



# Greater Minnesota **REGIONAL PARKS & TRAILS COMMISSION**



## Policy & Planning Report for 2019







1



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1. Duluth Hartley Park
2. Redwood Falls Ramsey Park
3. Duluth Hartley Park
4. Parks & Trails Legacy Exhibit at the 2019 Minnesota State Fair



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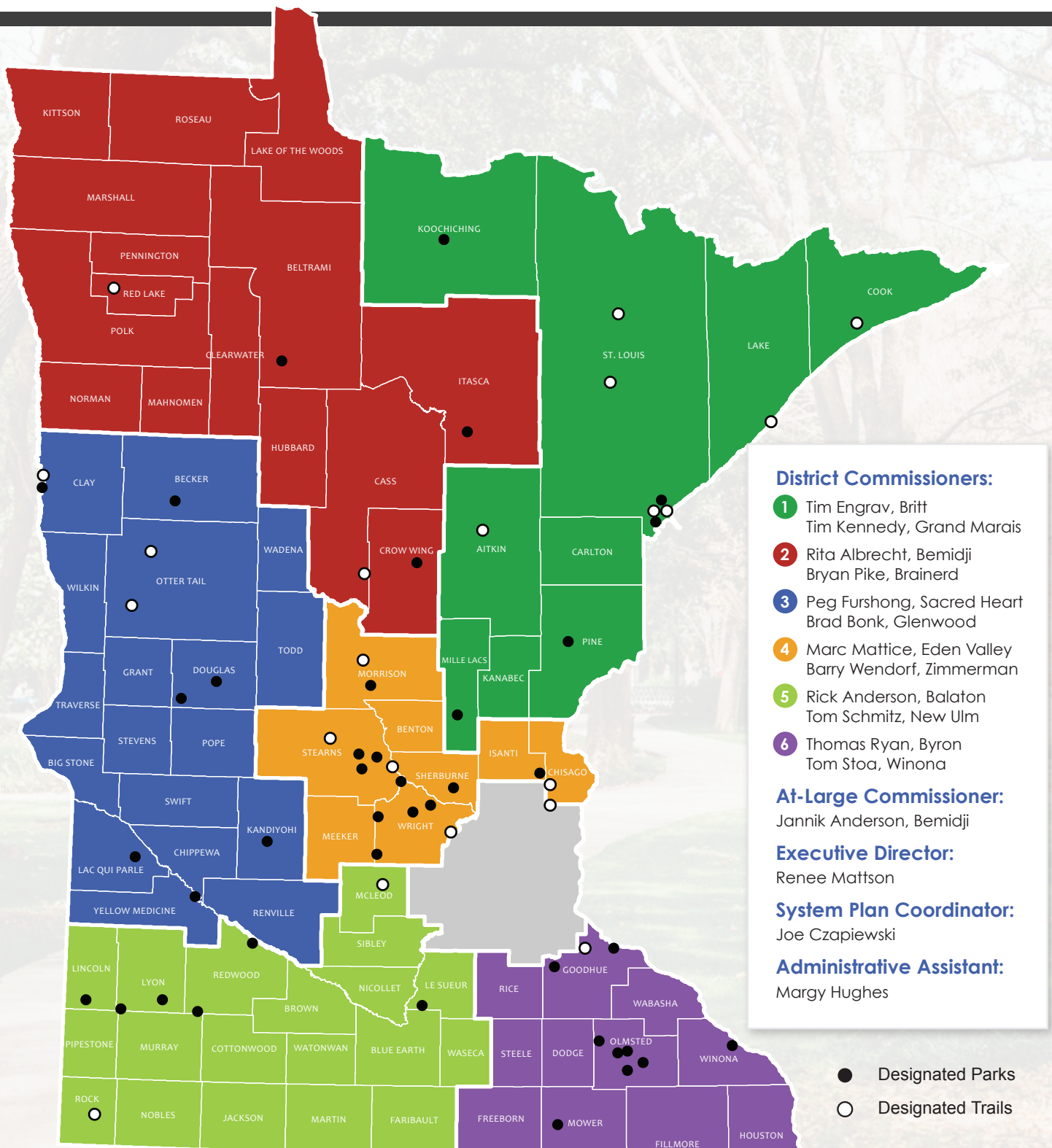
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## Cover Photos: (Left to Right)

1. Isanti County Irving & John Anderson Park  
Photo Credit: Brett Feldman/Parks & Trails Council
2. Crow Wing County Milford Mine Memorial Park
3. Lincoln County Hole in the Mountain Park
4. Cohasset Tioga Recreation Area

# DESIGNATED REGIONALLY SIGNIFICANT PARKS & TRAILS

(AS OF 12/31/19)



## District Commissioners:

- 1 Tim Engrav, Britt  
Tim Kennedy, Grand Marais
- 2 Rita Albrecht, Bemidji  
Bryan Pike, Brainerd
- 3 Peg Furshong, Sacred Heart  
Brad Bonk, Glenwood
- 4 Marc Mattice, Eden Valley  
Barry Wendorf, Zimmerman
- 5 Rick Anderson, Balaton  
Tom Schmitz, New Ulm
- 6 Thomas Ryan, Byron  
Tom Stoa, Winona

