PLAYFEATURES
Research on the Twin Cities Regional Parks & Trails

June 2019

Regional Park System Visits in 2018

This report highlights the estimated number of visits to the Regional Parks System in 2018.

The Metropolitan Council produces annual estimates of visits to the Twin Cities Regional Parks System in collaboration with 10 partner agencies, including cities, counties, and special parks districts. Visitation data were collected within each park and trail during the summer (Memorial Day to Labor Day) and then expanded to produce an annual estimate. We've developed an interactive online tool—available at *https://metrocouncil.org/parkestimates*—that describes how annual estimates are developed and provides usage statistics for each park and trail in the Regional Park System.

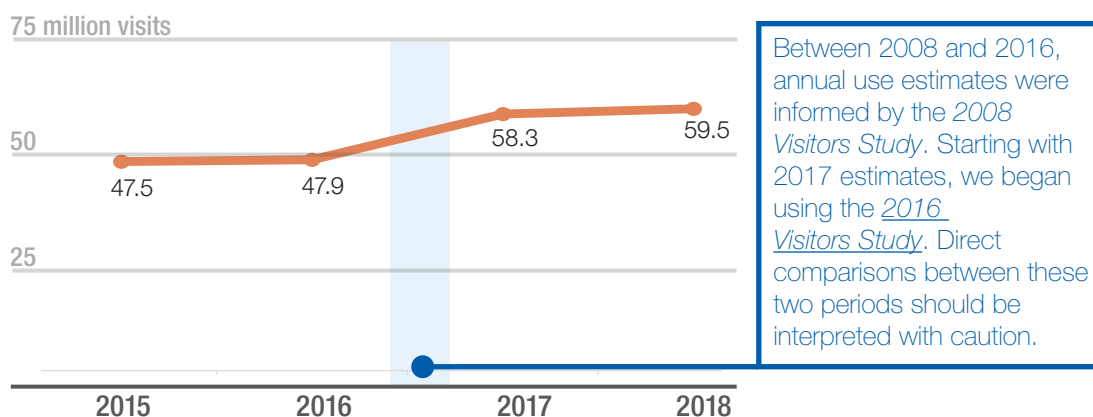| Key Findings |
|---|
| • An estimated 59.5 million visits were made to the Regional Parks System in 2018. This represents a 2.1% increase over 2017 and the most visits in any year on record.

• With approximately 20.8 million visitors in 2018, the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board had the highest visitation among the 10 park agencies in the Regional Park system. The most-visited regional park in 2018 was Minneapolis Chain of Lakes, with over 7 million visits.

• Anoka County Regional Parks showed the largest gain in visitation, with over 520,000 more visits in 2018 compared with 2017. Dakota County had the largest percentage increase in visitation, with a 14% increase over 2017 levels. |

The Twin Cities Regional Parks System is nationally renowned for its beauty, size, and variety of features. As of December 2018, the Regional Parks System included 44 regional parks, 12 park reserves, 49 regional trails, and eight special recreation features. Two new trail segments joined the system in 2018: Point Douglas Regional Trail (in Washington County) and Nokomis-Minnesota River Bluffs Regional Trail (in the City of Bloomington).

