



Parks and Trails Legacy Fund DNR Strategic Directions - Fiscal Years 2022-23

Minnesota Department of Natural Resources

February 8, 2021

Contents

| | |
|--|----|
| Background | 2 |
| Guidance on Biennial Legacy Priorities..... | 3 |
| Alignment of DNR Investments with the Four Legacy Pillars | 4 |
| Alignment with DNR and State Parks and Trails Strategic Guidance..... | 5 |
| FY22/23 DNR Parks and Trails Legacy Biennial Budget Proposal, by Pillar..... | 7 |
| Connect People to the Outdoors | 8 |
| Acquire Land and Create Opportunities | 11 |
| Take Care of What We Have..... | 13 |
| Coordinate with Partners..... | 15 |
| DNR FY22/23 Legacy Investment Plan At-A-Glance | 18 |

Background

Minnesota voters approved the Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment to the Minnesota Constitution in 2008. The Parks and Trails Legacy Fund receives 14.25 percent of the sales tax revenue resulting from the Legacy Amendment. Since the advent of the Fund, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Metropolitan Council and Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission (GMRPTC) have been appropriated a portion of the available funding each biennium to support parks and trails of regional or statewide significance.

This report lays out priorities, strategies, proposed funding allocations, and outcomes for appropriations to the DNR from the Parks and Trails Legacy Fund. Based on guidance from the 2011 *Parks and Trails Legacy Plan: Parks and Trails of State and Regional Significance, A 25-year long-range plan for Minnesota* ([“25-year Parks and Trails Legacy Plan”](#)), the DNR prioritizes its investments to align with the four Legacy “pillars”:

- Connect people to the outdoors.
- Acquire land and create opportunities.
- Take care of what we have.
- Improve coordination with partners to implement the *25-year Parks and Trails Legacy Plan*.

Orientation to this Document

The following pages lay out overall strategic guidance and specific outcomes in each of the four pillar areas. While the pillars help guide Legacy investments, DNR also uses an integrated approach to advancing Legacy priorities. For example, many projects advance multiple strategies, such as acquiring land and developing built facilities, connecting people to these new opportunities, coordinating with partners, and maintaining and taking care of these investments over time.

Supplement versus substitute/supplant

In compliance with M.S. 85.53 Subd. 2 (h), DNR affirms that the programs and projects presented in this document, and requested to be funded through an appropriation from the Parks and Trails Legacy Fund, do not supplant, nor substitute for, any previous funding that was not from a Legacy Fund and was used for the same purpose.

Guidance on Biennial Legacy Priorities

The *25-year Parks and Trails Legacy Plan* identified a set of key strategies, organized within four main strategic directions, also known as the “four pillars,” to move the state toward its vision of a world-class parks and trails system connecting everyone to the outdoors. The steering committee and work groups that advised the plan development selected a smaller group of recommended priority strategies for the early years of Legacy funding (FY2010-14) to help focus limited resources. One of these recommendations was to establish a statewide advisory body to work with DNR and the other Parks and Trails Legacy coordinating partners (i.e., Metropolitan Council, GMRPTC) to champion the 25-year Plan. The Parks and Trails Legacy Advisory Committee (PTLAC) began meeting in 2012, and has provided an important voice to guide partner agencies in the best use of the Legacy dollars appropriated each biennium. (More information is available on the [PTLAC website](#).)

Insights on Legacy Priorities from the Parks and Trails Legacy Advisory Committee (PTLAC)

The PTLAC provided the three coordinating partners with a key public engagement touchpoint during 2019 and 2020. In 2019, the PTLAC conducted its business as usual, with semi-monthly meetings at parks and trails units throughout the state. In 2020, the significant impacts from COVID-19 required that the PTLAC and coordinating partners focus their attention on addressing the impacts of the COVID-19 crisis on operation of, and visitation to, the state’s outdoor recreation facilities. Compared to the prior year, 2020 visitation to state parks increased by about 25% statewide, and to state trails by more than 50%. PTLAC and the coordinating partners recognize that this renewed interest in outdoor recreation presents an opportunity to better connect more people with Minnesota’s treasured natural resources, parks and trails into the future, while also presenting new operational demands and challenges.