## At-Large Commissioner:

Jannik Anderson, Bemidji

## Executive Director:

Renee Mattson

## System Plan Coordinator:

Joe Czapiewski

## Administrative Assistant:

Margy Hughes

- Designated Parks
- Designated Trails



# LEGACY GRANT OUTCOMES 2016-2019: COMPLETE OR IN PROGRESS

LEGACY DOLLARS AT WORK IN GREATER MINNESOTA

PROJECT  
PLANNING **3**

**47.86** RESTORED  
TRAIL MILES

**81.28**   
NEW TRAIL MILES

  
**726.19**  
**ACRES**  
ACQUIRED FOR PARKS

**468** PROGRAMMING  
CONNECTING   
PEOPLE TO THE OUTDOORS

**10.25**  
TRAIL MILES  
ACQUIRED

**23** PARKS  
DEVELOPED 

**5** BRIDGE  
PROJECTS

## FY21 FUNDING RECOMMENDATIONS

PROJECT	AWARD	DIST.
Sandstone Robinson Park	\$902,654	1
Douglas County Lake Brophy Park	\$930,746	3
Otter Tail County Perham to Pelican Rapids Regional Trail	\$1,878,820	3
St. Cloud Beaver Island Regional Trail	\$900,000	4
Wright County Crow River Regional Trail	\$400,000	4
Le Sueur County Lake Washington Regional Park	\$983,511	5
Olmsted County Oxbow Park and Zollman Zoo	\$2,135,000	6
Goodhue County Byllesby Park	\$1,350,236	6
Cannon Valley Trail	\$503,100	6
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$9,984,067</b>	





# DISTRICT 1

## PILLAR

### Connect People and the Outdoors

#### *Cook County Mountain Bike Trail System*

Phase I of trail construction creates a single track connection between mountain bike trails at Britton Peak in Tofte and Lutsen Mountain in Lutsen. Phase II will focus on trail construction and enhancements at the two connector trailheads, which, when complete, will include additional trail loops accommodating all levels of mountain bike riders. This network of single track trails will offer an outdoor recreational experience in a setting unavailable in other parts of Minnesota. It will also appeal to the more than 3.5 million annual visitors to the North Shore and introduce new generations to the thrill and excitement of this fast-growing multi-generational sport.

### Connect People and the Outdoors

#### *Duluth Hartley Park*

The park and nature center provide a venue for public environmental education through core programs – field trips, nature preschool, summer camps, special events and public programs – that currently connect more than 25,000 park visitors and 10,000 school children annually to the outdoors. A necessary expansion of the facility will enable the center to serve 60 children on daily field trips, up from the 45 now served. The popularity of the center, particularly in the summer and during school breaks, required more classroom space for expanded public programs. Hartley Nature Center partners with school districts throughout the region to provide nature-based field trip opportunities. The center also provides scholarship support for these field trips as well as camp and preschool programs.

1 - Big Falls Campground and Horse Camp

2 - Duluth Hartley Park

3 - Cook County Mountain Bike Trail System

Photo Credit: Bryan Hansel

4 - Sandstone Robinson Park

## TOTAL FUNDING AWARDED TO DISTRICT 1 (FY16-FY20)

*This notes the total number of applications for funding submitted from FY16-FY20 and the total amount of grants made to this district over time.*