An estimated 59.5 million visits were made to the Regional Parks System in 2018 (Figure 1). This represents a 2.1% increase over 2017 and the most visits in any year on record.
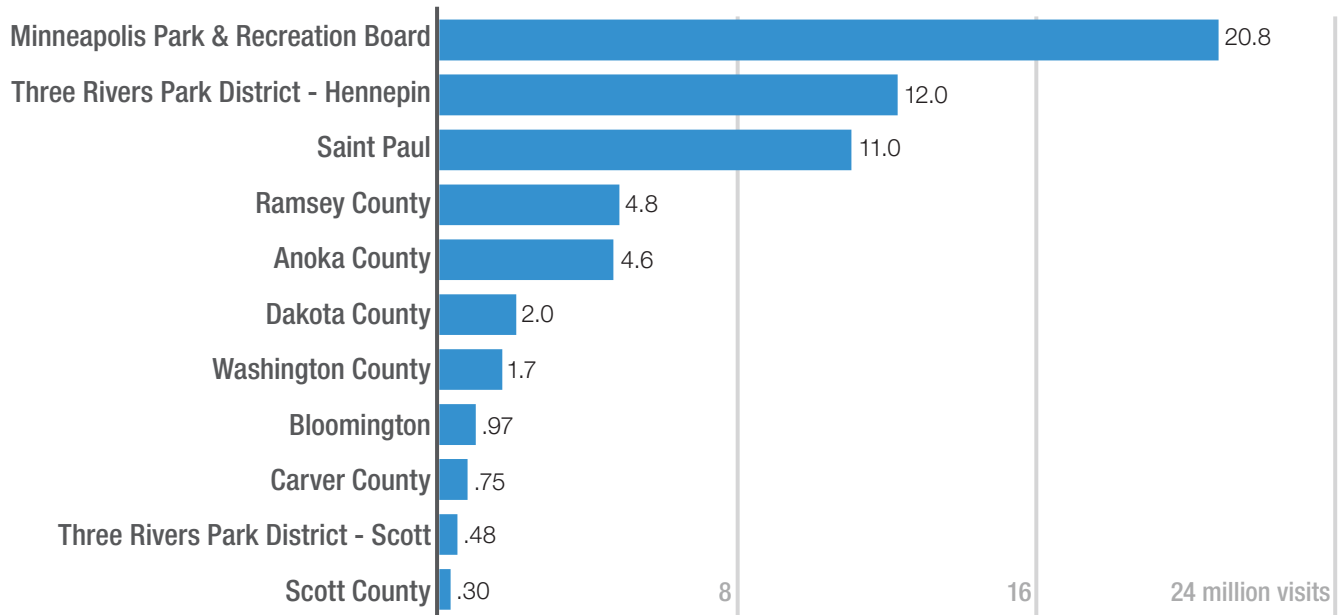
FIGURE 1. VISITS TO THE REGIONAL PARK SYSTEM

75 million visits

50

47.5   47.9   58.3   59.5

25

2015   2016   2017   2018

Between 2008 and 2016, annual use estimates were informed by the *2008 Visitors Study*. Starting with 2017 estimates, we began using the *2016 Visitors Study*. Direct comparisons between these two periods should be interpreted with caution.

Source: Metropolitan Council's Park Use Estimates.
The 2018 Park Use Estimate methodology is now an interactive tool available at metrocouncil.org/parkestimates.

Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board had the highest visitation among the ten agencies in 2018 with approx-
imately 20.8 million visitors, followed by Three Rivers Parks District - Hennepin (12.0 million) and the City of Saint
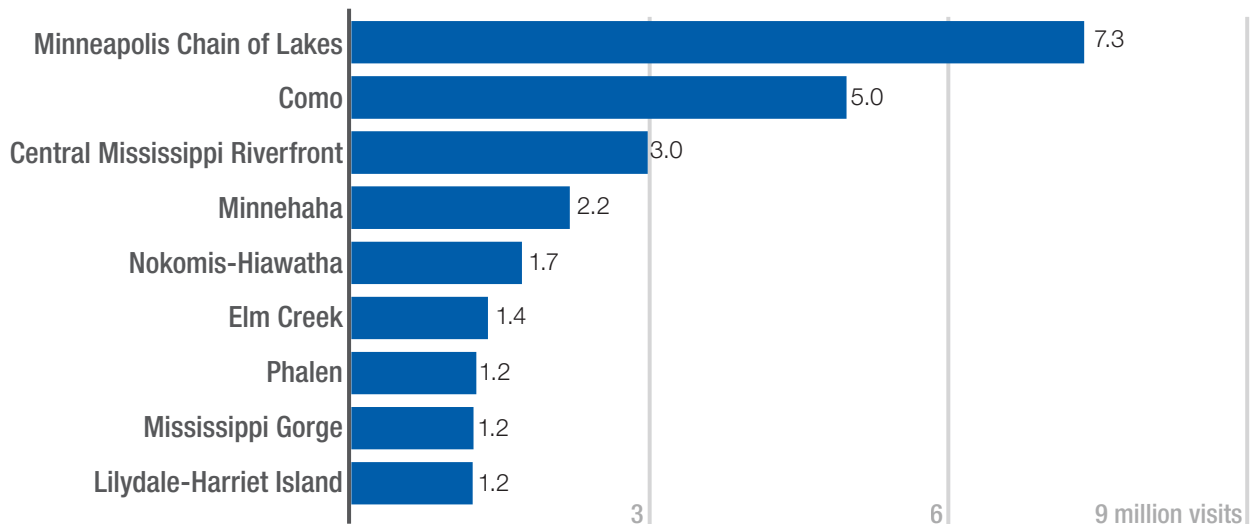Paul (11.0 million) (Figure 2).

