource responsibilities.**

Strategies:

1. Participate in applied research concerning climate change impacts to natural resources in Minnesota.
2. Monitor climate change-related ecosystem impacts to native communities and species in division-managed units.
3. Evaluate and implement resource management activities to minimize and mitigate impacts of climate change to natural resources in division-managed units.
4. Consider climate change mitigation as part of the division's criteria for evaluating and prioritizing land acquisitions.

**Climate change:  
Disagreement and concern**

There is still some disagreement surrounding the factors that are contributing to climate change – how much is human-caused, what portion is part of a natural cycle? However, the goals and strategies here are not concerned with the causes, but with the impacts. The division, as part of the larger department effort, is focusing on investigating and gaining a better understanding of how climate change will impact the health and productivity of the lands and waters of the state and what the division and department will need to do to mitigate and adapt its management of the natural and cultural resources under its care. The department's *A Strategic Conservation Agenda* establishes a strategic direction, desired outcomes and key measures for its efforts to address climate change impacts.

## Core Area: Internal Business and Innovation

***Progress in meeting these goals is crucial for the division to achieve success in any of the other core areas.***

The goals and strategies in this core area address the activities that support the division's work in its other core areas. These goals and strategies for these topics – such as innovation, data systems information and technology, and fiscal management – apply across all aspects of the division, guiding how the division goes about pursuing its mission-related activities. Progress in meeting these goals is crucial for the division to achieve success in any of the other core areas.

For many of the goals and strategies in this core area, the division is not acting on its own but as part of larger department efforts to address critical trends that affect all the divisions and bureaus. The division will work closely with the department in developing programs or actions around several strategies in this core area – including strategies for workforce training, recruitment and retention (Goal B, strategies 3, 5, 7, and 9), fiscal management (Goal C, strategies 1 and 5), safety (Goal D strategy 2) and data systems and technology (Goal F, strategy 5).

***Desired Outcome:*** *We pursue effective, sustainable and innovative approaches in our business practices.*

### ***Goals and Strategies:***

#### ***A. Promote a work environment that is open to new ideas and encourages innovation.***

##### *Strategies:*

1. Utilize multiple channels of communication to empower division staff to advance and promote innovative ideas.
2. Create a division-wide process to evaluate innovative ideas, and provide resources and flexibility to division staff for testing ideas.
3. Conduct program, process and project evaluations focused on identifying efficiencies and improving outcomes.
4. Encourage innovation at all levels of division staff.
5. Include customers, stakeholders, and partners in identifying improved ways of delivering services.

#### ***B. Support a motivated and dedicated workforce that is representative of the state's population.***

##### *Strategies:*

###### Training

1. Encourage use of individual development plans for employees and supervisors to identify skill development and training opportunities.
2. Develop training and knowledge sharing opportunities for employees by work class.

3. Develop training programs to assist employees interesting in moving from technical to professional and/or management positions.
4. Support employee involvement in training opportunities outside the division and department.

Recruitment

5. Coordinate with higher education institutions to develop curriculum and coursework to prepare students for natural resource careers.
6. Strengthen student worker and internship opportunities within the division.
7. Build relationships with organizations associated with underrepresented groups to build awareness of opportunities in natural resource and outdoor recreation career fields.
8. Integrate career opportunity information into outreach efforts and conservation education programming.

Retention

9. Develop a mentor program to support new staff and staff in new positions.
10. Prepare staff for job opportunities across all types of units and responsibilities in the division.
11. Use exit interviews, oral histories and other methods to retain knowledge from retiring employees.
12. Develop methods for overlapping outgoing and incoming staff to strengthen knowledge transfer and continuity.

**C. *Employ sound financial management practices.***

*Strategies:*

1. Maintain and strengthen fund integrity and fiscal management.
2. Make management decisions based on reliable financial planning and analysis.
3. Evaluate and structure fees to deliver a financially sustainable outdoor recreation system that meets a range of visitor needs.
4. Communicate with visitors, stakeholders, legislators, and the public the sources of division funds and how the funds are used.
5. Meet requirements to track dedicated funds and report expenditures in conjunction with department reporting procedures.
6. Support program partners to maintain fiscal integrity and positive program results.

**D. *Model safety, efficiency, and sustainability with division operations and asset management.***

*Strategies:*

1. Continue the division's commitment to a strong safety program through training, ongoing communication and instilling safety awareness with all employees.
2. Design programs and policies to promote employee safety, health, and wellness.
3. Provide equipment that is safe and appropriate for the tasks assigned to employees.

What is meant by underrepresented groups in relation to division employees?

Underrepresented groups are those that are fewer in number among division staff than among the state population as a whole – measured by age, gender, race or ethnicity. The division is interested in developing a workforce that more closely reflects the state's population as part of its mission to provide outdoor recreation and conservation education opportunities to all Minnesotans. A more diverse workforce will increase the division's ability to connect with underrepresented groups to build awareness of the recreation and education opportunities available to them.

4. Coordinate the use and location of employees and equipment within the division to reduce costs and improve operational outcomes.
5. Collaborate with other divisions and bureaus to promote operational efficiencies department-wide.
6. Develop clear lines of communication and points of contact within the division for interaction with support bureaus.
7. Enhance facility sustainability by improving building system performance and utilizing renewable energy technologies, installing energy-efficient appliances, and using recycled products.
8. Encourage environmentally responsible choices by employees for travel, material use, and purchasing decisions.
9. Utilize non-profits, partnerships and contracting to reduce costs while maintaining high quality service delivery.
10. Cooperate with program partners on providing and utilizing equipment.

**E. Promote a customer-oriented approach for division interactions with visitors, the public, and other organizations.**

*Strategies:*

1. Include customer service training for all division staff.
2. Measure division progress via visitor comments, user survey results, and communications within department and with other organizations.
3. Design procedures to assure prompt response to public inquiries.
4. Ensure that all division employees continue to use exemplary customer service practices and relay consistent messages.

**F. Develop, manage, support, and share data systems information and technology to provide consistent, accurate, and accessible information to better serve our clients' outdoor recreation opportunities and to support resource protection, business processes, decision-making, operational evaluations, and publications.**

*Strategies:*

1. Provide a division-wide approach to managing information systems.
2. Establish and maintain a cohesive information systems unit to avoid duplication of efforts.
3. Establish and maintain an enterprise system for managing and updating the division's data.
4. Work closely with each division unit to ensure all reporting and publications (electronic/web and hardcopy) are consistent and data-driven where possible.
5. Work closely with the department on establishing and keeping current with department and state data and hardware standards.
6. Coordinate the division's use of emerging technologies for information and service delivery.

**What are operational outcomes?**

Operational outcomes are the products of the division's work – visitors served, resources managed, facilities maintained, partner relationships strengthened, etc. Where and how the division allocates employees and equipment are important factors in accomplishing these outcomes.

**What is facility sustainability?**

Facility sustainability refers to the overall impact and costs of the development, operation and maintenance of facilities, such as state park buildings and division office locations. The department's *A Strategic Conservation Agenda 2009-2013* identifies methods for reducing the department's environmental footprint, including enhancing facility sustainability.

## Strategic Directions

The Division of Parks and Trails created three strategic directions that identify the points of emphasis for the division's efforts over the next ten years:

- ***Connecting People to the Outdoors***
- ***Accelerating Management of Our Natural, Cultural and Recreational Environments***
- ***Investing in Our Partnerships, Processes and People***

These strategic directions are the heart of this document – they are the division's statement of its priorities for targeting resources and funding to fulfill its vision.

***As the division's identified priorities, the division will focus its funding and resources toward activities that align with the strategic directions.***

### Developing Strategic Directions

The strategic directions were created through prioritizing the goals and strategies in the six desired outcomes. Priorities among the goals and strategies were identified in several ways – by the content teams within their core area, and by all division staff and the Division Management Team across all six desired outcomes. The Division Management Team considered the output of these prioritization efforts and identified a set of highest priority goals. These prioritized goals were organized into categories, based on the functions the goals are to perform and how the goals relate to each other. The strategic directions express the overarching intent of the goals within the three categories.

### Comprehensive versus Strategic

The desired outcomes encompass the full range of tasks that the division undertakes in fulfilling its vision. While the strategic directions – and prioritized goals embedded within – reflect the priorities for the division, work related to other goals and strategies laid out in the desired outcomes will also continue. The division will continue work in these areas including supporting ongoing operations and meeting fiscal and other mandates. However as the division's identified priorities, the division will focus its funding and resources toward activities that align with the strategic directions.

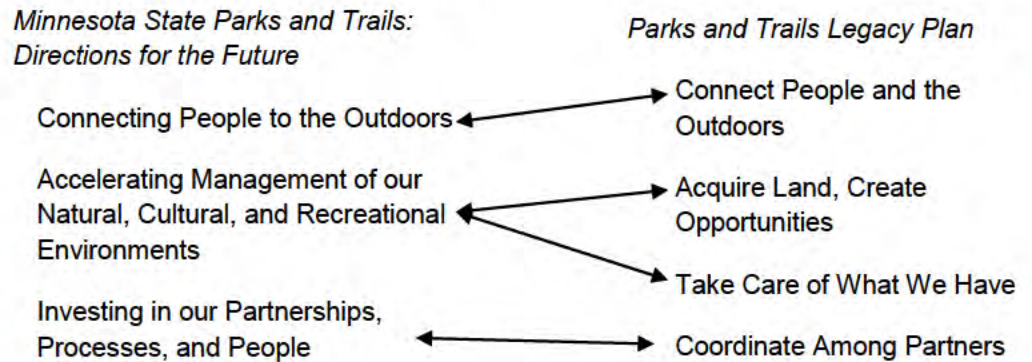
### Legacy Plan Connections

Like *Directions for the Future*, the major priorities in the *Parks and Trails Legacy Plan* are organized around strategic directions. The *Parks and Trails Legacy Plan* outlines four strategic directions:

- Connect People and the Outdoors
- Acquire Land, Create Opportunities
- Take Care of What We Have
- Coordinate Among Partners

There is very close alignment between the strategic directions in the two documents.

Legacy Plan Connections *continued*



Two of the strategic directions within the *Parks and Trails Legacy Plan* - “Acquire Land, Create Opportunities” and “Take Care of What We Have” - are encompassed within “Accelerating Management of Our Natural, Cultural, and Recreational Environments” from *Directions for the Future*. The main area of difference between the two sets of strategic directions is that this document’s third strategic direction - “Investing in Our Partnerships, Processes, and People” - is broader, including not only partnership issues but also workforce issues and other financial, data system, and human resource processes.

Describing the Strategic Directions

***Connecting People to the Outdoors***

Understanding people’s motivations for recreating outdoors and developing strategies to help them overcome barriers to outdoor recreation participation are critical components of this strategic direction. The division will provide opportunities that help people connect with the natural world – recreational activities and educational activities that enrich their experiences and increase their appreciation and understanding of the outdoors. Some of these opportunities will involve other parts of the Department of Natural Resources, with state parks, state trails and other division facilities serving as gateways for people to experience a broad range of activities. Key to success is not only to continue to provide great experiences to people already visiting, but to attract new visitors through outreach and new offerings.

Examples of activities that the division will undertake include: more programs that teach outdoor skills such as fishing and camping; new marketing efforts that raise awareness of the many opportunities available at the state parks, trails, and other facilities across the state; and continuing to ensure visitors feel welcome and safe.

***Understanding people’s motivations for recreating outdoors and developing strategies to help them overcome barriers to outdoor recreation participation are critical.***



**Goals for *Connecting People to the Outdoors*:**

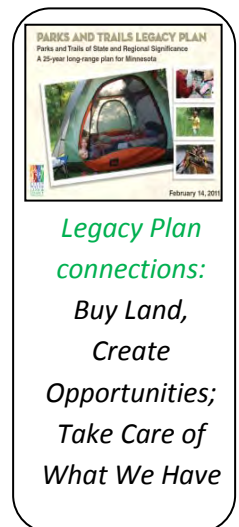
- Provide safe and memorable visitor experiences. (Outdoor Recreation – C)
- Plan and implement conservation education opportunities at division-managed units that promote natural, cultural and recreation resource stewardship. (Conservation Education – A)
- Further efforts to accomplish division and department recreation and resource missions utilizing division-managed units as gateways to the outdoors. (Conservation Education – C)
- Increase outdoor recreation participation at department-administered facilities. (Outreach, Marketing, Communications – A)
- Instill an appreciation for natural and cultural resources, and encourage a stewardship ethic. (Outreach, Marketing, Communications – C)

***Accelerating Management of Our Natural, Cultural and Recreational Environments***

***To maintain a high level of quality, the division must do more to manage its natural, cultural and recreational environments.***

People often choose to visit Minnesota State Parks and Trails because of their settings; unmatched natural and cultural resources, and high quality recreation facilities. To maintain this level of quality, the division must do more to manage its natural, cultural and recreational environments. This will involve acquisition, development, operations, maintenance, renewal and rehabilitation. The division faces significant challenges both in maintaining its current facilities and resource base, and in providing new facilities and conducting additional natural and cultural resource restoration work.

Examples of activities that the division will undertake include: accelerating acquisition of state park inholdings, increasing the number of repair and rehabilitation projects for trail surfaces, park buildings and other infrastructure; constructing new facilities to support additional recreational uses or more intensive use; adding amenities such as electric service and wireless internet in campgrounds to enhance visitor experiences; conducting additional resource inventories and assessments (including identifying rare and endangered species); controlling invasive species at more species; and undertaking additional forest, prairie and wetland restorations.



***Goals for Accelerating Management of Our Natural, Cultural and Recreational Environments:***

- Provide a diverse and connected system for outdoor recreation. (Outdoor Recreation – A)
- Create and sustain a system for outdoor recreation that evaluates and prioritizes acquisition and development opportunities, operations and maintenance needs, and available funding. (Outdoor Recreation – B)
- Protect, perpetuate, and restore natural and cultural resources in division-managed units. (Natural and Cultural Resources - A)

***Investments in partnerships, processes, and people produce dividends across all aspects of the division's work, and provide increased service delivery and increased promotion of opportunities available.***

***Investing in Our Partnerships, Processes and People***

The division accomplishes its work through partnerships with other agencies, non-profits, recreation clubs, and private citizens; via processes that effectively utilize resources, and through the talents of its employees. Investments in these areas produce dividends across all aspects of the division's work, and provide improved service delivery and increased promotion of opportunities available. The focus of this strategic direction is to improve the quality of the division's human resources through training, skills development, recruitment and retention. Several of these human resource efforts will be pursued as part of larger department-level initiatives.