**8** Projects  
Funded

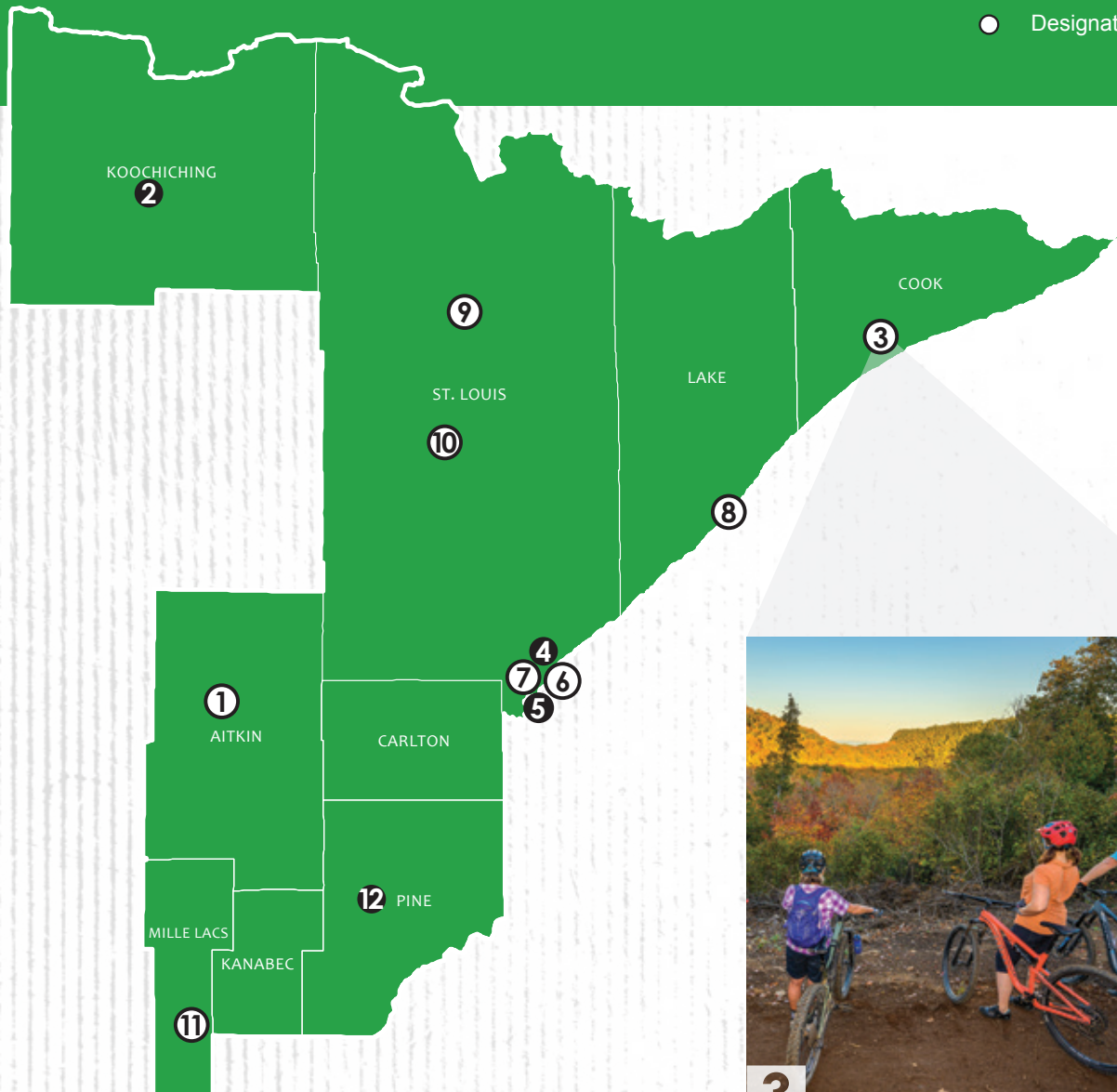
**17** Applications

**\$7,768,203**





- Designated Parks
- Designated Trails



	DESIGNATED PARK/TRAIL	CLASSIFICATION
1	Aitkin County Northwoods ATV Trail	T
2	Big Falls Campground and Horse Camp	S
3	Cook County Mountain Bike Trail System	S
4	Duluth Hartley Park	N
5	Duluth Spirit Mountain Recreation Area	S
6	Duluth Traverse	S
7	Hermantown/Proctor Munger Trail Spur	T
8	Lake County Mountain Bike Trails	T
9	Lake Vermilion Trail	T
10	Mesabi Trail	T
11	Mille Lacs County Plains to Port Trail	T
12	Sandstone Robinson Park	S

N=Natural Resource-Based Park | S=Special Recreation Feature Park | T=Regional Trail, motorized, non-motorized, mixed use, water





# DISTRICT 2

## PILLAR

### Acquire Land and Create Opportunities

#### *Crow Wing County Milford Mine Memorial Park*

This park project pays tribute to the fallen men of the Milford Mine, the site of Minnesota's worst mining disaster. The park is dedicated to the 41 miners who lost their lives on one tragic day in 1924, when a mine shaft collapsed and water flooded an underground network of tunnels. The park showcases the rich history, culture and heritage of the mine and the region. It also provides educational opportunities for students in the Crosby-Ironton school district to learn about the history of the mine site, the mining industry and natural resources. Thoughtful effort was put into preserving the memory of the miners while interpreting the site to connect visitors to the past.

### Coordinate Among Partners – Connect People and the Outdoors

#### *Lake Shore Gull Lake Trail*

A cooperative agreement between Cass and Crow Wing Counties, Fairview Township, Nisswa, Lake Shore and East Gull Lake encourages interagency collaboration, coordination and cooperation to enhance the recreational experience for residents and visitors to the area. The culmination of the partnership is the realization of the Gull Lake Trail. This interconnectivity among residential and vacation areas is unprecedented in the region. The trail is uniquely positioned in the heart of the Brainerd Lakes Area, winding through the most populous vacationland region. The trail makes connections to additional trails and existing recreational facilities. When complete, this multi-use trail will provide a safe, scenic way for year-round residents and visitors to explore and enjoy the region.

- 1 - Beltrami County Northland Sports Park
- 2 - Lake Shore Gull Lake Trail
- 3 - Crow Wing County Milford Mine Memorial Park
- 4 - Cohasset Tioga Recreation Area

## TOTAL FUNDING AWARDED TO DISTRICT 2 (FY16-FY20)

*This notes the total number of applications for funding submitted from FY16-FY20 and the total amount of grants made to this district over time.*