Intersecting with this heightened participation in nature-based recreation, the May 25, 2020 death of George Floyd in Minneapolis, and the widespread social justice discourse that followed that event, became another significant focus for the PTLAC meetings during 2020. Because a key strategy of the *25-year Parks and Trails Legacy Plan* is to create a welcoming environment at Minnesota’s parks and trails, PTLAC deliberated at some length how all of our outdoor recreation systems might better serve the increasingly diverse communities throughout Minnesota, particularly those that have been historically underserved.

Other topics discussed at the PTLAC meetings included creating measurable benchmarks for Legacy success, advancing a plan for an interconnected statewide touring trail, and more effectively communicating the goals and strategies of the *25-year Parks and Trails Legacy Plan*.

25-year Parks and Trails Legacy Plan Priorities

The 25-year Parks and Trails Legacy Plan identified the strategies listed below as top priorities for the first five years of plan implementation. These priorities continue to provide guidance for how the DNR invests Legacy funds across the state park and trail system.

1. **Do more marketing.** Time and again, Minnesotans have expressed a need for better information, including more integrated web-based offerings, to increase awareness of recreational opportunities.
2. **Provide a welcoming environment** with programs and special events to attract first-time visitors to parks and trails. Adapt to meet the needs of Minnesota’s changing demographics, which are aging and becoming more diverse.
3. **Physically connect communities to parks and trails** and make them accessible to people of all abilities.
4. **Accelerate the acquisition of private land within park or trail boundaries.**
5. **Connect high-priority trails and fill critical gaps in alignments.**
6. **Focus on opportunities near regional centers** and in areas of shortage that are projected to grow most rapidly over the coming 25 years.
7. **Accelerate the rehabilitation of aging park and trail infrastructure** to ensure high-quality experiences.
8. **Preserve existing high-quality natural resources** and restore those that have been degraded. Prioritize the control of the spread of invasive species.
9. **Give visitors the opportunity to easily find what they want.** Develop and maintain integrated and standardized information (e.g., website) about parks and trails of state and regional significance.
10. **Establish a statewide advisory committee** to help foster a network of parks and trails with a seamless user experience.

Alignment of DNR Investments with the Four Legacy Pillars

Pillar 1: Connect People to the Outdoors

The DNR’s primary strategies for connecting people to the outdoors include providing education, interpretation and outdoor skills training, promoting state parks and trails opportunities, and reaching out to new and diverse audiences in order to engage all Minnesotans in outdoor recreation and grow greater appreciation for Minnesota’s natural and cultural resources.

Pillar 2: Acquire Land, Create Opportunities

The DNR will pursue high-priority acquisitions that establish important connections and preserve priority natural or cultural resources. Within this pillar, the agency will focus on expanding trail experiences that motivate new customers to enjoy the outdoors, completing high-priority development projects that encourage outdoor recreation participation and enhance or protect natural and cultural resources.

Pillar 3: Take Care of What We Have (Maintain Existing Holdings)

The DNR will ensure high-quality outdoor recreation experiences through infrastructure renewal and increased accessibility. DNR resource professionals will also manage and restore natural landscapes within the state park and trail system, including invasive species detection and management.

Pillar 4: Coordinate with Partners

Coordination and cooperation are needed to do everything from providing information to park and trail visitors, to ensuring that gaps in outdoor recreation opportunities across the state are addressed. The PTLAC continues to encourage the development of a seamless network of parks and trails, where all three Legacy coordinating partners are working together toward shared outcomes.

Alignment with DNR and State Parks and Trails Strategic Guidance

DNR Strategic Priorities

The 2020-2022 DNR Strategic Plan identifies nine near-term priorities to advance the agency's four mission-oriented goals: 1) to conserve and enhance Minnesota's waters, natural lands, and diverse habitats; 2) to meet the needs of new and existing outdoor recreation participants so all benefit from nature; 3) to contribute to strong and sustainable job markets, economies, and communities; and 4) to demonstrate operational excellence and continuous improvement in public service.