Examples of activities that the division will undertake include: involving partners in identifying improved ways of delivering services, customer service training for division staff to foster positive visitor interactions, forging partnerships with civic and other groups that can help expand the division's contact with people underrepresented among our visitors.

***Goals for Investing in Our Partnerships, Processes and People:***

- Have effective internal and external communications. (Outreach, Marketing, Communications – E)
- Maintain and enhance existing partnerships to provide safe and convenient access to the state outdoor recreation system, and enhance the division's ability to pursue its program responsibilities and initiatives (Partnerships – A)
- Develop new partnerships to provide safe and convenient access to the state outdoor recreation system, and enhance the division's ability to pursue its program responsibilities and initiatives. (Partnerships – B)
- Promote a work environment that is open to new ideas and encourages innovation. (Internal Business – A)
- Support a motivated and dedicated workforce that is representative of the state's population. (Internal Business – B)
- Promote a customer-oriented approach for division interactions with visitors, the public, and other organizations. (Int. Bus. – E)



### Relationships between the Strategic Directions

Also important for the strategic directions in how they relate to each other. The diagram below illustrates the interaction between the three strategic directions.

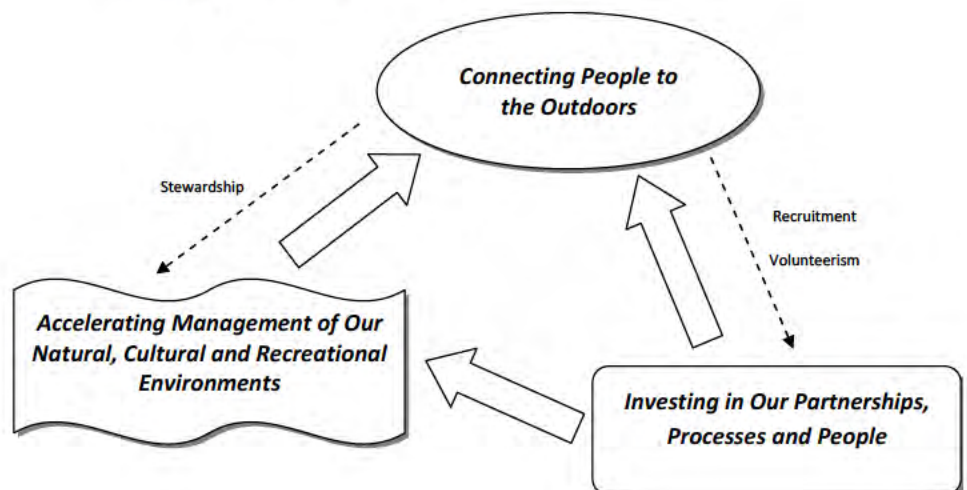
Activities for *Investing in Our Partnerships, Processes and People* contributes to the other two strategic directions – as partnerships, processes and people are tools that contribute to natural resource management projects, recreation facility management, conservation education programming, community outreach and other tasks involved in those strategic directions.

The work in *Accelerating Management of Our Natural, Cultural and Recreational Environments* contributes to *Connecting People to the Outdoors* by providing the attractive natural and cultural resource settings and high quality recreational facilities that are a key factor in drawing people to visit state parks, state trails and the other units the division manages.

***Connecting people to the outdoors promotes a greater appreciation and sense of value for Minnesota's outdoor heritage.***

The successes in *Connecting People to the Outdoors* create positive feedbacks to the other strategic directions. Positive visitor experiences and enhanced appreciation for the outdoors return as gains that strengthen the division's efforts: in recruitment (new people interested in resource and recreation careers), volunteerism (more people involved helping with the division's work), and stewardship (a greater appreciation and sense of value for Minnesota's outdoor heritage).

### **Strategic Directions – Relationships**



## Funding the Strategic Directions

The Division of Parks and Trails has a variety of funding sources that contribute to its operations and capital budgets. A Division of Parks and Trails budget analysis was recently completed as required by the Minnesota State Legislature [ML 2009, Chap. 172, Art. 3, Sec. 6, Subd. 3] regarding the adequacy of funding for State Parks, State Trails, State Recreation Areas (SRA's), state forest trails and recreation areas. That budget analysis is included as an appendix to this document

The general finding of the budget analysis is that in order to meet current needs and standards for operating and maintaining the existing parks and trails system, the division would need an additional \$6 million a year above and beyond its FY 2010 funded operations budget. Capital budget levels, likewise, have not been adequate to fully maintain and continue development of the system.

***The addition of Parks and Trails Legacy Funds has translated directly into higher service levels.***

The addition of Parks and Trails Legacy Funds in FY 2010 has translated directly into higher service levels – additional conservation education programs and extended staffing at contact stations and visitor centers, for example – and has enabled DNR to make serious inroads into the deferred maintenance backlog. Legacy funds have also increased awareness and motivation to participate in recreation opportunities through increased programming, marketing, and media coverage. This has led to increased park and trail visitation and increased revenue. Legacy funds, however, are not adequate nor intended to replace other funding sources.

The deferred maintenance backlog has over time resulted in higher repair and rehabilitation costs. Completion of trail segments and needed facility developments has also been delayed. Again, Legacy funds have helped cut into the backlog but the long-term funding-versus-need imbalance remains. Periodic large capital budget allocations, while delivering many projects across the system, have produced other difficulties with spending significant bonding funds in short time-frames.

### Funding Sources and Outlook for Implementing the Strategic Directions

Examining the funding situation for the three strategic directions identifies opportunities and ongoing successes, but also long-term funding uncertainties faced by the division for successfully implementing its strategic directions and fulfilling its vision.

#### ***Connecting People to the Outdoors***

Several sources of funds contribute to the activities in this strategic direction. Legacy funds have provided an important infusion of resources, supporting existing conservation education efforts and funding new initiatives; in 2010 and 2011, more than 200 programs and special events, additional interns to lead programs, enhanced winter recreation opportunities, new and expanded technology use

(touchscreens, podcasts, interactive exhibits), and additional public service staff at visitor centers and contact stations. The Legacy funds have augmented the other budget sources traditionally used for these efforts, including dedicated accounts funded by park merchandise sales and visitor fees, and the General fund, which pays the salary costs for employees involved in conservation education, public service and enforcement activities.

*Conclusion* - The division has been able to make great strides in conservation education programming, outreach efforts, and visitor service improvements with the addition of Legacy funds. However, Legacy funding alone is not adequate to replace all other funding sources or to meet the funding needs to expand these efforts system-wide.

### ***Accelerating Management of Our Natural, Cultural and Recreational Environments***

The division utilizes a broad range of fund sources to manage the natural and cultural resources and recreational facilities. Bonding and LCCMR funds are the primary sources used to acquire lands for state parks, SRAs, state trails and other units. Resource management activities are funded by General fund, capital bonding, department-level project funds, dedicated funds from park merchandise sales and visitor fees, and Legacy funds. Recreational facilities management projects are funded by capital bonding and dedicated funds (primarily for motorized use and water recreation activities related to those accounts). As with *Connecting People to the Outdoors*, Legacy funds have contributed greatly to recent progress on natural, cultural and recreational environment projects – including additional prescribed burning, new prairie and forest community restorations, trail bridge replacements, trail resurfacing, and state park building rehabilitation projects.

***Even with the Legacy funds, however, the division remains significantly short of funds to fully manage its responsibilities.***

Even with the Legacy funds, however, the division remains significantly short of funds to fully manage its responsibilities. The division faces additional costs for deferred rehabilitation and renewal of all of its facilities. Beyond maintenance of current facilities, the division also is seeking to add new facilities and amenities to enhance visitor experiences – upgrading campgrounds, creating new trail opportunities, etc. Resource management needs for conducting resource assessments on construction projects, controlling invasive species, managing and restoring native plant communities, and other tasks also outstrip the division's capacity. Each year, parcels for sale within state parks and SRAs are not purchased because of lack of funds, while authorization of new state trails outpaces funding for corridor acquisition and development.

*Conclusion* - The division lacks consistent funding sources adequate to meet all needs for managing its natural, cultural, and recreational environment responsibilities. Continued General fund

reductions have meant reduced project funds, and also resulted in shifting position costs to dedicated accounts, further reducing funds available for projects. Capital bonding has been a critical but inconsistent source of funding, with allocations shifting greatly in size as well as the type of projects that are funded from biennium to biennium. Although large capital bonding allocations have helped address facility needs, developing an investment plan contingent on this source is extremely difficult. Legacy funding has provided a significant boost for accelerating management activities, and represents a consistent source of funding. But Legacy funds cannot alone serve as an adequate, predictable source of funds for work in this strategic direction.

***Investing in Our Partnerships, Processes, and People***

The activities and expenses for this strategic direction are funded in large part from two sources. General fund monies account for expenses for salaries, staff development and training opportunities, and other personnel-related costs for many positions throughout the division. Some dedicated funding also supports work in this strategic direction, as it relates to process and people costs that work directly with activities with dedicated funding, such as winter grooming program salary costs paid from the snowmobile dedicated account or positions supported by park merchandise sales and visitor fees. Division employees develop and sustain partnerships with other agencies, outside groups and volunteers that are crucial to the division's work.

Whereas Legacy funds have been used to account for operations costs in some areas and to augment staffing for specific efforts – such as conservation education interns and resource management technicians – the bulk of the work in this strategic direction remains funded through the General fund and specific dedicated accounts. Dedicated funds are limited for taking up the slack from reduced General fund support, as not all General Fund supported positions could be clearly linked to activities for which the dedicated accounts were established. Further, the use of dedicated funds for salary costs reduces the amount available for projects such as trail improvements, native plant community restorations, etc.

*Conclusion* – This strategic direction is perhaps the most fundamental, as it contributes significantly to the success in the other two. Yet future funding for these activities and expenses is the most uncertain of the three strategic directions. Anticipated General fund reductions in the coming years will continue to erode the division's ability to sustain and build strong partnerships, hone its processes to changing circumstances, and maintain a skilled and motivated workforce.

### Responding to the Division's Funding Outlook

***The division will need to consider other actions to adjust to future budget realities while continuing to support current and create new opportunities for visitors and manage its resource responsibilities.***

Moving forward, the division will need to react to the changing levels and mix of its funding sources. The introduction of Legacy funds, the decline in General fund support, fluctuating capital bonding allocations, and changing values in revenue-funded dedicated accounts all contribute to the need for the division to evaluate how it funds activities and needs across the system. Some activities or expenses may need to be shifted to other sources of funding to insure stable sources for high priority functions while maintaining fund integrity. Other functions may need to be curtailed or no longer be conducted.

In addition to shifting funding sources, the division will need to consider other actions to adjust to future budget realities while continuing to support current and create new opportunities for visitors and manage its resource responsibilities. The division will examine its fee structure as a method for increasing revenue, while taking into account the impact of fees on affordability and efforts to attract new users. The division will need to seek alternative funding sources in the near-term to compensate for the loss of general fund support.

Some actions the division has already taken may need to be expanded, such as consolidating management of state parks, state trails and other units in the system and reducing the overall number of worksites the division maintains. Other actions the division has piloted include consolidating administrative functions to free staff for more public contact activities, more visitor self-service approaches (camping self-registration, web and mobile device-based information services), and additional work with partners and volunteers to deliver new and enhance existing recreation and conservation education opportunities.

Beyond adjustments to how it operates and maintains its units across the entire system, the division may need to consider the prioritizing among the units it supports, including the decommissioning of some units from the system; either passing them on to be managed by another agency or local entity, or closing them entirely. Decommissions are addressed in more detail in the Parks and Trails Legacy Plan. The division already uses visitation, revenue collection, facilities (miles of trail, number of buildings) and other metrics to help set priorities for operations and maintenance funding among current units.

***General fund reductions in the short term have the potential to cause significant disruptions in providing services to the public.***

### **What Does this Mean for the Next Biennium?**

The Division of Parks and Trails is likely to face a cut in General fund support in the next biennium, and continued erosion in General fund support over the long term. General fund reductions in the short term have the potential to cause significant disruptions in providing services to the public, especially for operations at state parks, forest recreation areas, and state trails. Operation of these facilities rely greatly on General funds to provide "basic services" at these units – visitor contact and customer service, day-to-day upkeep and general maintenance, security, administrative services, etc. Short term impacts of General fund reductions are likely to include less maintenance and

***General fund-supported operational activities are being reduced, even while new efforts and programs supported with Legacy funds are launched.***

upkeep of facilities; shorter camping seasons at some units; reduced staff presence along trails, in parks and forest recreation areas; reduced visitor center and contact station hours; less interpretive programming; and fewer resource management activities.

Legacy funds have helped enhance some division activities, especially resource management, interpretive programming, and outreach. However, Legacy funds are not intended to supplant existing funding. Therefore General fund-supported operational activities are being reduced, even while new efforts and programs supported with Legacy funds are launched.

Over the long term, shifting high priority task and activity expenses to other more stable funding sources or possibly new funding would help alleviate some of these impacts. But those adjustments made over time will result in other work tasks and activities no longer being done unless other funding is found. The division will need to seek additional new funding to replace lost General fund support in order to continue to provide a high-quality recreation system. Without other funding, deep General fund reductions in the near term or the sustained erosion of General funds over time will result in significant impacts to the state's recreational system, including the end of some opportunities and experiences long enjoyed by visitors and the probability of mothballing some units entirely.

## Implementation – Carrying the Strategic Directions Forward

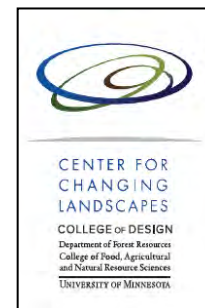
### Direction Setting

Minnesota Statutes Chapter 86a establishes the overall mandates for the units of the state outdoor recreation system. The department's *A Strategic Conservation Agenda 2009-2013, Adapting to Change: State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan 2008-2012*, and this document set the overarching direction for the DNR Division of Parks and Trails over the next ten years.

*Directions for the Future* represents the next ten years of activity to address the long-range trends and strategic directions identified during the planning process. As it implements the plan, the division will continue to evaluate and adjust its priorities and activities to changing organizational, social, and political environments.

### Incorporating the 25-Year Framework

As part of the planning requirements included with the first biennium of Legacy funding, the University of Minnesota Center for Changing Landscapes was directed to develop a 25-year Framework for an integrated statewide parks and trails system that provides information on the natural resource-based recreation opportunities available throughout the state. Several elements of the Framework will be helpful as the division moves forward with implementing *Directions for the Future*.