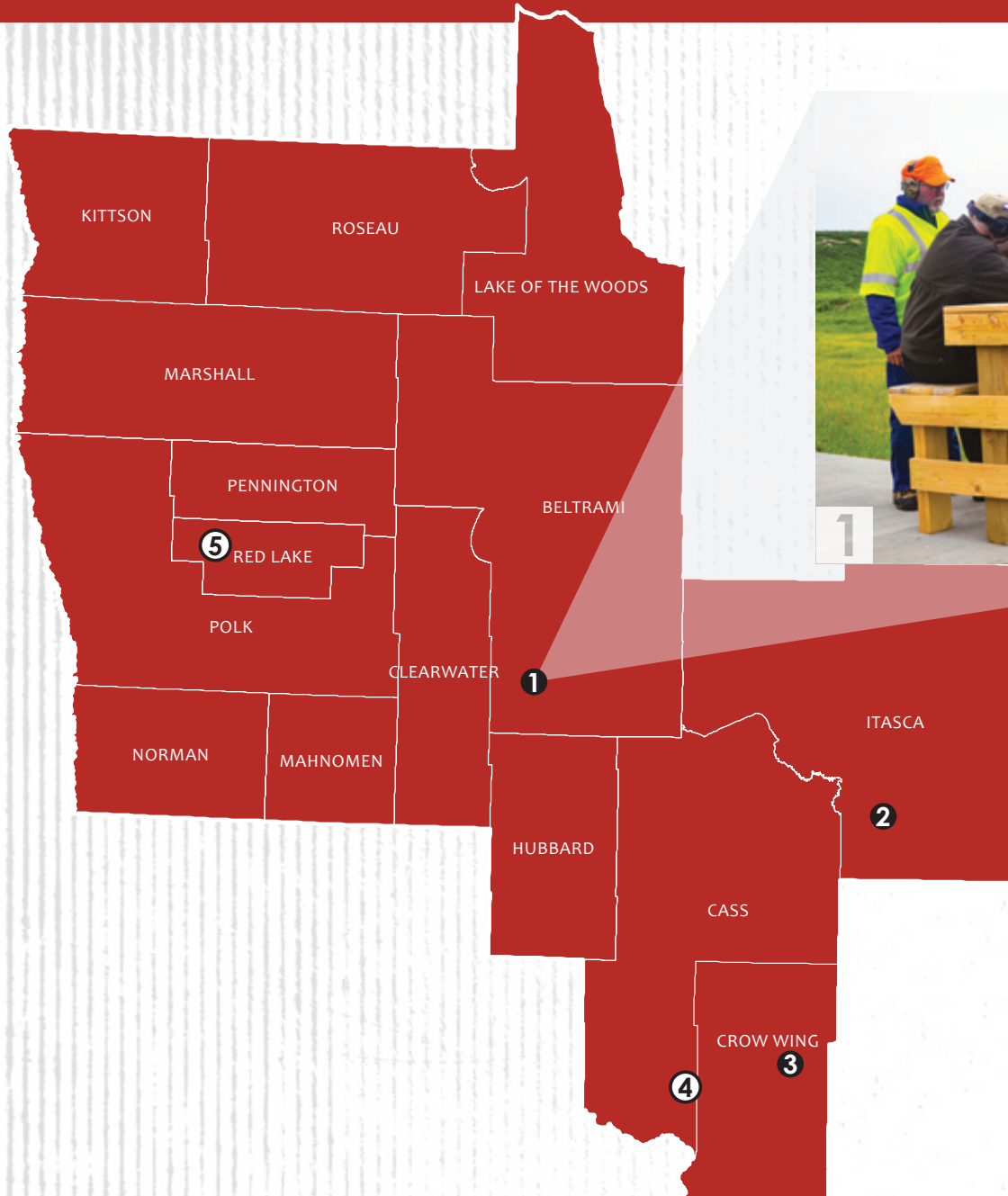
**8 Projects Funded** | **10 Applications**

**\$4,456,934**





- Designated Parks
- Designated Trails



	DESIGNATED PARK/TRAIL	CLASSIFICATION
1	Beltrami County Northland Sports Park	S
2	Cohasset Tioga Recreation Area	N
3	Crow Wing County Milford Mine Memorial Park	S
4	Lake Shore Gull Lake Trail	T
5	Red Lake River Corridor	T

N=Natural Resource-Based Park | S=Special Recreation Feature Park | T=Regional Trail, motorized, non-motorized, mixed use, water



# DISTRICT 3

## PILLAR

### Take Care of What We Have

#### *Willmar Robbins Island Park*

Already a popular destination for nature lovers, new projects at the park aim to enhance the visitor experience while creating more meaningful interactions with nature. A vital part of the work at the park is rehabilitating the wetlands and restoring parts of the park to a more natural setting that will improve water quality and create more natural habitat for wildlife. A new interpretive boardwalk will provide easy access for visitors to connect with and learn about the nature surrounding them. A new equipment rental program will provide access to equipment and recreational opportunities that have never been available before. The addition of a four-season shelter and winter equipment rentals will make the park a year-round destination in the region.

### Acquire Land and Create Opportunities

#### *Douglas County Lake Brophy Park*

The development of a previously undeveloped park just two and a half miles from Alexandria, in the heart of the popular Alexandria Lakes Area, provides residents and visitors with access to more than 9,000 feet of lakeshore property. This new park provides easy access, without even using a vehicle, by way of the Central Lakes State Trail, the Alexandria Chain of Lakes and the Long Prairie State Water Trail. ADA accessible walks link the major park features and allow all ages and abilities to enjoy the park. Natural surface hiking and mountain bike trails serve a dual purpose as ski trails and a sledding hill in winter. A new beach (the largest in the Alexandria Lakes Area) and beach house will serve as a place for rentals, programming, restrooms and an accessible fishing pier. The build out of this park opens many new opportunities for the community and visitors to the region.

