

Minnesota Parks and Trails Network Update - February 15, 2015

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Learning from previous effort

Responding to the challenges and opportunities that the previous work revealed.

Identified

- What was needed
- What was doable
- What was efficient and easy to use

1. User Survey: Minnesota Parks and Trails Standardized Survey Tool Development Project
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Overview

- Reflects what is needed to know.
- Targeted questions
- Need to understand current uses
- Gaps to be addressed
- User data that is the same in form and content across the DNR, Greater Minnesota, and Metropolitan park and trail entities.
- Data that can be used to compare uses within and among the three entities.
- Data that is spatially represented

Product: new user survey

- Worked with the three systems to create a user survey that will be used by all three entities.
- Status: nearly complete

Progress Summary

Interviews and discussion with partners and key stakeholders: November 2012-January 2014

- Interviews with 12 representatives from DNR, Metropolitan Council, Greater MN Regional Parks and Trails Coalition (GMRPTC) and others including Parks and Trails Council of MN, Explore MN Tourism, Minneapolis Parks and Recreation Board.
- Documented perspectives and input on the standardized survey tool and discussed information needs for outdoor recreation stakeholders.
- Presented and held informal discussions with the Parks and Trails Legacy Advisory Committee on December 5th, 2013.

Focus Groups with key stakeholders: March- April 2014:

- Two focus groups with 18 participants including representatives from DNR, Metropolitan Council, Greater MN Regional Parks and Trails Coalition (GMRPTC) and others (Parks and Trails Council of MN, Explore MN Tourism, Minneapolis Parks and Recreation Board, Parks and Trails Legacy Advisory Committee)
- Provided project updates, discussed outcomes for the standardized survey tool, and gathered input on survey design

Pilot Surveys: June- August 2014:

- Developed paper and tablet versions of the standardized survey for summer and winter use seasons.
- Consulted with representatives from DNR, Metropolitan Council, and Greater MN Regional Parks and Trails Coalition on survey design and content.
- Developed a sampling plan for three pilot locations in consultation with unit managers.
- Gathered input on survey design and updated the survey based on visitor comments.
- Conducted survey pilots at three locations: Cedar Lake Regional Trail (648 surveys completed), Gitchi Gami State Trail (137 completed surveys) and Tettegouche State Park (174 completed surveys).

2. Physical Data

- Challenging to create initial maps and tables.
- Recognized need for corrections and updating.
- Inventory and framework organized on DNR regions, but the regions have changed since the initial work.
- Recognize the need for better project location information.
- Needed system so that the three entities could update their data in order to keep the information current.

Product: new regional-scale maps

- Retained county as the building block.
- Created new, larger regional- scale easier to read maps that reflect Greater Minnesota Parks and Trails Commission regions.
- Status: draft maps need review by park and trail systems

3. Integrating Legacy Fund Allocations into the Physical Data

- Much current data on Legacy funding is not mapable at the regional or county scale. There is a need to have more fine-grained information, i.e. if funds were used for a statewide program; information on where it was actually spent was not available.
- The funding was not tied to the Parks and Trails Legacy Plans' four strategic directions:
 - Connect people to the outdoors,
 - Acquire land, create opportunities
 - Take care of what we have
 - Coordinate among partners
- Funding used for administration was not identified.
- Gathering data was uneven, not to be incorporated into the funding system.

Product

- Program that tracks Park and Trail Legacy fund expenditures developed in cooperation with MNIT.
- To be also used by park and trail entities to track other changes in their systems to keep maps current.
- Recommendation that Legacy fundees should be required to enter their product and specific project location data.
- Status: need

Additional Work Needs

1. Survey

- Develop manual for survey
- Develop training for surveyors

2. Mapping Physical Data

- Need for better location information as part of the grant/reporting process
- Need to develop program for Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage data layer
- Decision regarding how data should be mapped and symbolized and summarized to help determine data collection methods going forward. The current data is limited on how it can be displayed on a map due to lack of granularity in location information.
- Need the ability to visually link parks and trails use information with grant information
- Ability to identify opportunities for future investment.