***Several elements of the Framework will be helpful as the division moves forward with implementing Directions for the Future.***

### ***Inventory***

To inform the Framework, an inventory of recreation experience opportunities was conducted in five regions across the state and is presented in a series of regional profiles. Please see: <http://ccl.design.umn.edu/mnpat.html>. The regional profiles offer a picture of existing recreation demand by examining county, regional and state population sociodemographic characteristics, and recreation experience opportunity data available from past research and monitoring efforts. Maps illustrating the recreational opportunities in each of Minnesota's 87 counties are also available.

### ***Regional Profiles***

The profiles serve as the foundation for an analysis of current demand and existing recreation supply in light of relative geographic distribution of resources and facilities; future recreation demand projections (e.g., population sociodemographic and recreation participation); and proposed or planned enhancements to the parks and trails system.

### ***Recreational Location Quotients***

Recreational Location Quotients (RLQs) are standardized scores of relative differences in recreational supply and potential demand

across a geographic area. Supply is generally measured in either acres (e.g. parks or recreation areas) or mileage (e.g. trails). Potential demand is generally measured by population or land area.

These elements of the framework will be incorporated into the divisions planning, budgeting, acquisition and development projects, and operations in future biennia to help inform the division's progress toward achieving its vision.

**Directions for the Future will be implemented through the division's biennial budget requests, capital bonding and other legislative requests, division initiatives, and its program and unit-level workplans.**

### Establishing Actions and Measurable Outcomes: Budgets, Initiatives and Workplans

*Directions for the Future* will be implemented through other actions by the division; through its biennial budget requests, capital bonding and other legislative requests, division initiatives, and its program and unit-level workplans. The successful implementation of this document will be illustrated by its links to – and the progress made in – legislative cycles, rehabilitation and new construction projects, resource management and enhancements, participation in programs and special events, marketing and public affairs efforts, and the daily work of division staff providing high-quality service to park and trail visitors.

#### **Budget Requests**

Over the next 10 years, the division will shape its biennial budget requests to reflect the strategic directions identified in the plan. Through the budgeting process, funding and staff resources will be allocated to best position the division to work on those priorities.

#### **Division Initiatives**

As with the biennial budgets, future bonding and grant requests will be used to target acquisition, development, and management activities on those projects that align with the strategic directions and highest priorities for the division. Over the ten-year life of the plan, the types of projects and proposals will shift as the division evaluates its progress and the effectiveness of its efforts.

#### **Workplans**

The division uses workplans at several levels. Workplans are developed for specific programs statewide, at the region and district levels, and at the unit level. The division will create division-wide biennial workplans to coordinate and track its progress for implementing *Directions for the Future*. The biennial workplan will link to the workplanning at the program, region, district and unit level to help make connections to the division priorities at all levels of the organization. The biennial workplan will address selected goals and strategies with identified actions, measurable outcomes, links to program, region and district activities, and timeframes for completion. Regular check-in points will be established for continuous measurement of progress and success.



# Appendix A: Figure 1 Division of Parks and Trails Major Facilities

## State Parks, State Recreation Areas, State Trails, State Water Trails and State Waysides

This figure illustrates several of the major facility systems managed by the Division of Parks and Trails.

State Parks	67 units
State Recreation Areas	8 units
State Trails	24 units
State Water Trails	32 units
State Waysides	8 units

The Division of Parks and Trails manages other facilities not shown on this figure, including: forest campgrounds and day-use areas, water access sites, grant-in-aid snowmobile trails, grant-in-aid OHV trails, and wild and scenic river districts. Because of the large number and complexity of many of these other systems, those facilities are illustrated on the individual District Facility Maps (Figures 3 – 12).



Appendix A: Figure 2  
Division of Parks and Trails

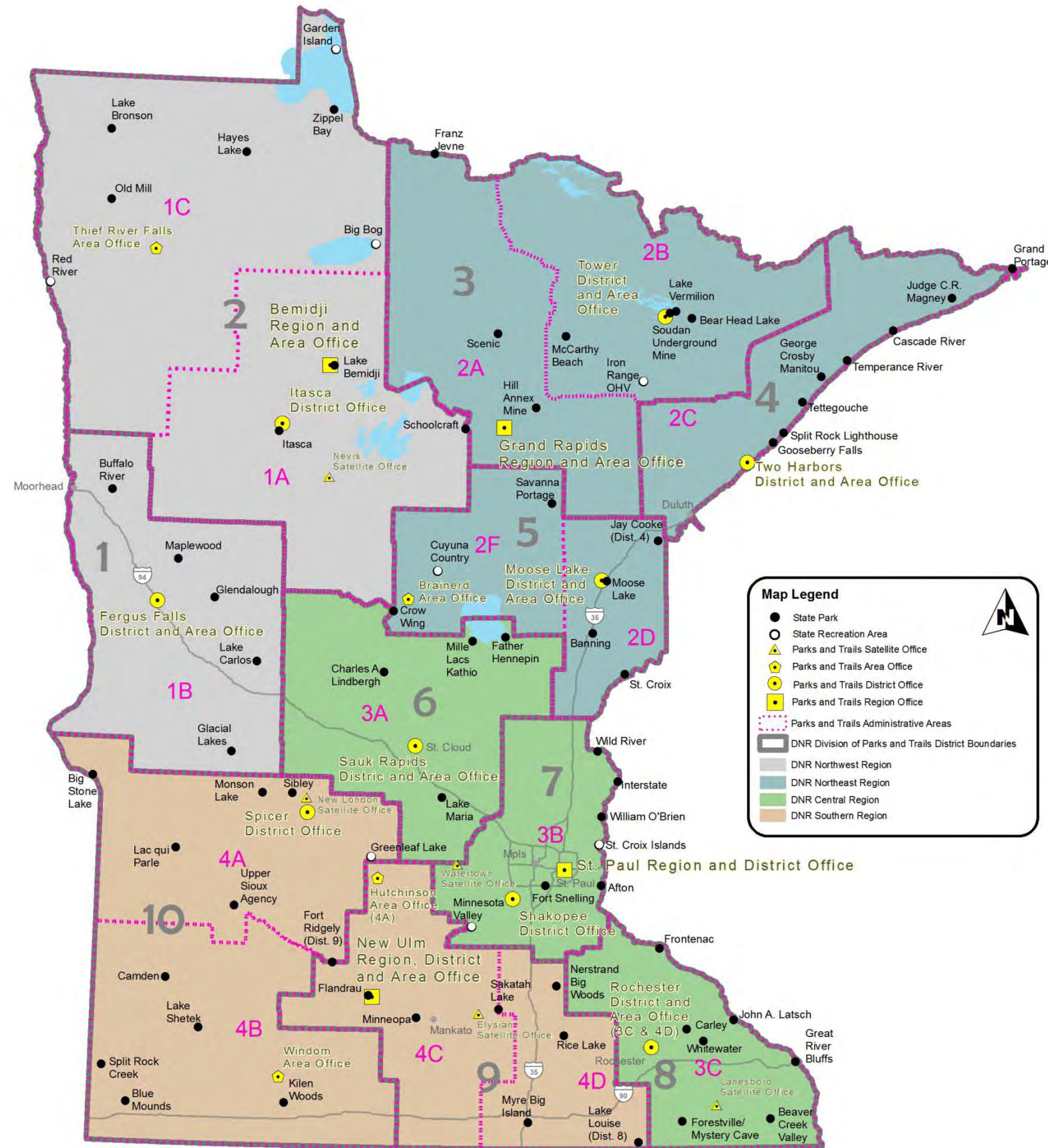
# Staffed Locations & Administrative Boundaries

The Department of Natural Resources and its associated divisions organize their operations into four geographic regions, with a regional headquarters in each:

Region	Headquarters Location
Northwest Region	Bemidji
Northeast Region	Grand Rapids
Central Region	St. Paul
Southern Region	New Ulm

The Division of Parks and Trails organizes its regions into ten districts. Within several districts, operational responsibilities are further organized into administrative areas. The recreational facilities within each district and area are illustrated on the District Facility Maps (Figures 3 – 12).

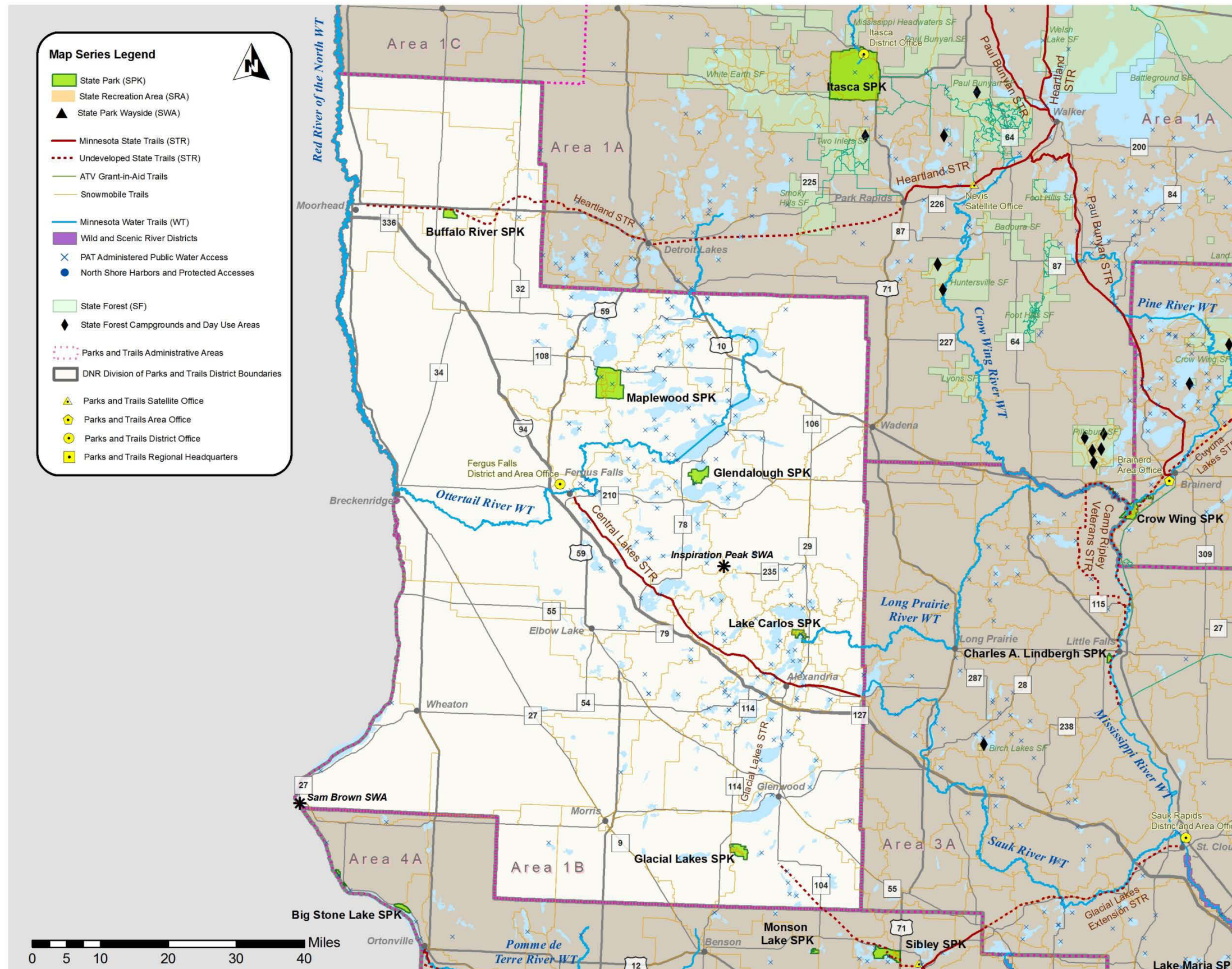
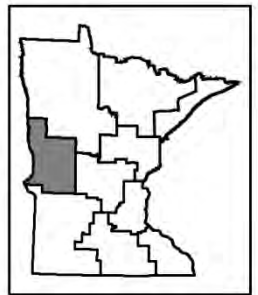
In addition to the division headquarters in St. Paul and the four regional headquarters, division staff are located at area offices, satellite offices, and at most state parks and state recreation areas throughout the state. Several state parks and state recreation areas have no staff permanently assigned to that location, instead these units are managed from other nearby units.



Appendix A: Figure 3

# District 1 Facility Map

DNR Northwest Region  
Parks & Trails Area 1B



## Division Facilities

State Parks (SPK): 5

- Buffalo River SPK
- Glacial lakes SPK
- Glendalough SPK
- Lake Carlos SPK
- Maplewood SPK

State Waysides (SWA): 2

- Sam Brown SWA
- Inspiration Peak SWA

State Trails (STR): 55 miles

- Central Lakes STR

Undeveloped State Trails: 78 miles

Water Trails (WT): 304 miles

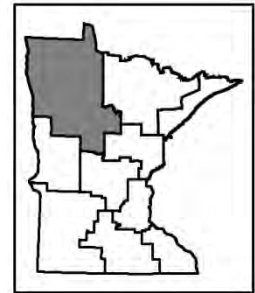
- Long Prairie River WT
- Ottertail River WT
- Red River of the North WT

Water Access Sites: 182

Snowmobile Trails: 1,561 miles

Appendix A: Figure 4

# District 2 Facility Map



DNR Northwest Region  
Parks & Trails Areas 1C, 1A, 1D

## Division Facilities

### State Parks (SPK): 7

- |                  |                  |
|------------------|------------------|
| Franz Jevne SPK* | Lake Bronson SPK |
| Hayes Lake SPK   | Old Mill SPK     |
| Itasca SPK       | Zippel Bay SPK   |
| Lake Bemidji SPK |                  |

### State Recreation Areas (SRA): 3

- |                   |               |
|-------------------|---------------|
| Big Bog SRA       | Red River SRA |
| Garden Island SRA |               |

### State Forest Campgrounds & Day-use Areas: 16

- |  |
|--|
| Beltrami Island State Forest: 3        |
| Huntersville State Forest: 3           |
| Land O' Lakes State Forest: 1          |
| Mississippi Headwaters State Forest: 1 |
| Paul Bunyan State Forest: 2            |
| Pillsbury State Forest: 5              |
| Two Inlets State Forest: 1             |

### State Trails (STR): 125 miles

- |                 |
|-----------------|
| Heartland STR   |
| Paul Bunyan STR |