- 1 - Douglas County Lake Brophy Park
- 2 - Detroit Lakes Detroit Mountain Recreation Area
- 3 - Moorhead River Corridor Trail
- 4 - Willmar Robbins Island Park

## TOTAL FUNDING AWARDED TO DISTRICT 3 (FY16-FY20)

*This notes the total number of applications for funding submitted from FY16-FY20 and the total amount of grants made to this district over time.*

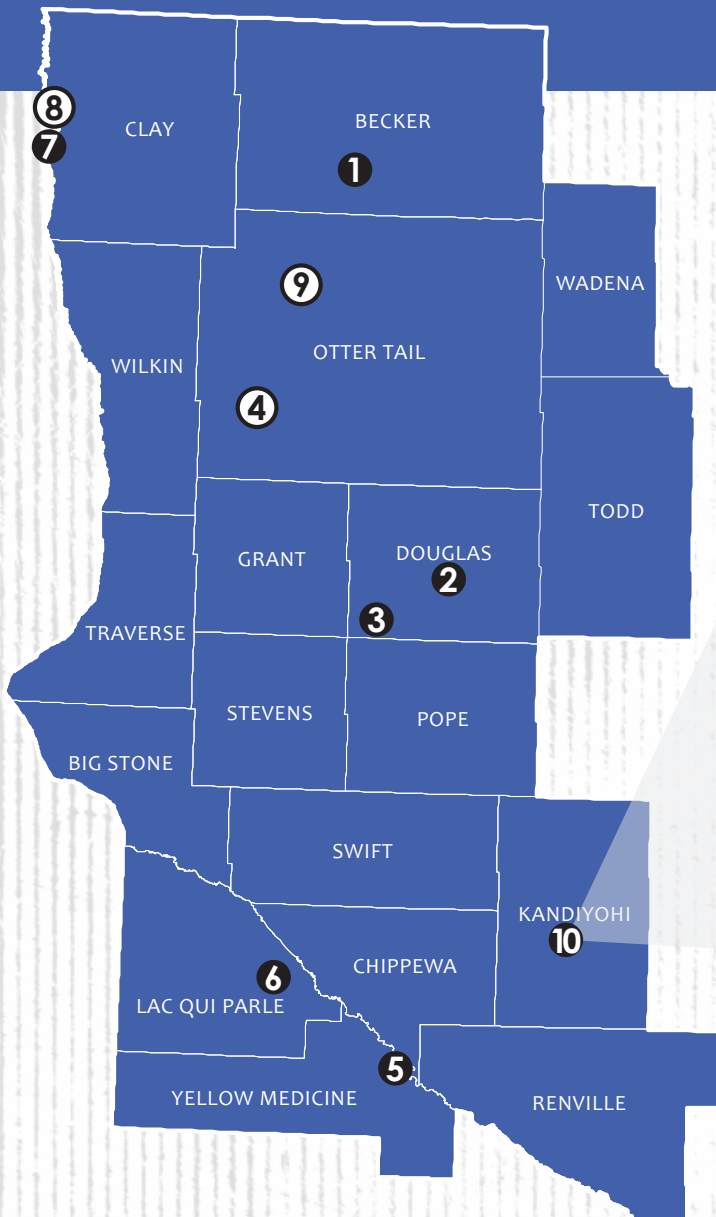
**11** Projects Funded    **20** Applications

**\$7,148,941**





- Designated Parks
- Designated Trails



	DESIGNATED PARK/TRAIL	CLASSIFICATION
1	Detroit Lakes Detroit Mountain Recreation Area	S
2	Douglas County Lake Brophy Park	N
3	Douglas County Kensington Park	N
4	Fergus Falls Glacial Edge Trail	T
5	Granite Falls Memorial Park	N
6	Lac qui Parle County Park	N
7	Moorhead MB Johnson Park	N
8	Moorhead River Corridor Trail	T
9	Otter Tail County Perham to Pelican Rapids Trail	T
10	Willmar Robbins Island Park	N

N=Natural Resource-Based Park | S=Special Recreation Feature Park | T=Regional Trail, motorized, non-motorized, mixed use, water



# DISTRICT 4

## PILLAR

### Take Care of What We Have

#### *Morrison County Belle Prairie Park*

An enhancement and update of the Belle Prairie Park master plan will lead to developing the park in a way that provides a reoccurring desire to use the facility while preserving the natural environment and pristine beauty. With its location on the Mississippi River, access points needed repair and posed a safety hazard. The updated plan will help identify the best access and ways to enhance accessibility for all park visitors. Greater scope of use and high-quality recreational experiences and activities are also targets of a successful new plan. Through public engagement and outreach, the new plan will help identify missing elements and provide a roadmap to a reimagined park.

### Connect People and the Outdoors

#### *Wright County Bertram Park*

Development of a new campground at Bertram Park will substantially complete the park master plan and fills a gap within the district. Camping units are getting larger and more luxurious and campers want full-service hook-ups and activities for a range of ages within campgrounds. Through a variety of active and passive programs, Wright County and the YMCA operate a day camp from June through August that averages 300 youth per week. Campers at the park would have the full range of activities available to them as well as a swimming beach, fishing pier and hiking trails. Additionally, the campground can be utilized as an overnight stop for users of the Mississippi River Trail.