FIGURE 2. 2018 VISITS BY PARK AGENCY

Agency	Visits (million)
Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board	20.8
Three Rivers Park District - Hennepin	12.0
Saint Paul	11.0
Ramsey County	4.8
Anoka County	4.6
Dakota County	2.0
Washington County	1.7
Bloomington	.97
Carver County	.75
Three Rivers Park District - Scott	.48
Scott County	.30

Source: Metropolitan Council's Park Use Estimates.
The 2018 Park Use Estimate methodology is now an interactive tool available at metrocouncil.org/parkestimates.

The most-visited regional park was Minneapolis Chain of Lakes with over 7 million visits, followed by Como
Regional Park with about 5 million visits (Figure 3).

FIGURE 3. MOST VISITED REGIONAL PARKS IN 2018

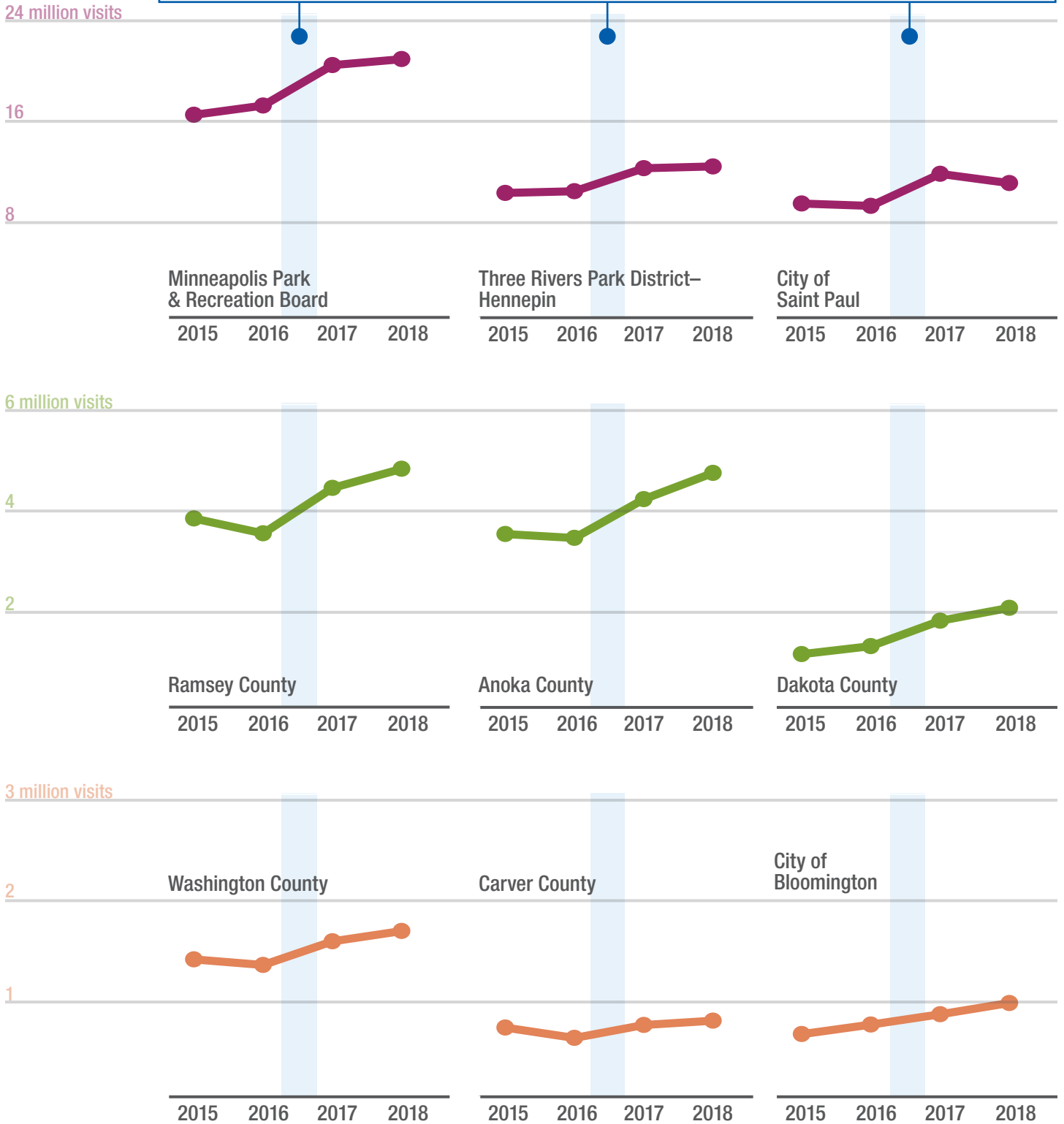| Park	Visits (million)
Minneapolis Chain of Lakes	7.3
Como	5.0
Central Mississippi Riverfront	3.0
Minnehaha	2.2
Nokomis-Hiawatha	1.7
Elm Creek	1.4
Phalen	1.2
Mississippi Gorge	1.2
Lilydale-Harriet Island	1.2

Source: Metropolitan Council's Park Use Estimates.
The 2018 Park Use Estimate methodology is now an interactive tool available at metrocouncil.org/parkestimates.