### Undeveloped State Trails: 58 miles

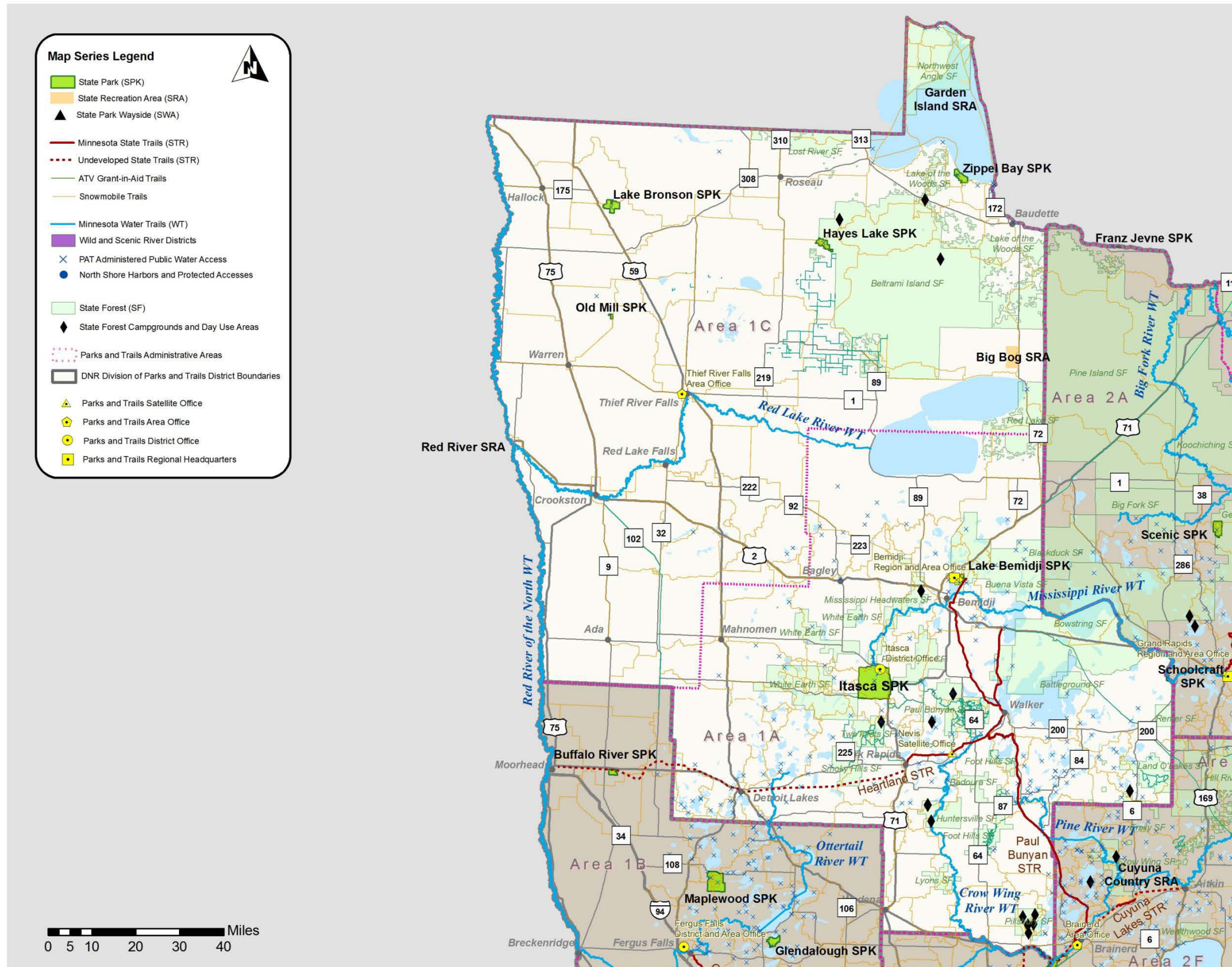
### Water Trails (WT): 728 miles

- |                           |
|---------------------------|
| Crow Wing River WT        |
| Mississippi River Wt      |
| Ottertail River WT        |
| Pine River WT             |
| Red Lake River WT         |
| Red River of the North WT |

### Water Access Sites: 223

### Snowmobile Trails: 4,816 miles

\* Franz Jevne SPK is located in District 3 but is managed from Hayes Lake SPK in District 2.

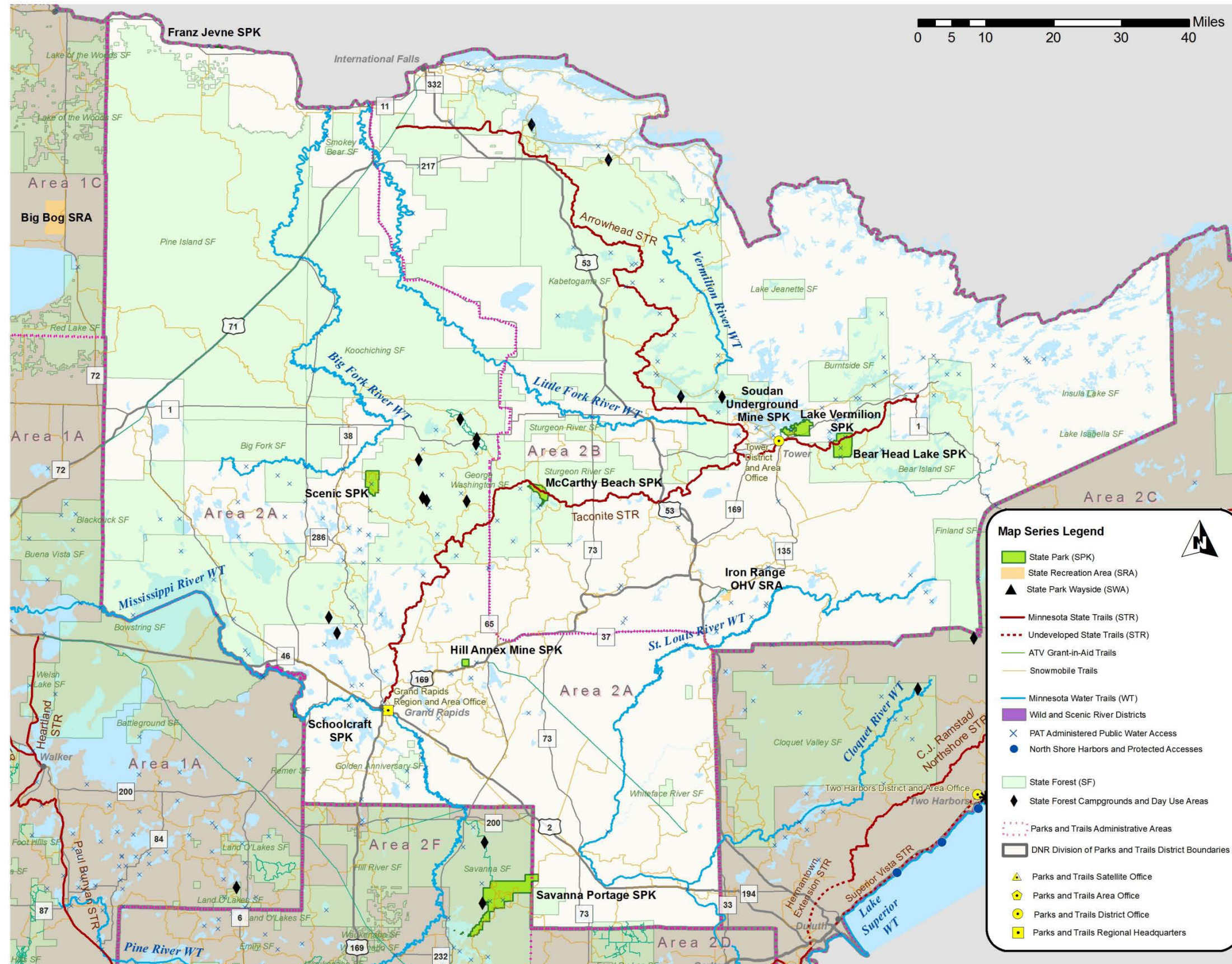


Appendix A: Figure 5

# District 3

## Facility Map

DNR Northeast Region  
Parks & Trails Areas: 2A, 2B



**Map Series Legend**

- State Park (SPK)
- State Recreation Area (SRA)
- State Park Wayside (SWA)
- Minnesota State Trails (STR)
- Undeveloped State Trails (STR)
- ATV Grant-in-Aid Trails
- Snowmobile Trails
- Minnesota Water Trails (WT)
- Wild and Scenic River Districts
- PAT Administered Public Water Access
- North Shore Harbors and Protected Accesses
- State Forest (SF)
- State Forest Campgrounds and Day Use Areas
- Parks and Trails Administrative Areas
- DNR Division of Parks and Trails District Boundaries
- Parks and Trails Satellite Office
- Parks and Trails Area Office
- Parks and Trails District Office
- Parks and Trails Regional Headquarters

### Division Facilities

State Parks (SPK): 7

- Bear Head Lake SPK
- Hill Annex Mine SPK
- Lake Vermilion SPK
- McCarthy Beach SPK
- Scenic SPK
- Schoolcraft SPK\*
- Soudan Underground Mine SPK

State Recreation Areas (SRA): 1

- Iron Range OHV SRA

State Forest Campgrounds & Day-use Areas: 13

- Bowstring State Forest: 1
- George Washington State Forest: 7
- Kabetogama State Forest: 4
- Outside State Forest: 1

State Trails (STR): 271 miles

- Arrowhead STR
- Taconite STR

Water Trails (WT): 630 miles

- Big Fork River WT
- Cloquet River WT
- Little Fork River WT
- Mississippi River WT
- St. Louis River WT
- Vermilion River WT

Water Access Sites: 183

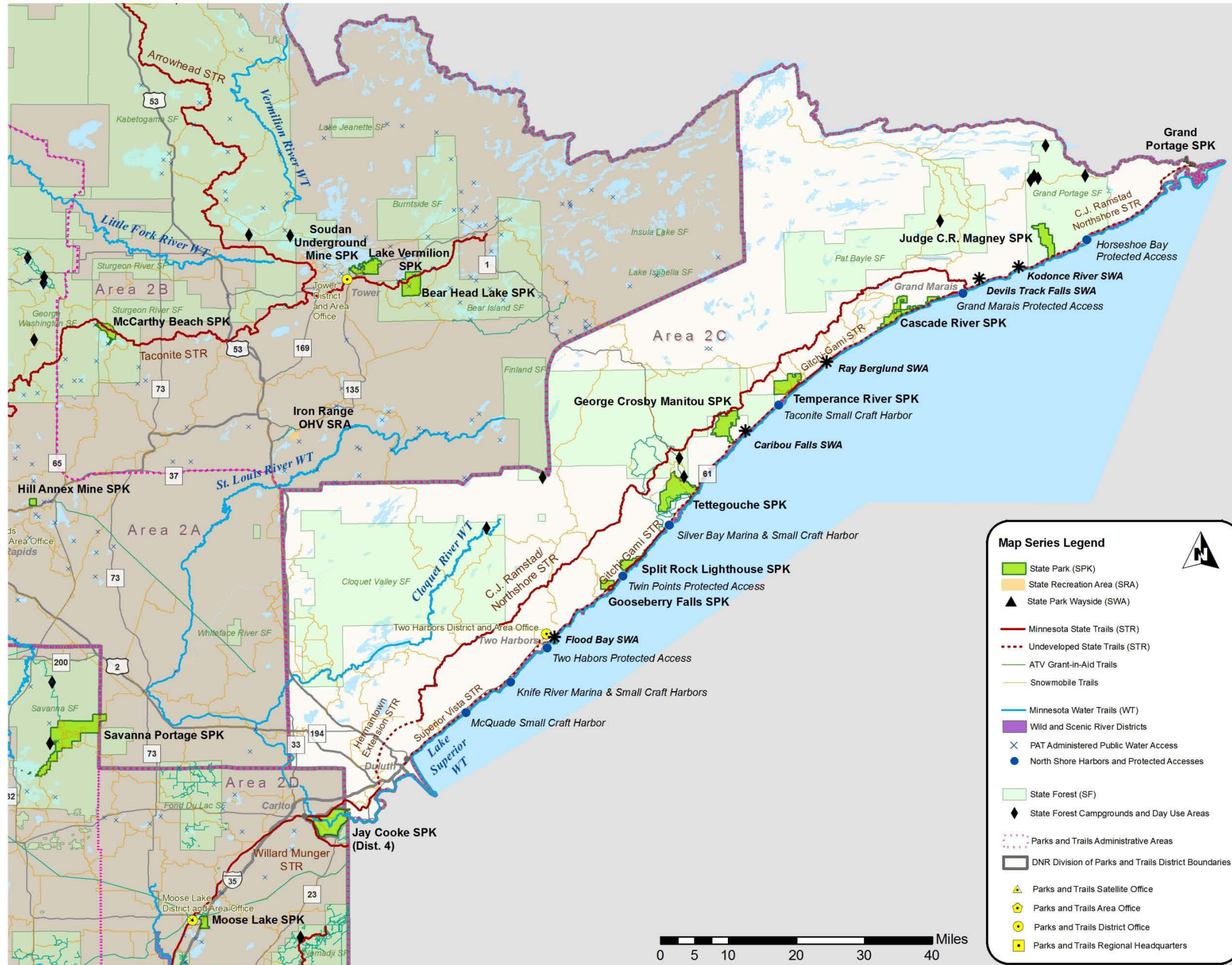
Snowmobile Trails: 2,116 miles

\* Schoolcraft SPK is located in District 2 but managed by Hill Annex SPK in District 3.