- 1 - Morrison County Belle Prairie Park
- 2 - Isanti County Irving & John Anderson Park  
Photo Credit: Brett Feldman/Parks & Trails Council
- 3 - Wright County Bertram Park
- 4 - Stearns County Kraemer Lake Park

## TOTAL FUNDING AWARDED TO DISTRICT 4 (FY16-FY20)

*This notes the total number of applications for funding submitted from FY16-FY20 and the total amount of grants made to this district over time.*

**16** Projects Funded : **22** Applications

**\$11,897,972**



1



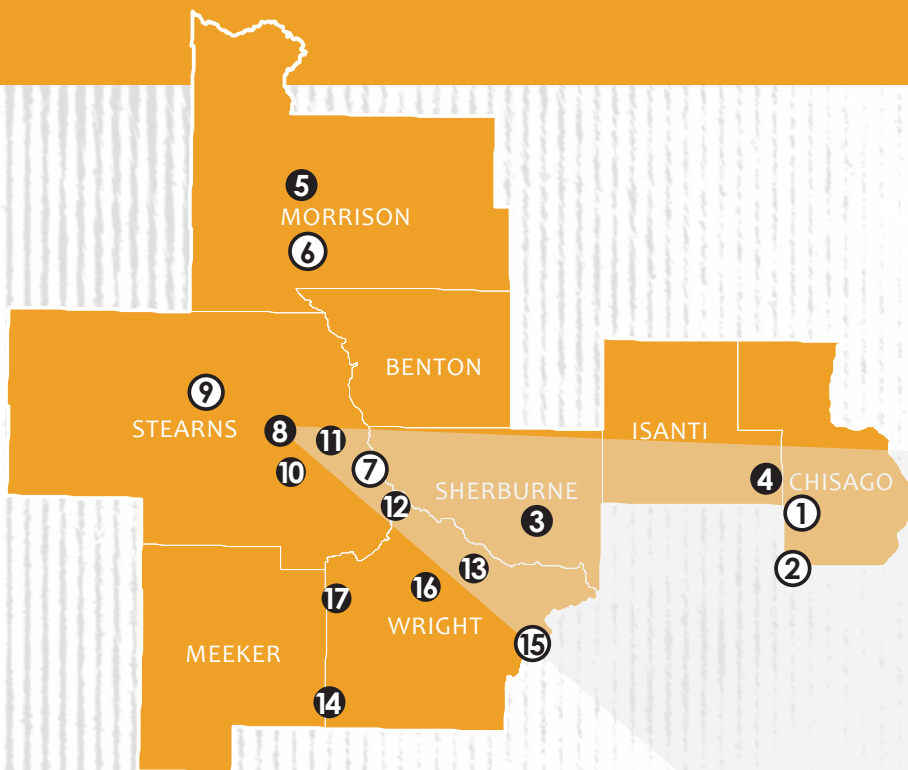
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3



- Designated Parks
- Designated Trails



	DESIGNATED PARK/TRAIL	CLASSIFICATION
1	Chisago County Sunrise Prairie Trail	T
2	Chisago County Swedish Immigrant Trail	T
3	Elk River Woodland Trails Park	N
4	Isanti County Irving & John Anderson Park	N
5	Morrison County Belle Prairie Park	N
6	Morrison County Soo Line Trail	T
7	St. Cloud Beaver Island Trail	T
8	Stearns County Kraemer Lake Park	N
9	Stearns County Lake Wobegon Trail	T
10	Stearns County Rockville Park	N
11	Stearns County Quarry Park	N
12	Stearns County Warner Lake Park	N
13	Wright County Bertram Park	N
14	Wright County Collinwood Park	N
15	Wright County Crow River Trail	T
16	Wright County Robert Ney Park	N
17	Wright County Stanley Eddy Park Reserve	N

N=Natural Resource-Based Park | S=Special Recreation Feature Park | T=Regional Trail, motorized, non-motorized, mixed use, water



# DISTRICT 5

## PILLAR

### Take Care of What We Have

#### *Lincoln County Hole in the Mountain Park*

A research and planning initiative at Hole in the Mountain Park will build upon the current master plan to further research the needs of existing and new park users and to enrich conceptual designs and cost estimates for future park and trail improvements in the implementation plan. The effort will also detail operational costs within the plan as a result of the planned park improvements. The initiative, through public engagement, will delve into the needs and desire of existing and new park users to inform future park improvements and activities.

### Connect People and the Outdoors

#### *Redwood County Plum Creek Park*

An upgrade to a variety of facilities and areas within Plum Creek Park achieved many goals of the master plan and created new experiences for park users. New camper cabins opened the park to a new audience and the addition of primitive campsites did the same, on a different level. A new kayak rental station allowed those interested in trying a new sport the opportunity to do so without a major investment. Vault toilet replacements and a new accessible trail create a more welcoming and high-quality experience for park visitors. These new and much needed investments achieve better park access and richer appreciation for the natural beauty of this setting.

- 1 - McLeod County Dakota Rail Trail
- 2 - Lyon County Twin Lakes Park Pavillion
- 3 - Lincoln County Hole in the Mountain Park
- 4 - Lyon County Twin Lakes Park

## TOTAL FUNDING AWARDED TO DISTRICT 5 (FY16-FY20)

*This notes the total number of applications for funding submitted from FY16-FY20 and the total amount of grants made to this district over time.*