The nine strategic priorities for DNR are:

1. Connect people to the outdoors
2. Enhance public engagement
3. Expand diversity, equity and inclusion
4. Consult and collaborate with tribal governments
5. Manage natural resources responsibly for economic and community benefit
6. Address critical natural resource issues proactively
7. Mitigate and adapt to climate change
8. Cultivate a healthy, supportive and safe workplace
9. Ensure DNR's financial vitality

Parks and Trails Division Areas of Impact

The DNR Parks and Trails Division has identified five "areas of impact" that help advance the agency's goals and strategic priorities, as well as the *25-year Parks and Trails Legacy Plan*. These five areas of impact are guided by the Division Leadership Team, and include the following:

1. Operational excellence in outdoor recreation
2. Healthy cultural and natural resources
3. Quality visitor services and outreach
4. Healthy and productive organization
5. Organizational stability and sustainability

The areas of impact are implemented by staff across the state, so DNR delivers excellent operations, resource management and visitor services in the northwest, northeast, central and southern regions of Minnesota.

Minnesota State Parks and Trails System Plan

The DNR developed the [Minnesota State Parks and Trails System Plan](#) to advance new approaches for managing the state's parks, recreation areas, trails, forest recreation areas, and water recreation system. The system plan is an outgrowth of work completed by the [State Parks and Trails Future Strategies Committee](#). That committee recommended the DNR "move toward a more differentiated system that favors quality of facilities and opportunities over quantity or geographic distribution."

The system plan is a tool to help guide strategic decisions about where and how to invest over a ten-year period. Rather than "trying to do everything, everywhere," the DNR strives to focus investments in the right places at the right times. The system plan informs investment in state parks and trails by identifying different types of experiences and the type and frequency of investments that are needed to sustain those experiences at a high quality. For example, some state parks have campgrounds with many developed facilities and amenities, while others have campgrounds with a more rustic setting. Both types of experiences offer a great connection to nature, but have different investment needs.

In these pages, state parks, recreation areas and state trails are sometimes referenced by their system plan investment group category. State Park and State Recreation Area investment groups include the following:

- **Destination units** offer a destination-quality experience, with an array of outdoor recreation and lodging opportunities, park facilities, and naturalist-led interpretive offerings.
- **Core units** offer a diversity of quality outdoor recreation experiences, from classic camping and hiking opportunities to adventurous climbing, mountain biking, off-highway vehicle (OHV) riding, and kayaking opportunities, often in close proximity to population centers.
- **Rustic units** offer basic amenities, including picnic tables, fire rings, and orientation signage.

State trail investment groups include the following:

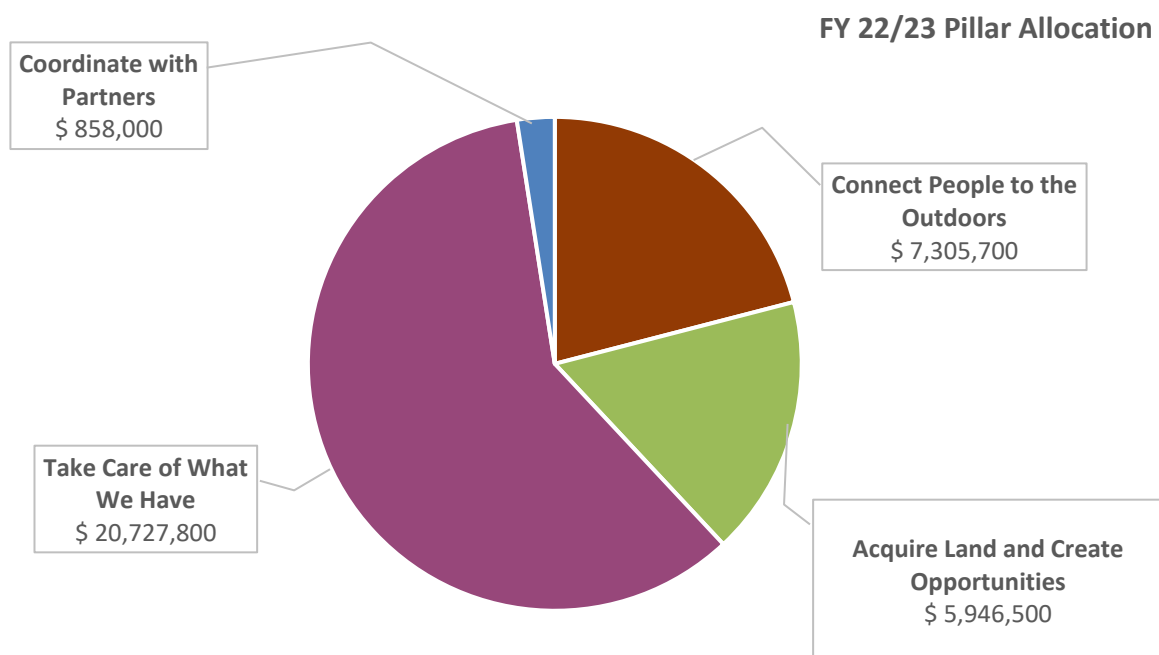
- **Primary state trail corridors** are those that provide high-quality recreational and community connections, host a broad variety of uses, and traverse scenic and diverse Minnesota landscapes.
- **Secondary state trail corridors** are those that provide important recreation connections, but may require local partnerships to help the state develop and manage them in the future.

FY22/23 DNR Parks and Trails Legacy Biennial Budget Proposal, by Pillar

Due to the recent economic downturn, and assuming a continuation of the 40-40-20 split of Legacy Funds between DNR, Metropolitan Council and GMRPTC respectively, the DNR anticipates that the 2021 Legislature will appropriate about \$6.7 million less in Parks and Trails Legacy Funds to the agency, or a 16% reduction, in the FY22/23 biennium. To align with agency and PTLAC priorities, the DNR proposes the allocation of Legacy funds in the next biennium as outlined in the following table. The DNR relied on the *25-year Parks and Trails Legacy Plan* and its guiding principles to inform recommendations about the necessary reductions. The DNR also prioritized finishing projects over starting new ones. As a result, the proposed allocation of Legacy Funds has fewer dollars directed toward new acquisition and development projects, and instead emphasizes completing priority commitments in connecting people to the outdoors and taking care of what we have. The remainder of this report details proposed investments for each Legacy pillar.

| Legacy Pillar | FY 22/23 Dollars (Proposed) | FY 22/23 Percent | FY 20/21 Dollars (Appropriated) | FY 20/21 Percent |
|--|--------------------------------|------------------|------------------------------------|------------------|
| Connect People to the Outdoors | \$7,305,700 | 21.5% | \$6,923,590 | 17.0% |
| Acquire Land and Create Opportunities | \$5,946,500 | 17.5% | \$9,978,115 | 24.5% |
| Take Care of What We Have | \$20,727,800 | 61.0% | \$23,825,295 | 58.5% |
| Total DNR Parks and Trails Allocation | \$33,980,000 | 100% | \$40,727,000 | 100% |
| Coordinate with Partners * | \$858,000 | N/A | \$1,028,000 | N/A |

* Funding for the Coordinate with Partners pillar is appropriated separately from the DNR Legacy budget.



Connect People to the Outdoors

FY22/23 Proposed Biennial Legacy Allocation: \$7,305,700

21.5% of total DNR Parks and Trails Division allocation

Previous Budget Allocations

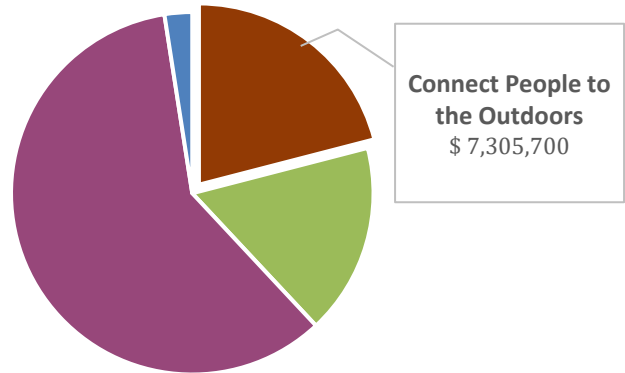
FY12/13 Biennium: \$4,300,000

FY14/15 Biennium: \$5,066,000

FY16/17 Biennium: \$5,448,000

FY18/19 Biennium: \$5,559,696

FY20/21 Biennium: \$6,923,590



Why is this Important?