Appendix A: Figure 6

# District 4 Facility Map

DNR Northeast Region  
Parks & Trails Area 2C



**Map Series Legend**

- State Park (SPK)
- State Recreation Area (SRA)
- State Park Wayside (SWA)
- Minnesota State Trails (STR)
- Undeveloped State Trails (STR)
- ATV Grant-in-Aid Trails
- Snowmobile Trails
- Minnesota Water Trails (WT)
- Wild and Scenic River Districts
- PAT Administered Public Water Access
- North Shore Harbors and Protected Accesses
- State Forest (SF)
- State Forest Campgrounds and Day Use Areas
- Parks and Trails Administrative Areas
- DNR Division of Parks and Trails District Boundaries
- Parks and Trails Satellite Office
- Parks and Trails Area Office
- Parks and Trails District Office
- Parks and Trails Regional Headquarters

## Division Facilities

### State Parks (SPK): 9

- Cascade River SPK
- George Crosby Manitou SPK
- Gooseberry Falls SPK
- Grand Portage SPK
- Jay Cooke SPK
- Judge C.R. Magney SPK
- Split Rock Lighthouse SPK
- Temperance River SPK
- Tettegouche SPK

### State Waysides (SWA): 5

- Caribou Falls SWA
- Devils Track Falls SWA
- Flood Bay SWA
- Kodonce River SWA
- Ray Berglund SWA

### State Forest Campgrounds & Day-use Areas: 13

- Cloquet Valley State Forest: 1
- Finland State Forest: 3
- Grand Portage State Forest: 5
- Pat Bayle State Forest: 1

### State Trails (STR): 172 miles

- C.J. Ramstad /North Shore STR
- Gitchi-Gami STR
- Willard Munger STR- Hinckley to Duluth

### Undeveloped State Trails: 166 miles

- Cloquet River WT
- Lake Superior WT

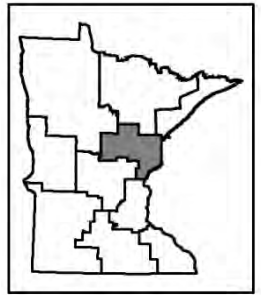
### Water Trails (WT): 270 miles

### Water Access Sites: 51

### Snowmobile Trails: 834 miles

Appendix A: Figure 7

# District 5 Facility Map



DNR Northeast Region  
Parks & Trails Areas: 1D, 2A,  
2D

## Divisions Facilities

State Parks (SPK): 5

- Banning SPK
- Crow Wing SPK
- Moose Lake SPK
- St. Croix State Park
- Savanna Portage SPK

State Recreation Areas (SRA): 1

- Cuyuna Country SRA

State Forest Campgrounds & Day-use Areas: 9

- Chengwatana State Forest: 1
- Crow Wing State Forest: 2
- General C.C. Andrews State Forest: 1
- Nemadji State Forest: 1
- Savanna State Forest: 2
- St. Croix State Forest: 2

State Trails (STR): 189 miles

- Cuyuna Lakes STR
- Willard Munger STR- Hinckley to Duluth
- Matthew Lourey STR
- Paul Bunyan STR

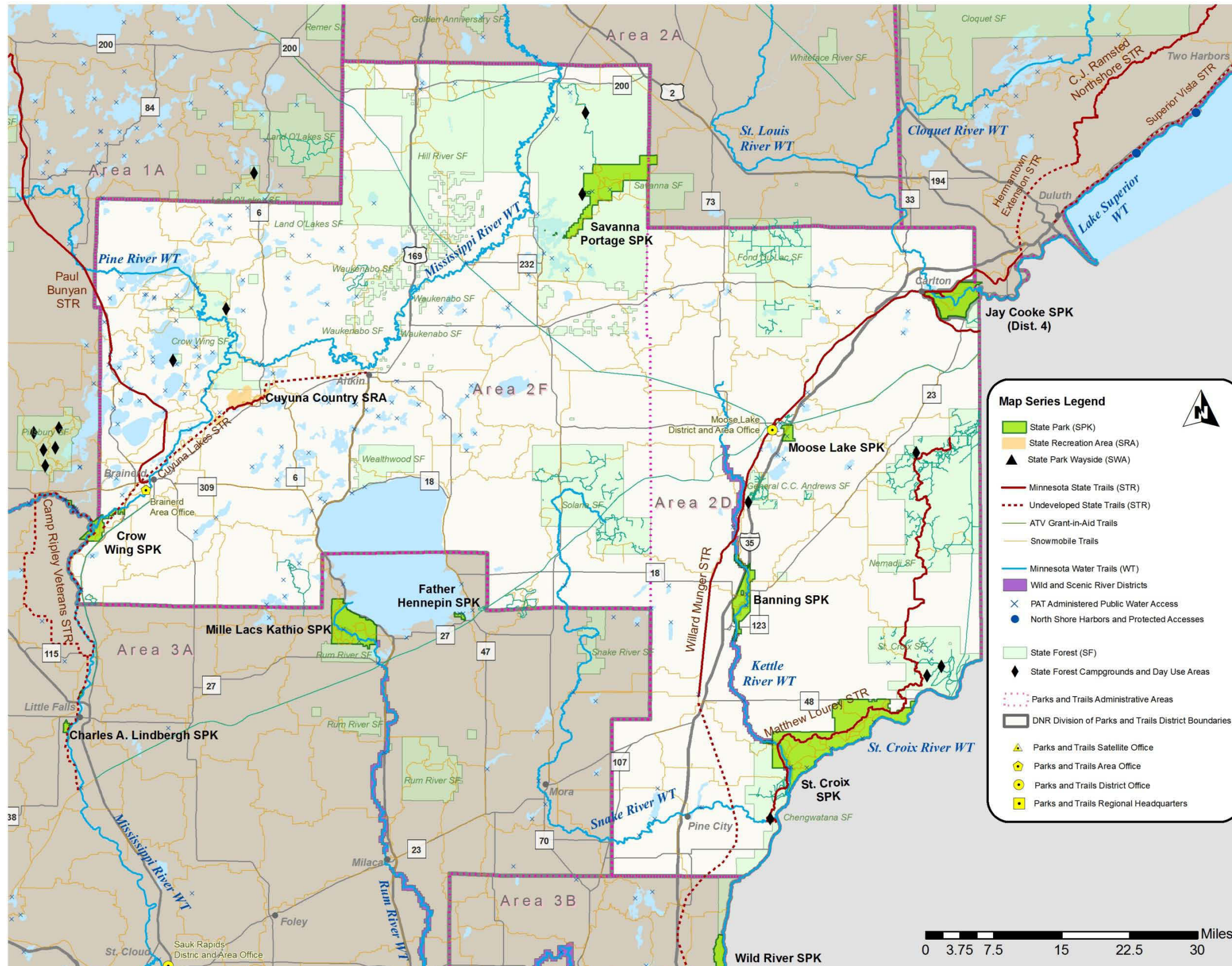
Undeveloped State Trails: 53 miles

Water Trails (WT): 352 miles

- Kettle River WT
- Mississippi River WT
- Pine River WT
- Snake River WT
- St. Louis River WT

Water Access Sites: 149

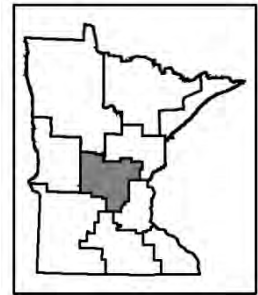
Snowmobile Trails: 2,067 miles



Appendix A: Figure 8

# District 6 Facility Map

DNR Central Region  
Parks & Trails Area 3A



## Division Facilities

State Parks (SPK): 4

- Charles A. Lindbergh SPK
- Father Hennepin SPK
- Lake Maria SPK
- Mille Lacs Kathio SPK

State Forest Campgrounds & Day-use Areas: 3

- Birch Lake State Forest: 1
- Sand Dunes State Forest: 2

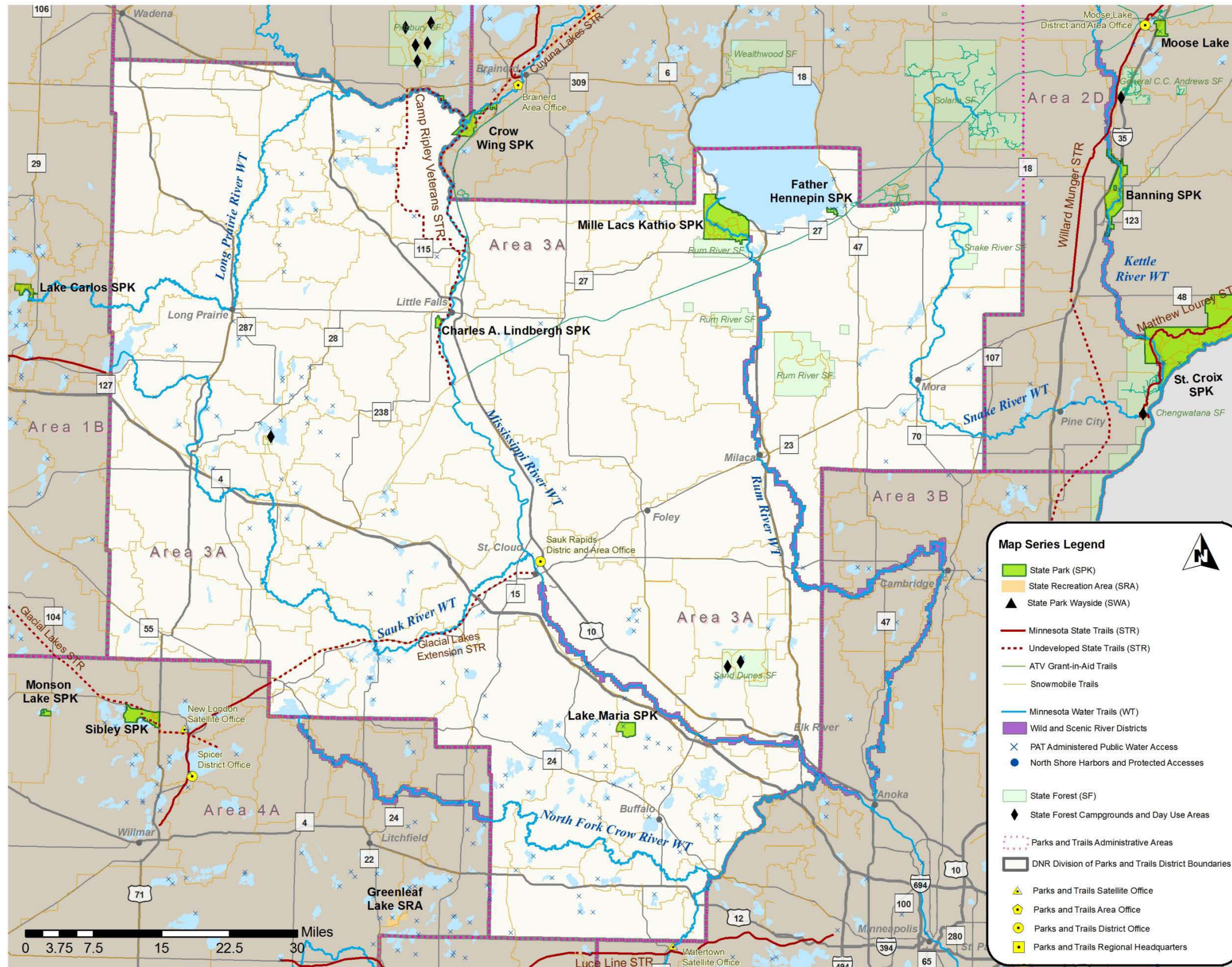
Undeveloped State Trails: 20 miles

Water Trails (WT): 527 miles

- Long Prairie River WT
- Mississippi River WT
- North Fork of the Crow River WT
- Rum River WT
- Snake River WT
- Sauk River WT

Water Access Sites: 159

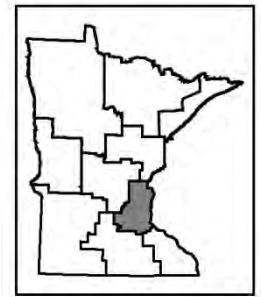
Snowmobile Trails: 2,224 miles





Appendix A: Figure 9

# District 7 Facility Map



DNR Central Region  
Parks & Trails Area 3B

## Division Facilities

State Parks (SPK): 5

- Afton SPK
- Fort Snelling SPK
- Interstate SPK
- Wild River SPK
- William O'Brien SPK

State Recreation Areas (SRA): 1

- Minnesota Valley SRA

State Trails (STR): 109 miles

- Willard Munger STR- Gateway Segment
- Luce Line STR
- Minnesota Valley STR

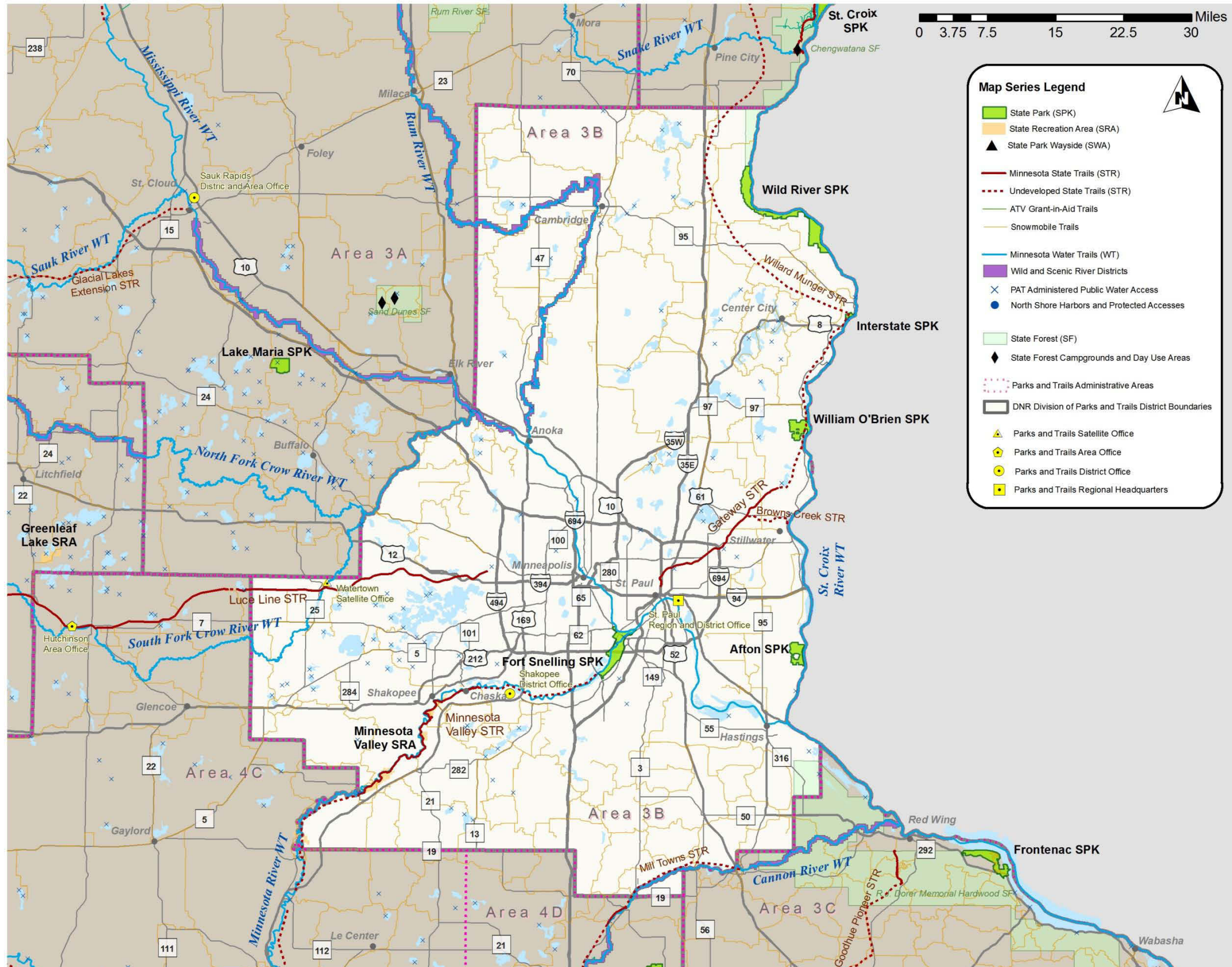
Undeveloped State Trails: 98 miles

Water Trails (WT): 340 miles

- Cannon River WT
- Minnesota River WT
- Mississippi River WT
- North of the Fork Crow River WT
- Rum River WT
- St. Croix River WT