**7** Projects  
Funded

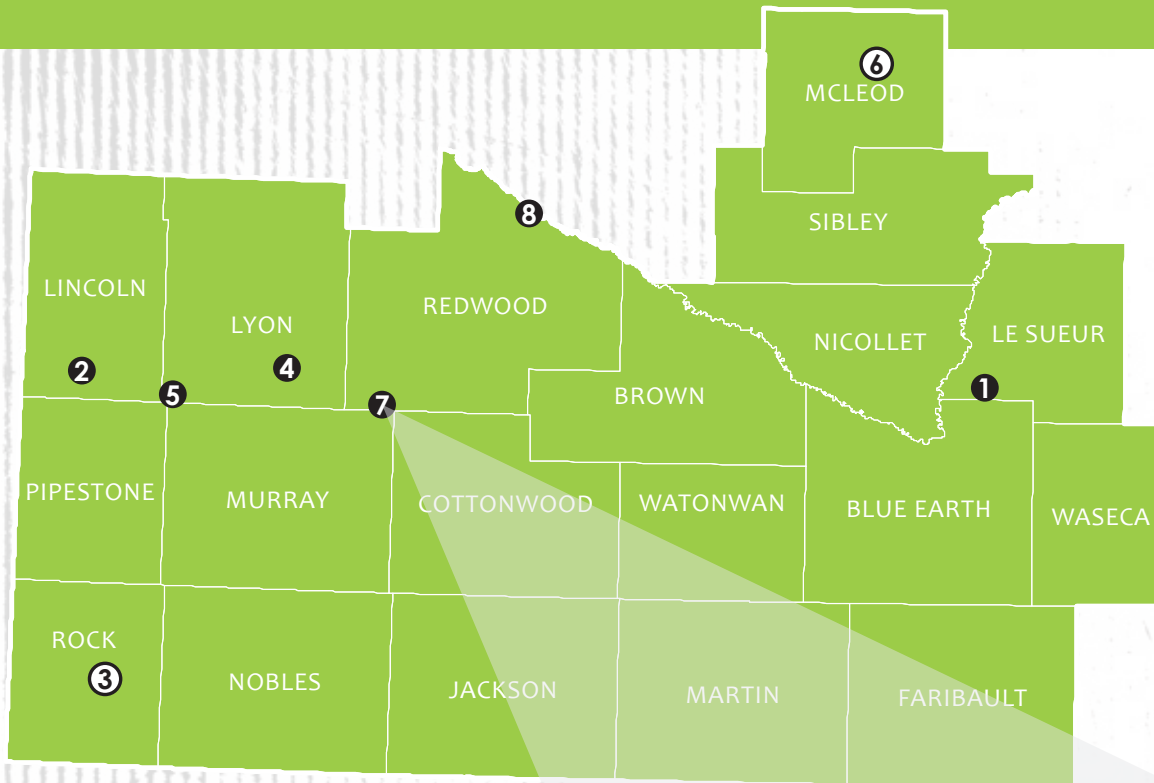
**9** Applications

**\$2,285,754**





- Designated Parks
- Designated Trails



	DESIGNATED PARK/TRAIL	CLASSIFICATION
1	Le Sueur County Lake Washington Park	N
2	Lincoln County Hole in the Mountain Park	N
3	Luverne Loop & Blue Mounds Trail	T
4	Lyon County Garvin Park	N
5	Lyon County Twin Lakes Park	N
6	McLeod County Dakota Rail Trail	T
7	Redwood County Plum Creek Park	N
8	Redwood Falls Ramsey Park	N

N=Natural Resource-Based Park | S=Special Recreation Feature Park | T=Regional Trail, motorized, non-motorized, mixed use, water



# DISTRICT 6

## PILLAR

### Take Care of What We Have

#### *Red Wing He Mni Can – Barn Bluff Park*

He Mni Can – Barn Bluff Park is a powerful and iconic landscape to the Dakota people and one of the most sacred places in the world. A significant project was to invest in the park to maintain a high-quality visitor experience, preserve the existing natural resources and restore those that had been degraded was undertaken with great results. Two significant features of the bluff were made ADA accessible; access to the G.A. Carlson Kiln and a new Dakota Community Memorial site. Improvements were made to trail infrastructure, directional signage, drinking water and restroom facilities. A new entry plaza creates a more welcoming and accessible environment for all park users.

### Connect People and the Outdoors

#### *Rochester Cascade Lake Park*

Cascade Lake Park provides a nature experience in an urban environment. At 225 acres, the park was created out of the reclamation of a sand mining area. The outdoor amenities and activities the park has to offer help residents and visitors foster a healthy lifestyle, in an unexpected setting. Opportunities within the park include a garden space, two bridge decks, a play area and a trail loop around the lake. Development of the nature-based landscaping and creation of various topographic changes and niche enclaves allows visitors to be immersed in a micro landscape and natural environment.

1 - Red Wing He Mni Can – Barn Bluff Park

2 - Cannon Valley Trail

3 - Goodhue County Byllesby Park

4 - Winona Bluffs Traverse

## TOTAL FUNDING AWARDED TO DISTRICT 6 (FY16-FY20)

*This notes the total number of applications for funding submitted from FY16-FY20 and the total amount of grants made to this district over time.*