During the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, state parks, recreation areas, and trails had record visitation. The pandemic emphasized how important these outdoor places are to Minnesotans. Compared to the prior year, visitation to state parks and recreation areas increased almost 25% statewide, and more than 50% at state parks near Minnesota’s most densely populated areas. State trail use also increased nearly 50%.

Research shows that spending time outdoors provides significant health and wellness benefits. People who engage with nature are also more likely to have an appreciation of the natural world—and to want to support and maintain it for future generations.

The 2017 Minnesota Outdoor Activities Survey identified broad trends in outdoor recreation participation among Minnesotans.¹ While the study showed that outdoor activity has become increasingly important to Minnesotans, it also showed that barriers to participation still exist for some. The study reinforces what most outdoor recreation providers already intuitively know – that people desire to spend time together in nature with family and friends in order to improve their health and disconnect from the demands of everyday life. Our goal is to reduce the barriers that exist so that *all Minnesotans* can enjoy the benefits of our state parks and trails system.



¹ The Improve Group. (2017) 2017 Minnesota Outdoor Activities Survey Report on Findings. Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. St. Paul, MN. [Minnesota Outdoor Activities Survey Finding Report, 2017](#)

Desired 25-Year Outcome from the *Legacy Plan*

The state's population is projected to increase by 19% over the next 25 years. Our goal is for the number of visits to Minnesota's parks and trails to increase by at least this much as well. This increase would encourage life-long visitation by individuals and families and foster a continued sense of stewardship from generation to generation. Together with partners, Minnesota can encourage growth in outdoor recreation participation so that more residents enjoy higher quality-of-life and the health and wellness benefits of nature-based recreation.

Top *Legacy Plan* Priorities for the FY22/23 Biennium:

1. Provide a safe and welcoming environment to attract first-time visitors to parks and trails. Adapt to Minnesota's changing demographics, which point to a more diverse and older population.
2. Provide simple and accessible orientation and wayfinding information that is easy to understand and shares meaningful and engaging information to parks and trails visitors.
3. Do more effective marketing and promotion. Time and again, Minnesotans have expressed a desire for better information, including more integrated web-based content, to increase awareness of outdoor recreation opportunities.
4. Increase the diversity of Minnesota state and regional parks and trails staff and volunteers by recruiting, hiring, and mentoring employees, interns and volunteers who better reflect the overall Minnesota population. Provide ongoing equity, diversity and inclusion training to staff and volunteers.
5. Connect communities with parks and trails and make them accessible to people of all abilities.

DNR '*Connect People*' Programs

- Statewide interpretive services, including naturalist programs and *I Can!* skill-building programs.
- Multi-platform content delivery, including web-based information, social media and multicultural media outlets.
- Expanded intern, volunteer and partnership opportunities.
- Marketing and promotions to diverse communities.



FY22/23 Proposed Plan and Outcomes

DNR's FY22/23 Plan

In light of Minnesota's increased need for outdoor recreation and the renewed recognition of persistent social inequities in 2020, DNR is recommitting to our goal of ensuring visitors of all backgrounds feel welcome at state parks and trails and bringing our visitor demographics more in line with the demographics of the state. An increased allocation in the "Connect People to the Outdoors" pillar is proposed so that the DNR can provide more education, interpretation and outdoor skills training; promote state parks and trails opportunities in new and innovative ways; and reach out to new and diverse audiences in order to engage all Minnesotans in outdoor recreation. In addition to improving overall quality of life, these initiatives will help Minnesotans further understand and appreciate the state's natural and cultural resources.