Water Access Sites: 106

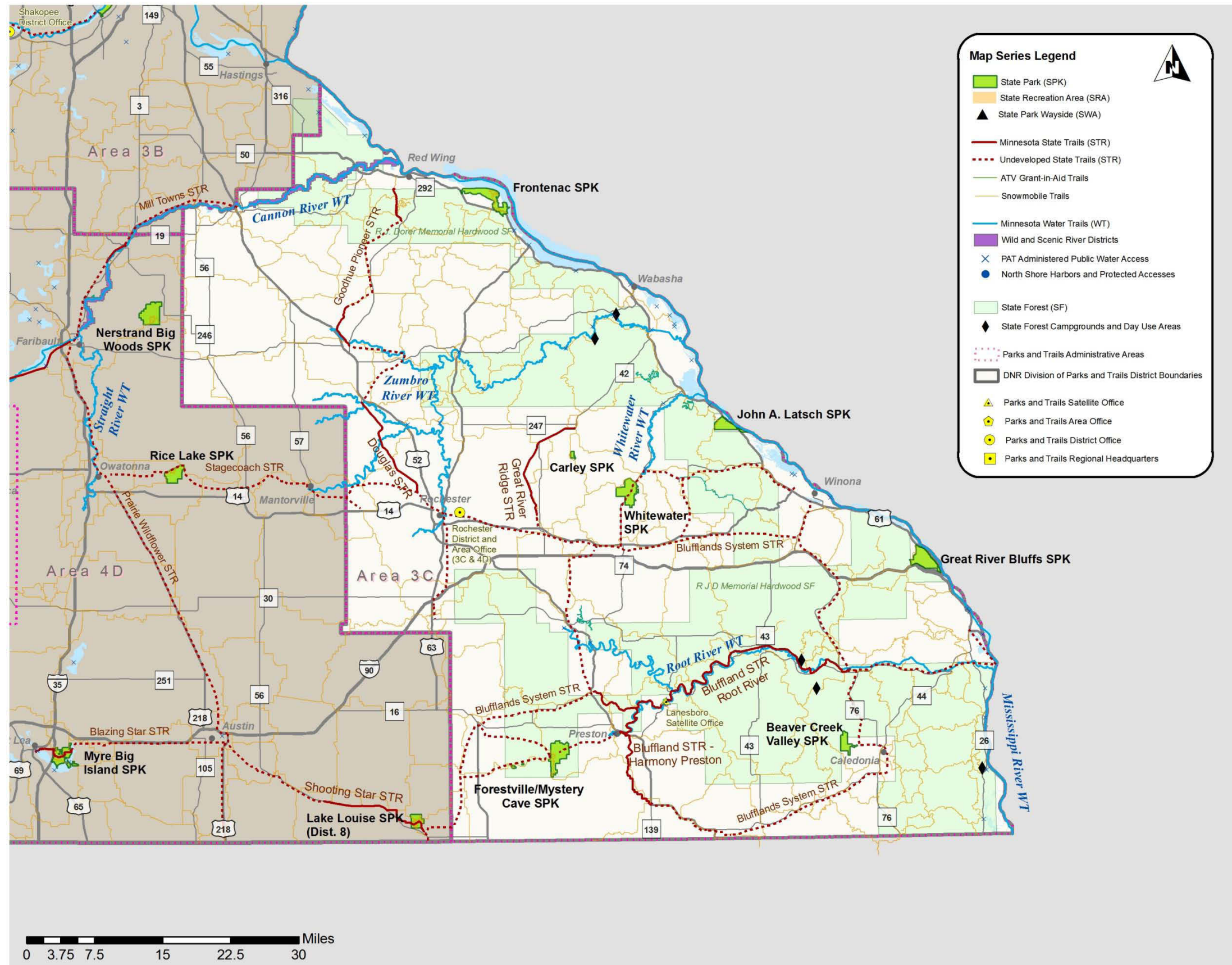
Snowmobile Trails: 1,420 miles



Appendix A: Figure 10

# District 8 Facility Map

DNR Central Region  
Parks & Trails Area 3C



## Division Facilities

### State Parks (SPK): 8

- Beaver Creek Valley SPK
- Carley SPK
- Forestville/Mystery Cave SPK
- Frontenac SPK
- Great River Bluffs SPK
- Lake Louise SPK\*
- John A. Latsch SPK
- Whitewater SPK

### State Forest Campgrounds & Day-use Areas: 5

- R.J. Dorer Memorial Hardwood SF: 5

### State Trails (STR): 111 miles

- Bluffland STR- Harmony Preston
- Bluffland STR- Root River
- Douglas STR
- Goodhue-Pioneer STR
- Great River Ridge STR

### Undeveloped State Trails: 303 miles

### Water Trails (WT): 439 miles

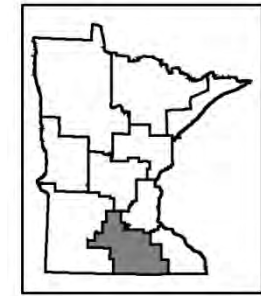
- Cannon River WT
- Mississippi River WT
- Root River WT
- Whitewater River WT
- Zumbro River WT

### Water Access Sites: 42

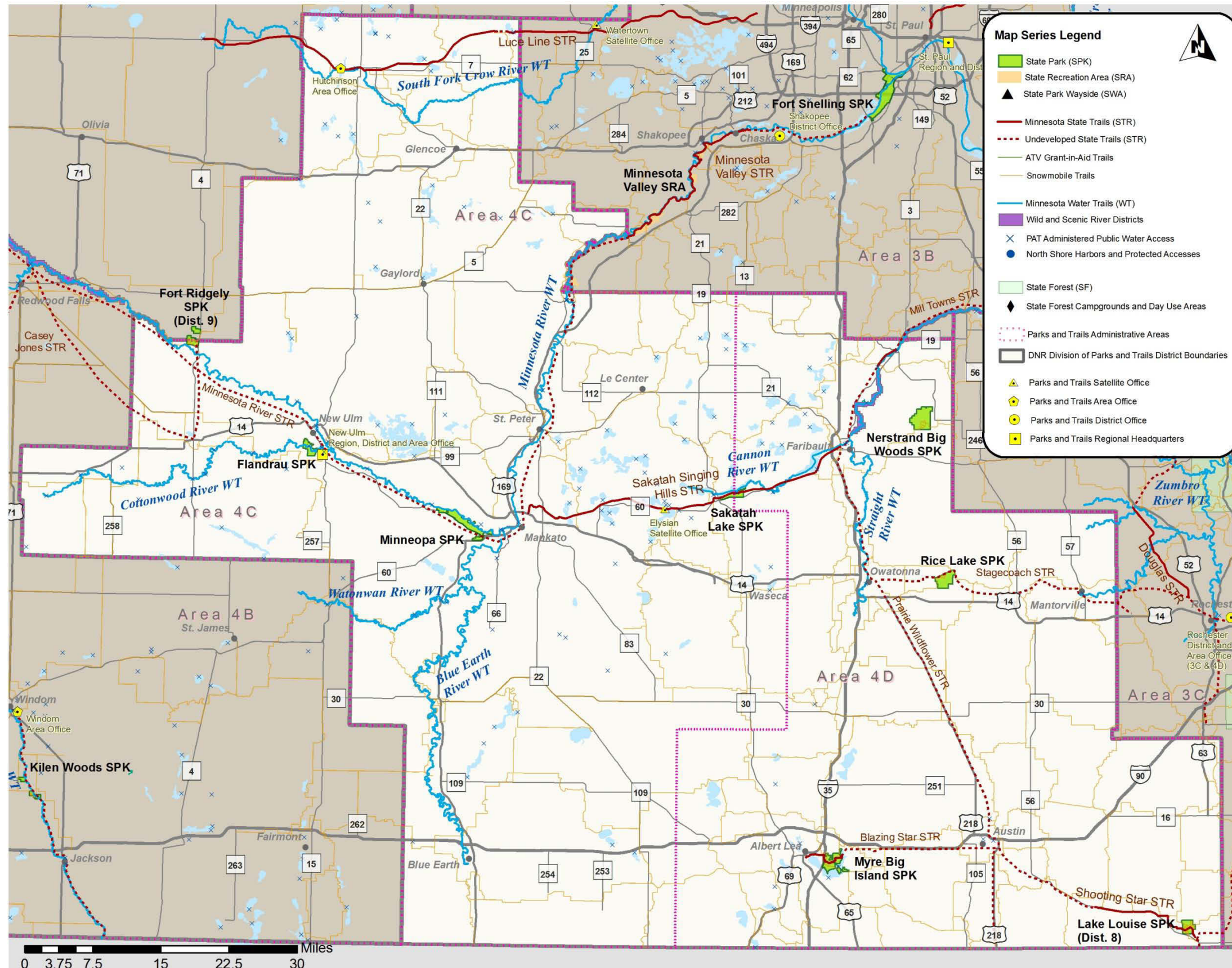
### Snowmobile Trails: 1,764 miles

\* Lake Louise SPK is located in District 9 but managed by Forestville/Mystery Cave SPK in District 8.

# District 9 Facility Map



DNR Southern Region  
Parks & Trails Areas: 4C, 4D



### Division Facilities

#### State Parks (SPK): 7

- Flandrau SPK
- Fort Ridgely SPK\*
- Minneopa SPK
- Myre Big Island SPK
- Nerstrand Big Woods SPK
- Sakatah Lake SPK
- Rice Lake SPK

#### State Trails (STR): 97 miles

- Blazing Star STR
- Luce Line STR
- Sakatah Singing Hills STR
- Shooting Star STR

#### Undeveloped State Trails: 244 miles

#### Water Trails (WT): 348 miles

- Blue Earth River WT
- Cannon River WT
- Cottonwood River WT
- Minnesota River WT
- Straight River WT
- Watonwan River WT

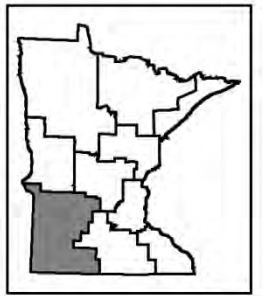
#### Water Access Sites: 130

#### Snowmobile Trails: 2,080 miles

\* Fort Ridgely SPK is located partially in District 10 but for management purposes is considered within District 9.

Appendix A: Figure 12

# District 10 Facility Map



DNR Southern Region  
Parks & Trails Areas: 4A, 4B

### Division Facilities

#### State Parks (SPK): 10

- Big Stone Lake SPK
- Blue Mounds SPK
- Camden SPK
- Kilen Woods SPK
- Lac qui Parle SPK
- Lake Shetek SPK
- Monson Lake SPK
- Sibley SPK
- Split Rock Creek SPK
- Upper Sioux Agency SPK

#### State Recreation Areas (SRA): 1

- Greenleaf Lake SRA

#### State Park Wayside (SWA): 1

- Joseph R. Brown SWA

#### State Trails (STR): 54 miles

- Casey Jones STR
- Glacial Lakes STR
- Luce Line STR

#### Undeveloped State Trails: 306 miles

- Chippewa River WT
- Des Moines River WT
- North & South Fork of the Crow River WT
- Minnesota River WT
- Pomme de Terre River WT
- Redwood River WT

#### Water Access Sites: 187

#### Snowmobile Trails: 2,916 miles

**Map Series Legend**

- State Park (SPK)
- State Recreation Area (SRA)
- State Park Wayside (SWA)
- Minnesota State Trails (STR)
- Undeveloped State Trails (STR)
- ATV Grant-in-Aid Trails
- Snowmobile Trails
- Minnesota Water Trails (WT)
- Wild and Scenic River Districts
- PAT Administered Public Water Access
- North Shore Harbors and Protected Accesses
- State Forest (SF)
- State Forest Campgrounds and Day Use Areas
- Parks and Trails Administrative Areas
- DNR Division of Parks and Trails District Boundaries
- Parks and Trails Satellite Office
- Parks and Trails Area Office
- Parks and Trails District Office
- Parks and Trails Regional Headquarters





# Minnesota Department of Natural Resources Division of Parks and Trails

## Budget Analysis - Addendum

November 16, 2009

### **Section 1. About this Report**

This addendum is a follow-up to a previous submittal dated July 29, 2009, which examine the adequacy of funding sources and appropriations that the DNR receives to acquire, develop, operate and maintain Minnesota's state park and trails systems. It addresses questions asked by the State Legislature [ML 2009, Chap. 172, Art. 3, Sec. 6, Subd. 3] regarding the adequacy of funding for State Parks, State Trails, State Recreation Areas (SRA's), state forest trails and recreation areas. **This addendum does not address funding for local, regional, county or municipal recreation facilities.**

#### **All Figures are in Current Dollars**

For simplicity, clarity and consistency, all current and future projections and cost estimates are reported in current dollars not adjusted for inflation.

#### **Parks & Trails Legacy Fund Revenue Estimates**

Revenue estimates for the Parks and Trails Fund obtained from Minnesota Management & Budget are shown below. The estimates anticipate growth in the fund, which may allow for increased future allocations for fund-eligible activities and programs.