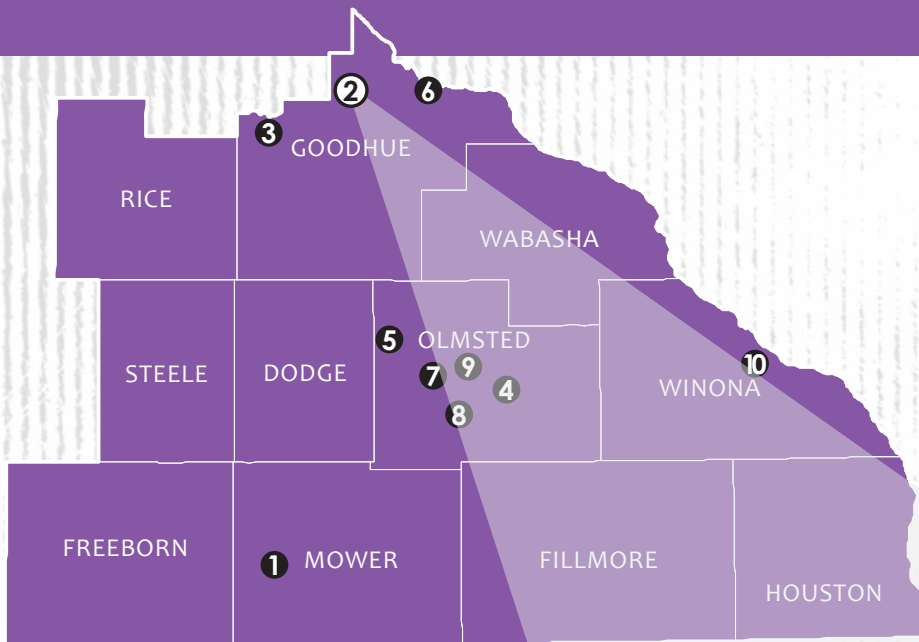
**11** Projects Funded : **17** Applications

**\$8,682,678**





- Designated Parks
- Designated Trails



	DESIGNATED PARK/TRAIL	CLASSIFICATION
1	Austin Jay C. Hormel Nature Center	N
2	Cannon Valley Trail	T
3	Goodhue County Byllesby Park	S
4	Olmsted County Chester Woods Park	N
5	Olmsted County Oxbow Park/Zollman Zoo	S
6	Red Wing He Mni Can – Barn Bluff Park	S
7	Rochester Cascade Lake Park	N
8	Rochester Gamehaven Park	N
9	Rochester Quarry Hill Park	N
10	Winona Bluffs Traverse	S

N=Natural Resource-Based Park | S=Special Recreation Feature Park | T=Regional Trail, motorized, non-motorized, mixed use, water





1



2



3

- 1 - Cook County Mountain Bike Trail System  
Photo Credit: Bryan Hansel
- 2 - Crow Wing County Millford Mine Shelter
- 3 - Parks & Trails Legacy Exhibit at the  
2019 Minnesota State Fair



# 2019 MILESTONES

- The Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission (GMRPTC) was a partner, along with the DNR and Metropolitan Council, in a Parks and Trails Legacy exhibit in the DNR building at the 2019 Minnesota State Fair. The exhibit drew an estimated 20,000 visitors and provided an opportunity for feedback and education about the three systems. This initiative is a stellar example of coordinating among partners and working together for a common goal.
- Work began in 2019 to complete an update of the 2015 Strategic Plan. Over time, as the Commission has developed and matured, it has become evident that principals and protocols within the Strategic Plan should be reviewed and adjusted to better suit a growing system. The process has included input from District Planning Committees, the Evaluation Team and, of course, the 13 GMRPTC Commissioners. Work will continue into 2020, with the updated Strategic Plan available in summer 2020.
- The Commission's Data Management System improvements/enhancements continued with Phase III work throughout 2019. Phase III has included updates to the funding application and reporting systems, as well as significant work to the master plan portal and the output. The result of the update is a more professional, visually-enhanced printed report, which can now include photos and charts.
- Recognizing the rapid growth of mountain bike trail systems within Districts 1 and 2, the GMRPTC contracted a consultant to research, inventory and map the systems within those districts. The result is a thorough and complete inventory of the number of trails, miles of trails, level of difficulty, trail types and support facilities. The report includes not only existing systems, but planned and proposed trail systems as well. The report is available to anyone and is available on the Commission website.
- The Commission contracted with a well-regarded mountain bike trail builder to create Mountain Bike Trail Design Guidelines. The document, when complete, will be available at no cost to any entity seeking to build sustainable mountain bike trails. A committee of knowledgeable and experienced individuals has provided review and input for the guidelines and it is anticipated to be available in 2020.
- To date, Greater Minnesota has designated 62 parks and trails as regionally significant under the designations of Natural Resource-Based Park, Special Recreation Feature Park and Regional Trail.
- The GMRPTC has brought together a coalition of agencies; DNR, Destination Marketing Organizations, Explore Minnesota Tourism and knowledgeable individuals, to form a Mountain Bike Collaborative Partnership. The intent of the group is to conduct a joint research project (visitor intercept surveys and trails counts) of eight mountain bike trail systems in the summer of 2020, followed by a joint marketing campaign in the summer of 2021. An overarching brand identity for the partnership has tentatively been agreed upon – Mountain Bike Minnesota North.
- The Commission has a new Instagram account, cleverly titled: [greaterminnesota](#), [#greaterminnesota](#) or [#gmrptc](#). The account highlights unique, fun, strange, different and just plain amusing places and sites throughout the landscape that is Greater Minnesota. The response has been fun as people comment on the interesting photos and captions on our travels throughout the state.

Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission is comprised of 13 members appointed by the governor, two members from each of the six districts and one at-large member.

The Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission was created to undertake system planning and provide recommendations to the legislature for grants funded by the parks and trails legacy fund to counties and cities outside of the seven-county metropolitan area. These parks and trails must be designated by the GMRPTC as being regionally significant.



[gmrptcommission.org](http://gmrptcommission.org)

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