Anoka County Regional Parks showed the largest gain in visitation with over 520,000 more visits in 2018 com-
pared with 2017 (Figure 4). Other agencies with large gains included Minneapolis (> 470,000 more), Ramsey Coun-
ty (> 380,000 more), Three Rivers - Hennepin (about 146,000 more), and Dakota County (> 250,000 more). Dakota
County had the largest pecentage increase in visitation, with a 14% increase over 2017, followed by Bloomington
(13%) and Anoka County (12%). Scott County, Three Rivers - Scott County, and Saint Paul had slightly less visita-
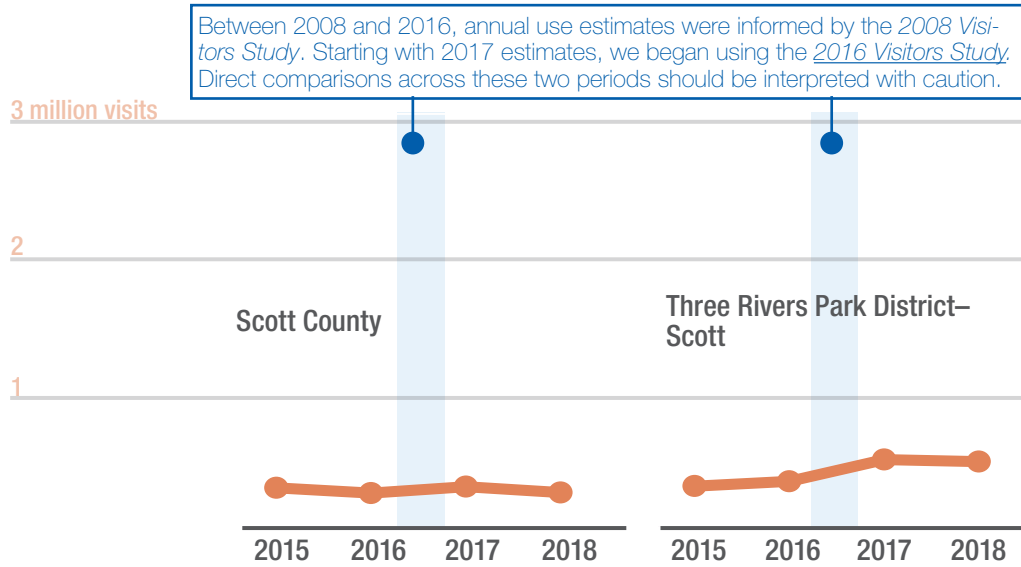tion in 2018, but were all still above their 2016 levels.

FIGURE 4. RECENT VISIT TRENDS BY PARK AGENCY (1/2)

Between 2008 and 2016, annual use estimates were informed by the *2008 Visitors Study*. Starting with 2017 estimates, we began using the *2016 Visitors Study*. Direct comparisons across these two periods should be interpreted with caution.

24 million visits
16
8

Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board
2015 2016 2017 2018

Three Rivers Park District– Hennepin
2015 2016 2017 2018

City of Saint Paul
2015 2016 2017 2018

6 million visits
4
2

Ramsey County
2015 2016 2017 2018

Anoka County
2015 2016 2017 2018

Dakota County
2015 2016 2017 2018

3 million visits
2
1

Washington County
2015 2016 2017 2018

Carver County
2015 2016 2017 2018

City of Bloomington
2015 2016 2017 2018

Source: Metropolitan Council's Park Use Estimates.
The 2018 Park Use Estimate methodology is now an interactive tool available at **metrocouncil.org/parkestimates**.

FIGURE 4 (continued). RECENT VISIT TRENDS BY PARK AGENCY (2/2)

Between 2008 and 2016, annual use estimates were informed by the *2008 Visitors Study*. Starting with 2017 estimates, we began using the *2016 Visitors Study*. Direct comparisons across these two periods should be interpreted with caution.

Source: Metropolitan Council's Park Use Estimates.
The 2018 Park Use Estimate methodology is now an interactive tool available at metrocouncil.org/parkestimates.