**Table 1. Parks & Trails Legacy Fund – Estimated Revenues**

2010	\$33,357,000
2020	\$47,330,000
2035	\$69,527,000
10 Years (cumulative)	\$398,293,000
25 Years (cumulative)	\$1,262,935,000

#### **Parks & Trails System - Defined**

**“Existing parks”** are defined as that portion of those authorized units of Minnesota's Outdoor Recreation System (MS 85.012 & 85.013) that have been largely **acquired and developed as of Fall 2009**. This includes 66 State Parks, 7 State Recreation Areas, 8 State Waysides, and 54 State Forest campgrounds and day use areas. Acquisition and development within many of these units is not yet 100% complete.

**“Existing trails”** refers to the **acquired and developed portion** (i.e., 21 State Trails and 1,266 miles) of the authorized State Trail System (MS 85.015) consisting of 26 trails and 2,597 trail miles. Also included are state forest trails which include 390 miles of hiking trail, 284 miles of horseback riding trails, 250 miles of mountain biking trails, 170 miles of cross-country ski trails.

Motorized trails and dedicated funding sources are discussed only briefly on Page 5 of the report. Snowmobile and off-highway vehicle trails, located in state forests and managed by the division, were not explicitly addressed in this report. Nor was the Iron Range Off-Highway Vehicle State Recreation

Area (MS 85.013, Subd. 12a), which is also funded almost exclusively by dedicated off-highway vehicle recreation accounts.

### **Operations & Maintenance - Defined**

**'Operations'** includes visitor and interpretive services, enforcement, customer service, reservations, communications, marketing, and day-to-day facility operations and administration.

**'Maintenance'** includes time spent on resource management, facility maintenance, rehabilitation and renewal, and the protection of the natural and cultural resources of these units.

**'Deferred Maintenance'** includes larger, more complex maintenance tasks that generally fall between routine daily maintenance and new capital development. As the term implies, deferred maintenance results from delayed or backlogged maintenance activity. Examples include undertaking a sizable plumbing or electrical upgrade, resurfacing or widening an existing bituminous trail, remodeling or replacing a dilapidated building, or replacing a substantial trail bridge.

# Minnesota Department of Natural Resources

## Division of Parks and Trails

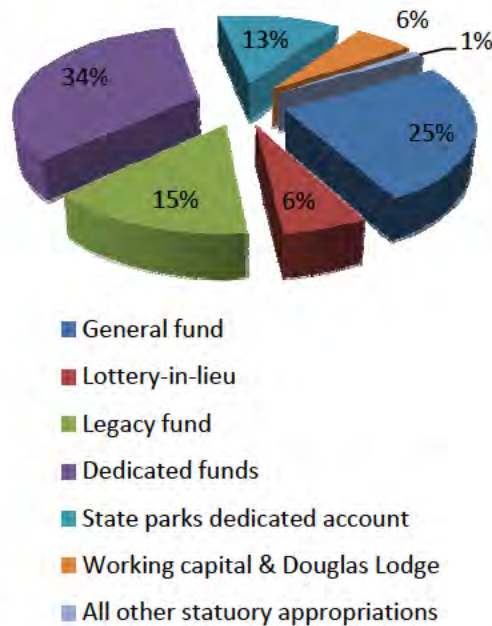
### Section 2. FY 2010 Budget Overview

***Table 2. FY 2010 - Total Budget Appropriations***

General fund	\$21,402,000
Lottery-in-lieu	\$5,131,000
Legacy fund*	\$12,641,000
Dedicated funds ( <i>Water Rec &amp; Trails</i> )	\$28,280,000
State parks dedicated account	\$10,620,000
Working capital & Douglas Lodge	\$5,200,000
<u>All other statutory appropriations</u>	<u>\$875,000</u>
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$84,149,000</b>

\* Parks & Trails Legacy Funds are split between three DNR initiatives: 1) Connecting People to the Outdoors, 2) Accelerated Natural Resource Management, and 3) Accelerated Facility Maintenance, Rehabilitation and Renewal.

**Fig. 1. FY 2010 All Funding Sources  
Division of Parks & Trails  
(\$84,149,000)**



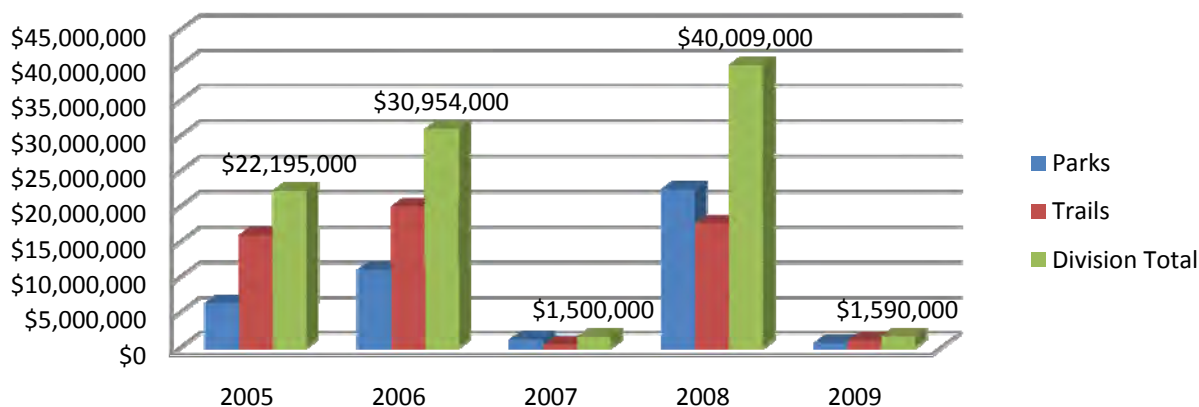
**Capital Budget Support.** In addition to regular appropriations, the Division of Parks & Trails receives substantial capital support from the Legislature. Figure 2 and Table 3 (*below*) show both LCCMR and

Capital Bonding appropriations for FY 2005-2009. This funding has been, and will continue to be instrumental in acquiring, developing, renewing and replacing state park and trail facilities.

**Table 3. Capital Bonding and LCCMR Funding by Year, 2005-2009**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Parks</b>	<b>Trails</b>	<b>Division Total</b>	<b>Source</b>
2005	\$6,300,000	\$15,895,000	\$22,195,000	Bonding & LCCMR
2006	\$11,000,000	\$19,954,000	\$30,954,000	Bonding Only
2007	\$1,119,000	\$381,000	\$1,500,000	LCCMR Only
2008	\$22,436,000	\$17,573,000	\$40,009,000	Bonding & LCCMR
2009	\$590,000	\$1,000,000	\$1,590,000	LCCMR Only

**Fig. 2. Capital Bonding and LCCMR Funding by Year, 2005-2009**



**State Parks - FY 2010 Operating Budget (Fig. 3)**

The Division of Parks & Trails' FY 2010 operations and maintenance budget for State Parks, State Recreation Areas (SRAs), State Waysides, and State Forest campgrounds and day-use areas is \$48,357,000 from a range of funding sources. This total includes \$640,000 from the Water Recreation Account for authorized purposes (See Pg. 5 for a discussion of dedicated funding sources).

Included in this total is \$7,079,000 of Parks & Trails Legacy Funding (of P&T's \$12,641,000 total appropriation) allocated to these units. This additional funding has accelerated resource management, added outdoor education opportunities, and increased facility rehabilitation and renewal projects.

**Table 4. FY 2010 Budget – State Parks**

General fund appropriation	\$19,572,000
Water recreation appropriation*	\$640,000
Lottery-in-lieu allocation	\$4,371,000
State parks dedicated account	\$10,620,000
Working Capital & Douglas Lodge Account	\$5,200,000
All other statutory appropriations	+ \$875,000
<b>Total from traditional funding sources</b>	<b>\$41,278,000</b>
<b>Legacy funding**</b>	<b>+ \$7,079,000</b>
<b>Total from all sources</b>	<b>\$48,357,000</b>

\* This appropriation is from the Water Recreation Account total reported in Table 6 on Page 6.

\*\* Of this, approx. \$2 million is for capital-eligible deferred maintenance.



## State Trails - FY 2010 Operating Budget (Fig. 4)

The FY 2010 operations and maintenance budget for state trails and state forest trails is \$5,640,000. This includes:

**Table 5. FY 2010 Budget - State Trails**

General fund appropriation	\$1,830,000
Lottery-in lieu allocation	\$760,000
Legacy funding*	+ \$5,562,000
	<u>(-\$2,912,000)</u>
Total Funded O&M Budget	\$5,240,000

*\*Of this amount, \$2,912,000 in Parks & Trails Legacy Funding is being used for state trail bridge replacement and state trail renewal (e.g. bituminous resurfacing).*

For FY 2010, the State Forest (*non-motorized*) Trails budget is \$400,000 (*not shown in Table 5*). Of this, \$280,000 is from Parks & Trails Legacy Funding, and \$120,000 is revenue generated from sales of the Horse Trail Pass. These dedicated revenues are split between horse trails and facilities in State Parks and those located in State Forests.

**Division O&M Budget Summary.** The total Parks & Trails Division's FY 2010 operations and maintenance budget totals nearly \$54 million; that is \$48,357,000 for State Parks/SRA's and \$5,640,000 for Trails.

### **Dedicated Funding Sources** (*Water Recreation & Trails*)

In addition, the DNR receives appropriations from several dedicated user-funded accounts. Part of the Natural Resources Fund, these accounts include Water Recreation, Cross-Country Ski and Horse Pass, Snowmobile, All-Terrain Vehicle, Off-Highway Motorcycle, and the Off-Road Vehicle Accounts. In total, these accounts generate about \$28 million annually, about \$10 million of which comes to the department in the form of pass-through grants (*Fig. 5, Page 7*). These funds are generated principally from trail user fees, vehicle and boat registrations, and a portion of unrefunded motor vehicle fuel taxes.

Dedicated account revenues may only be used for specific purposes set forth by law. Moreover, these dollars are subject to annual appropriation, and are not available for general recreational trail purposes. Still, dedicated trail funds are a critical part of overall recreational trail funding. They supplement regular maintenance funding for State Parks, State Trails and state forest trails to assist with trail signing, summer-season mowing, brushing, water access sites, bridge maintenance and bridge replacement along shared trail corridors. Multi-use trail maintenance is increasingly dependent upon this important contribution from dedicated funding sources.

While these accounts do provide a relatively stable and reliable source of user-generated funding, individual fund receipts and annual appropriations do not always keep pace with the demand for new and expanded facilities, or with the need to protect and maintain existing recreational trails. The division anticipates that the programs and activities supported by these accounts will require new and/or additional sources of funding in future years.

**Table 6. Water Recreation & Trails Dedicated Fund Sources – FY 2010 Amounts<sup>1</sup>**

Water Recreation <sup>2</sup>	\$11,000,000
Snowmobile	\$12,400,000
All-Terrain Vehicle (ATV)	\$3,100,000
Off-Highway Motorcycle (OHM)	\$400,000
Off-Road Vehicle (ORV)	\$1,000,000
Cross-Country Ski Pass <sup>3</sup>	\$260,000
Horse Pass	+ \$120,000
Total	\$28,280,000

Footnotes

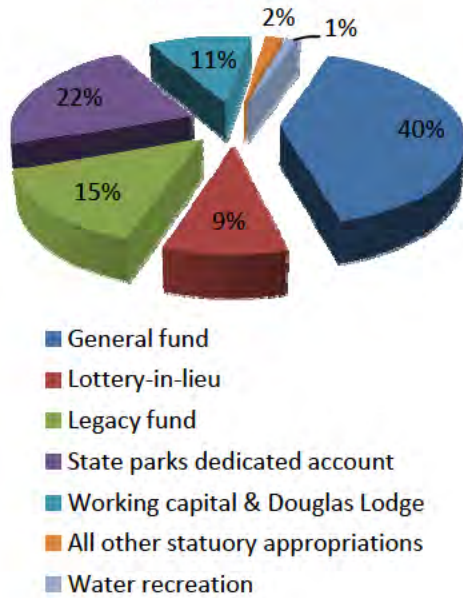
1. This table does not include federal sources of dedicated funding.
2. About \$640,000 of this total is included in the State Parks operations budget.
3. Cross-Country Ski receipts are appropriated to the Commissioner as grants-in-aid for ski trails sponsored by local units of government and Special Park Districts (MS 85.43).

**State Park Dedicated Accounts**

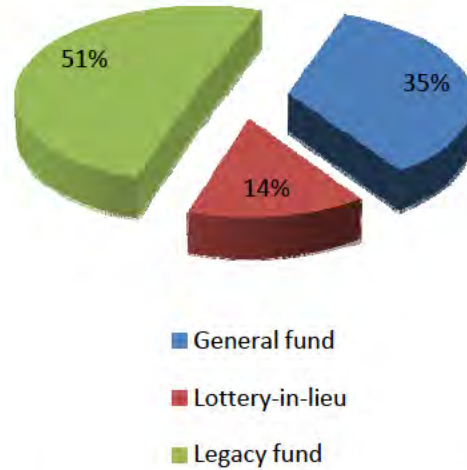
There are two dedicated accounts used to fund various activities within the State Park System. The **Working Capital & Douglas Lodge Account** generates revenue from the state park merchandise program and operation of the Douglas Lodge. In FY 2010, this account provides 11% of the State Park System budget.

The **State Parks Account** generates revenue from permit sales, camping fees, and other visitor-paid fees. This account represents 22% of the FY 2010 budget for the State Park System. Although increased park visitation and/or higher fees will boost account revenues, increased fees will, at some point, create affordability barriers for some Minnesotans. Moreover, although dedicated funding accounts will likely grow over time and provide additional resources for some activities, they will not be adequate to fund expansion of the park system.

**Fig. 3. FY 2010 Funding Sources for State Parks, SRAs, State Waysides, Forest Campgrounds & Day-Use Areas (\$48,357,000)**

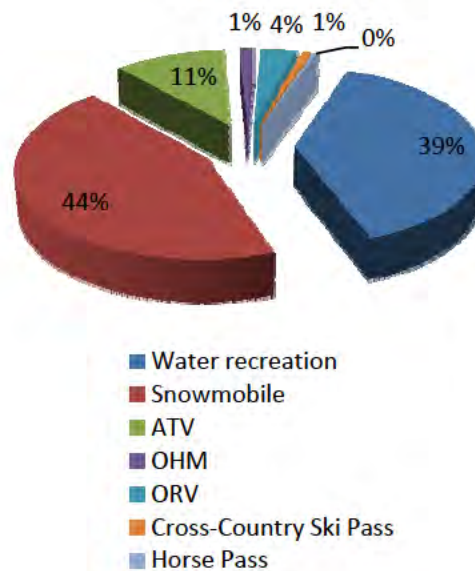


**Fig. 4. FY 2010 Funding Sources for State Trails (\$5,240,000)**



\* State Forest non-motorized trails funding is not included (\$400,000)

**Fig. 5. Dedicated Funding Sources Water & Trail Recreation FY 2010 Amounts (\$28,280,000)**



## **Section 3. Budget Analysis & Cost Projections**

***Questions 1 & 2: The amount necessary to operate and maintain the existing system of state parks and trails for the next 10 and 25 years?***

**Operations & Maintenance Needs.** The Parks & Trails Division's FY 2010 O&M budget is approximately \$54 million. In order to meet current practices and standards, the division would need an additional \$6 million/yr to improve facility maintenance and visitor services (*for example*):

- Expand conservation education efforts by adding interpretive programs and opportunities.
- Increase trail grooming on over 190 miles of crossing county skiing trails in State Parks.
- Improve spring, summer and fall camping services at State Parks and state forest campgrounds.
- Provide additional crack sealing and asphalt patches along state trails.
- Improve trailhead and parking facilities along state trails.
- Provide additional interpretive signs at trailheads and along state trails.