Proposed Results/Outcomes

- **Interpretive services (in ways consistent with COVID-19 public health protocols):**
 - Introduce up to 49,000 participants per year to new outdoor activities through *I Can!* and other skill-building programs. Help participants stay connected to additional opportunities with an electronic newsletter. Research the impact of skill-building programs on participants, including retention in outdoor recreation.
 - Deliver up to 2,900 naturalist programs to about 100,000 visitors, program participants and school students. Provide interpretive programs through year-round and seasonal naturalists at Destination and Core state parks and trails. Recruit and mentor interns through the Naturalist Corps program.
 - Guide visitors through the prairie in a bison tour vehicle, connect to Spanish-speaking communities, and support other interpretive services at Blue Mounds State Park.
 - Provide engaging, self-service interpretation by designing new exhibits, visitor center displays, brochures, mobile apps and maps.
- **Multi-platform content delivery:**
 - Provide motivating messages through media relations, multi-cultural media outreach, web-based content and social media to provide information about state parks and trails. Expand virtual-based skill-building and trip planning information to reduce barriers for new or potential visitors and make it easier for existing visitors to get outdoors.
 - Improve wayfinding, orientation, and general visitor information to create a safe and welcoming environment for all.
 - Deploy new technologies to improve the visitor experience, including digital and mobile-based interpretive and orientation tools.
 - Expand and refine the use of social media to reach current and potential new visitors, including youth, young adults, families with children and diverse communities.
- **Marketing and retail:**
 - Implement new marketing and advertising campaigns, including materials, photo and video shoots, promotions and media buys.
 - Focus on ensuring that all Minnesotans see themselves reflected in these campaigns, and therefore the outdoors.
 - Expand digital and social media presence with multicultural media.
 - Improve and expand Hiking Club and Passport Club loyalty programs.
- **Partnership development:**
 - As COVID-19 public health protocols allow, augment programming and services with volunteers and increase volunteer engagement across the state.
 - Expand partnerships that reduce the barriers for underserved populations to access state parks and trails opportunities.
 - Support the Urban Outreach Program based out of Fort Snelling State Park.

- Build cross-cultural partnerships and contract with targeted vendors. Promote new and innovative partnerships through small “grants” to support engagement of under-represented groups.
- **Intercultural Competence:**
 - Continue to increase the DNR’s intercultural competence through training and development.

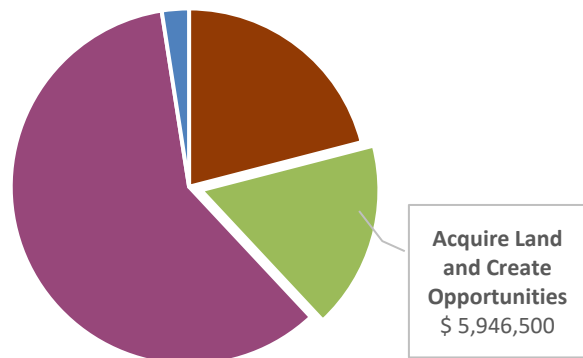
Acquire Land and Create Opportunities

FY22/23 Proposed Biennial Legacy Allocation: \$5,946,500

17.5% of total DNR Parks and Trails Division allocation

Previous Budget Allocations

FY12/13 Biennium: \$10,301,350
 FY14/15 Biennium: \$13,509,000
 FY16/17 Biennium: \$9,527,000
 FY18/19 Biennium: \$9,142,034
 FY20/21 Biennium: \$9,978,115



Why is this Important?

Seventy percent of Minnesota residents participate in outdoor recreation each year, and nearly two-thirds of Minnesotans reported recreating, on average, more than twice per week.² Yet, Minnesotans who use parks and trails often say they would like additional opportunities available to them. New and expanded park and trail opportunities are needed to satisfy current visitors, as well as to create opportunities for new visitors. Outdoor recreation has never been more important than during the COVID-19 pandemic, with 2020 visits to state parks increased almost 25% statewide, and nearly 50% increased visits to state trails.