The division's current FY 2010 budget need for parks and trails operations and maintenance is approximately \$60 million. The ten and twenty-five year projections that follow are based on the FY 2010 funded budget plus identified needs. These estimates also include \$10 million annually for capital-eligible deferred maintenance (*i.e., \$5 million parks/yr + \$5 million trails/yr*).

**Table 7. 10 Year Projection of Total Needs for Existing Parks and Trails (2011-2020)**

	<i>Operations</i>	<i>Maintenance</i>	<i>Def Maintenance</i>	<i>Total</i>
Parks/SRA's	\$232,350,800	\$295,719,200	\$50,000,000	\$578,070,000
Trails	+ \$28,204,000	+ \$42,306,000	+ \$50,000,000	+ \$120,510,000
<b>Division Total</b>	<b>\$260,554,800</b>	<b>\$338,025,200</b>	<b>\$100,000,000</b>	<b>\$698,580,000</b>

**25 Year Projection of Total Needs for Existing Parks and Trails (2011-2035)**

	<i>Operations</i>	<i>Maintenance</i>	<i>Def Maintenance*</i>	<i>Total</i>
Parks/SRA's	\$580,877,000	\$739,298,000	\$125,000,000	\$1,445,175,000
Trails	+ \$70,510,000	+ \$105,765,000	+ \$125,000,000	+ \$301,275,000
<b>Division Total</b>	<b>\$651,387,000</b>	<b>\$1,095,063,000</b>	<b>\$250,000,000</b>	<b>\$1,746,450,000</b>

[Note that 25 yr projections **include** the 10 yr budget figures.]

\* At this level of funding, the existing parks and trails system may reach a point, within the 25 year projection period, where deferred maintenance needs may be reduced.

**Question 3: Adequacy of funding to support expansion of the existing park system?**

'Expansion' of the park system was defined as: 1) Continued acquisition and development of existing units of the state park system; and 2) Adding one new State Park or SRA every other biennium – **or one new facility every four years** [*e.g., Acquisition/capital development of new Park/SRA in 2014, 2018, 2022, 2026 & 2030, each requiring increased ops/maint dollars two years later*]. These cost projections are in addition to costs for operating and maintaining the existing state park system.

**Table 8. 10 Year Total Estimated Cost for Expanding the Park System (2011-2020)**

Continued acquisition/develop (existing)	\$72,500,000	
Number of new units added	2	
Acquisition and development costs (new)	\$50,000,000	(\$25,000,000/unit)
Operation and maintenance budget cost	\$3,600,000	(\$600,000/yr/unit)

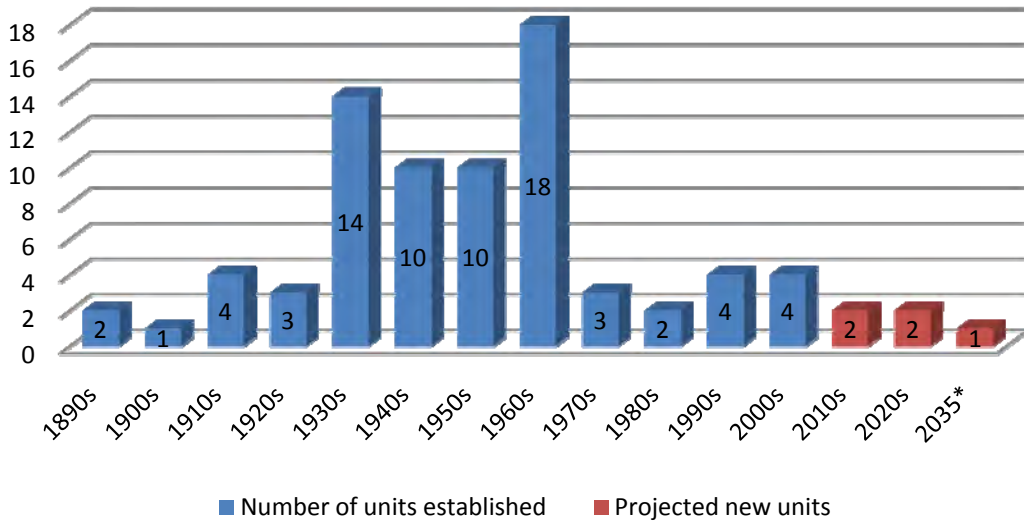
**25 Year Total Estimated Cost for Expanding the Park System (2011-2035)**

Continued acquisition/develop (existing)	\$181,250,000	
Number of new units added	5	
Acquisition and development costs (new)	\$125,000,000	(\$25,000,000/unit)
Operation and maintenance budget cost	\$36,000,000	(\$600,000/year/unit)

[Note that 25 yr projections **include** the 10 yr budget figures.]

Not reflected in these projected costs is the possibility of land donations or land transfers for purposes of establishing a new state park or SRA. Some newer State Parks and SRAs have benefitted from the donation or transfer of a significant portion of the property from a private entity or another public agency. This could significantly reduce initial start-up capital costs. Figure 2 (below) illustrates the addition of state parks and SRAs by decade and the expansion scenario described above.

**Fig. 6. State Parks & SRAs Established by Decade (1890s-2000s) and Projected New Units** [Source: MN DNR, Parks & Trails, 2009]



**Question 4: Adequacy of funding to support expansion of the existing trail system?**

Currently, only half of the authorized trail miles in the state trail system have been developed. Expanding this system was defined as developing new or additional miles of state trail at a pace similar to that of the last decade (25-30 mi/yr). Expansion will also include adding four new non-motorized trail areas in State Forests. The following cost projections do not include costs for continued operations and maintenance of the existing trail system.

**Table 9. 10 Year Total Estimated Cost for Expanding the Trail System (2011-2020)**

Miles of new state trail developed	300
New state forest trail opportunities	2
Acquisition and development costs	\$90,800,000
Operation and maintenance budget cost	\$14,500,000

**25 Year Total Estimated Cost for Expanding the Trail System (2011-2035)**

Miles of new state trail developed	700
New state forest trail opportunities	4
Acquisition and development costs	\$226,600,000
Operation and maintenance budget cost	\$75,800,000

**Alternative State Trail System Development Scenarios**

**1) Status Quo.** Under this scenario, which is reflected in the calculations above, the State Trail System continues to grow by 25-30 (*paved*) miles per year. Assuming that the historic authorization rate of 60 new miles/year continues, there will be 4,100 authorized miles with approximately 2,100 miles of developed state trails in 2035. This is comparable to the situation that exists today; only about one-half, or 1,266 of 2,597 authorized miles of trail, have actually been developed.

**2) Complete the System - No New Authorizations.** If no new state trail authorizations were to occur after 2009, and those portions of the authorized system were available for acquisition, approximately 53 miles of trail corridor would need to be acquired and developed **each year** in order to “complete” the (already authorized) system by 2035. The estimated cost to complete the system would be approximately \$429 million, or \$17 million per year for land acquisition and trail development.

**3) Complete the System - Authorizations Continue.** If new authorizations continue at the historic rate of 60 miles/year, about 110 miles of trail corridor will need to be acquired and developed **each year** in order to “complete” the system by 2035. The estimated cost to complete the system would be approximately \$948 million, or \$38 million per year for land acquisition and trail development. Under all three scenarios, operations and maintenance costs would grow commensurate with the addition of newly developed trail miles.

**Future Funding Considerations.**

In order to meet current needs and standards for operating and maintaining the existing parks and trails system, the division would need an additional **\$6 million/yr** above and beyond its FY 2010 funded budget. The addition of Parks & Trails Legacy Funds in FY 2010 has translated directly into higher service levels at the state’s outdoor recreation facilities, and have enabled DNR to make serious inroads into the deferred maintenance backlog.

Legacy funds, however, are not adequate to replace current funding sources. This is particularly true when it comes to system ‘expansion’. Even with an increased share of fund allocations (currently at 45%), the Parks & Trails Legacy fund will likely come up short of completing the entire system. Increased DNR funding would also come at the expense of other public recreation providers (*e.g., city, county, regional parks*) that fulfill an important public need for close-to-home recreation. These facilities complement the state’s system of parks and trails.

As the state park and trail systems grow, there will be substantial costs associated with that growth. Infrastructure rehabilitation and renewal needs will grow both for the existing system, and for new facilities added to the system. Despite increased visitation, and additional revenue from fees, permits, and dedicated user-funded accounts, these sources will not provide the revenue necessary to fund continued expansion of this system.

Expansion of the state park and trail systems, as outlined in this analysis, will almost certainly require increased capital bonding and LCCMR support, in addition to Parks & Trails Legacy Funds. General fund

support will also remain a vital component of the Parks and Trails Division's budget, especially for routine operations and maintenance activities for Minnesota's growing system of outdoor recreation facilities.

**10/25 Year Strategic Plan & Framework.** *Minnesota Laws 2009, Chapter 172, Article 3, Section 6, subdivision 2*, requires the development of a twenty-five year strategic parks and trails long-range plan and framework by February 15, 2011. *Section 2e* of this same bill calls for the development of a ten year strategic DNR parks and trails plan considering both traditional funding and Parks and Trails Legacy Funding. The information contained in this report will be provided to planners working on the above plans.

It is hoped that the ten and twenty-five year plans will identify needs and inform decisions regarding the appropriate level and mix of funding sources needed to complete Minnesota's system of parks and trails. They will also likely prompt adjustments to future budget needs as outlined here.

## Appendix C: Stakeholder and Public Involvement Summary

Stakeholder and public involvement is an important component of all departmental planning processes, and the Ten-Year Strategic State Parks and Trails Plan is no exception. Throughout the planning process key stakeholders and the general public had the opportunity for their voices to be heard.

Parks and Trails Division and departmental staff provided input on the draft strategic plan in April and May, and again in August, 2010. Park friends groups, trail associations, and other key stakeholders shared their feedback between July and October 2010. The department's Statewide Interdisciplinary Review Service (SIRS) provided input between August and September, 2010. The general public shared their insights in October and November, 2010.

Throughout the planning process, efforts to connect the Ten-Year Strategic State Parks and Trails Plan with the Parks and Trails Legacy Plan and the University of Minnesota's Inventory and Framework were also made. For more information, please see page 4 of the strategic plan.

The following represents a summary of the input received from state parks friends groups, state trail associations and other key stakeholders, as well as that of the general public. All comments have been compiled and archived, and are available upon request.

### ***State Park Friends Groups, State Trail Associations, and Other Key Stakeholders***

In July and August 2010, state park managers, assistant park managers, and area supervisors reached out to park friends groups, trail associations, and other interested individuals and groups. Comments were received from ten state park friends groups, state trail associations, and other groups during the roughly three month period. Input was also solicited and received from two statewide outdoor recreation stakeholder groups, the Parks and Trails Council of Minnesota (PTCMN) and the Minnesota Recreational Trail Users Association (MRTUA). Additional feedback was received from a number of other key stakeholders during the 30-day public review process. That input is summarized in the next section.

Many of the comments received were focused on the individual unit the group is associated with, or with the specific cause(s) the stakeholder group stands for. While the detailed recommendations for a specific state park, state trail or other unit are valuable for the division, the planning team deemed them to be too narrowly focused for a ten-year strategic plan that focuses on the statewide system. Even so, these specific recommendations will be considered as the division undertakes its biennial budgeting process, workplanning, and other division initiatives. Beyond comments related to specific units or facilities, several overall topic areas and themes emerged in the comments. Comments from friends groups, trail associations, and other key stakeholders included:

- Suggestions to include more specific language around strategies and the partners who will likely be involved.
- Suggestions to expand the discussion of the likely disconnect between priorities and funding.
- Suggestions to include additional language on the critical importance of the natural resources that provide the foundation for outdoor recreation.
- Suggestions to expand the discussion of acquisition and development.
- Suggestions to be more inclusive of volunteers, particularly in the outreach core area.
- Concerns about funds dedicated to grant programs.
- Concern that there will be enough staff to accomplish and implement the new initiatives.
- Concern over the underfunding of state forest recreation areas.
- Accolades on the background material, cross-referencing, and the inclusion of input.



**General Public**

Following a press release announcing the 30-day public review period, the draft Ten-Year Strategic State Parks and Trails plan was posted on the DNR internet site in October and November, 2010 for public comment. Comments were received from 30 individuals or groups during the public review period. As with the comments received from state parks friends groups, state trail associations and other key stakeholders, many comments were focused on a specific element of the outdoor recreation system that the division manages or administers. Those suggestions and recommendations will prove to be valuable as the division develops its biennial budget requests and other initiatives, but they are too narrowly focused for a ten-year strategic plan that focuses on the statewide system. Beyond those specific comments, some overall topic areas and themes included:

- Suggestions that the plan go further and be bolder in its recommendations.
- Suggestions that plan language be more inclusive of accessibility and equity concerns.
- Suggestions that the plan should say more about connecting with non-state owned or operated trails.
- Suggestions that All-Terrain Vehicles (ATVs) be allowed on more trails, and that additional ATV campsites and campgrounds be developed.
- Questions about the budget analysis and funding discussion in the plan.
- Support for horseback riding opportunities.
- Support for quiet places, and opportunities to experience silence and solitude.
- Questions about connections to the 10/25 Legacy Plan, and how state parks and trails fit into the broader scope of all parks and trails in Minnesota.



## Appendix D: References and Resources

Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (2005). *Ten-year forecasts of Minnesota adult outdoor recreation participation, 2004 to 2014*.

Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (2008) *Adapting to Change: Minnesota's 2008-2012 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan*. St Paul, MN: MNDNR.

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