Desired 25-Year Outcome from the Legacy Plan

To meet Minnesota’s nature-based recreation demand, lands and trail connections will be acquired and/or developed. High-priority development projects will encourage outdoor recreation participation and enhance or protect natural and cultural resources.



² Outdoor Industry Association, 2017 and DNR Outdoor Activities Survey, 2017

Top Legacy Plan Priorities for the FY22/23 Biennium:

1. Accelerate acquisition of private land within a park or trail boundary (private in-holdings).
2. Connect high-priority trails and fill critical gaps.
3. Develop infrastructure and amenities that meet the lifestyles of our target markets.
4. Design, develop, and redevelop parks and trails facilities that meet the differing outdoor recreation needs for people of all abilities.
5. Design and construct sustainable, resilient, and energy-efficient infrastructure.

DNR 'Acquire Land, Create Opportunities' Programs

- State Park and Recreation Area Development
- State Trail Development
- State Park and Trail Land Acquisition

FY22/23 Proposed Plan and Outcomes

DNR's FY22/23 Plan

Given the lower-than-average anticipated revenues into the Parks and Trails Legacy Fund, DNR plans to substantially moderate investment in this pillar for the FY22/23 biennium. Using the State Parks and Trails System Plan as a guide, DNR will pursue the highest-priority acquisitions that provide important connections and/or preserve priority natural or cultural resources. DNR will focus on acquiring and/or developing critical trail connections between existing trails, parks, and communities to attract new customers and serve communities. DNR will also focus on completing high-priority development projects that create new opportunities to encourage outdoor recreation participation and/or enhance and protect natural and cultural resources. Finally, DNR will continue to prioritize making our facilities energy efficient and accessible to all.

Proposed Results/Outcomes

- Complete bike rental and trail parking facility at Itasca State Park.
- Complete final phase of trail projects at Cuyuna Country State Recreation Area.
- Complete design phase of Minnesota River State Trail connection between St. Peter and Mankato.
- Develop a paved multi-use trail and trail center at Glendalough State Park.
- Acquire high-priority trail connections and state park inholdings.
- Complete the pre-design phase of new development projects in preparation for the FY24/25 biennium.

Take Care of What We Have

FY22/23 Proposed Biennial Legacy Allocation: \$20,727,800

61.0% of total DNR Parks and Trails Division allocation

Previous Budget Allocations

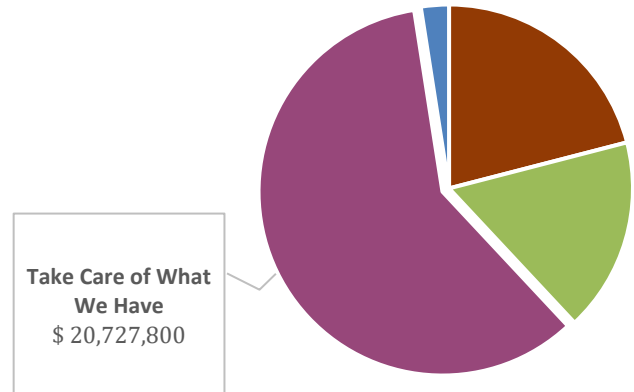
FY12/13 Biennium: \$13,859,650

FY14/15 Biennium: \$15,198,000

FY16/17 Biennium: \$19,927,000

FY18/19 Biennium: \$20,773,270

FY20/21 Biennium: \$23,825,295



Why is this Important?

Minnesota continues to invest in the rehabilitation and renewal of parks and trails of state and regional significance. Once a park or trail is established, regular reinvestment is needed to maintain natural and cultural resources and to ensure safe, high-quality experiences for current and future visitors. Over time, aging infrastructure and intensive use have outstripped available funding, leading to a backlog of preservation, rehabilitation and renewal work. For example, more than one-third of the 296 bridges in the state trail system are over 100 years old and many of those will need to be rehabilitated or replaced in the coming years. In addition, the state parks and trails system includes more than 2,100 buildings — many of them historic. Assets like these contribute to Minnesota being a national leader in outdoor recreation, but also require the state to adequately invest in these resources to maintain our outstanding resources into the future.

Desired 25-Year Outcome from the Legacy Plan

Minnesota parks and trails of state and regional significance are well maintained and up-to-date. They meet current needs and provide high-quality recreation opportunities for a variety of visitors with different interests, needs and abilities. Rehabilitation is accelerated beyond current levels; this work includes infrastructure and natural resource management.



Top Legacy Plan Priorities for the FY22/23 Biennium:

1. Accelerate rehabilitation of an aging park and trail infrastructure to ensure high-quality experiences. State and regionally significant parks and trails need more funds set aside for development, restoration and redevelopment to meet current standards for accessibility and energy sustainability.
2. Preserve existing high-quality natural and water resources. Manage the spread of invasive species and restore high-quality, rare and aquatic plant communities. Natural resources are the foundation for the state park and trail system. Participants in the DNR's 2017 Visitor Study and the 2018 10-year Legacy Celebration events said natural settings are very important to them.
3. Protect cultural resources, including archaeological sites, cultural landscapes and structures listed on the National Register, which are critical to help tell the stories of Minnesota's past to visitors. Complete

archaeological investigations and resource assessments to avoid, minimize or mitigate impacts to cultural resources.

DNR ‘Take Care’ Programs

Asset Management

- Renewal and rehabilitation of state trails, forest trails, state trail bridges, and state park buildings and facilities.
- Renewable energy and energy conservation projects across the state park and trail system.
- Emergency repair and maintenance of buildings and facilities.
- Enhancing Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessibility.

Natural and Cultural Resource Management

- Invasive species management on Parks and Trails Division-administered lands.
- Landscape restoration and maintenance.
- Prescribed burning.
- Archaeological investigations.
- Resource assessments to avoid, minimize or mitigate impacts to natural and cultural resources.
- Special projects (e.g., bison restoration).



FY22/23 Proposed Plan and Outcomes

DNR’s FY22/23 Plan

Increased visitation has created some unprecedented wear and tear on our state park and trail system. Many units, and their facilities, were designed to accommodate much lower visitorship than we are currently experiencing. Using the [State Parks and Trails System Plan](#) as a guide, the DNR will work to ensure visitors experience high-quality resources and renewed facilities that can accommodate our current users and circumstances in a safe and accessible manner. “Take Care of What We Have” means that the DNR is maintaining the natural and cultural resources and built facilities that are necessary to sustain quality outdoor experiences for current and future visitors. Accelerating investments to restore and preserve our resources and facilities will be crucial for the DNR to address a backlog of rehabilitation needs and sustain the system into the future. These investments help improve public safety, increase accessibility of outdoor recreation to people of all abilities, and reduce our energy footprint.

Proposed Results/Outcomes

- Complete two shower building rehabilitations at Core state parks.
- Complete a park portfolio upgrade of orientation, wayfinding, and vault toilets at one Rustic state park.
- Complete design and engineering for one state park campground redevelopment.
- Address backlog of site restoration projects, including building demolition and habitat restoration.
- Upgrade interpretive display at one state park.
- Rehabilitate and repair four to six state trail bridges.
- Rehabilitate five to seven miles of multi-use state trail.
- Maintain sustainable state park hiking trails at high-priority locations.
- Invest in energy efficiency and renewable energy projects across the state park and trail system.
- Complete assessments and design for future state park and trail system asset management.
- Reconstruct native plant communities, with a focus on high-quality, rare or aquatic communities.
- Conduct prescribed burns on state park and trail lands.
- Manage invasive species on state park and trail lands.
- Conduct natural and cultural resource assessments to avoid, minimize or mitigate impacts to resources.
- Contract with Conservation Corps of Minnesota and Iowa to engage youth workers in resource management.

Coordinate with Partners

FY22/23 Proposed Biennial Legacy Allocation: \$858,000

Note that, as was the case in previous biennia, “Coordinate” funding, which benefits all systems, is a separate appropriation that DNR administers for the benefit of all the Legacy partners.

Previous Budget Allocations

FY12/13 Biennium \$404,000

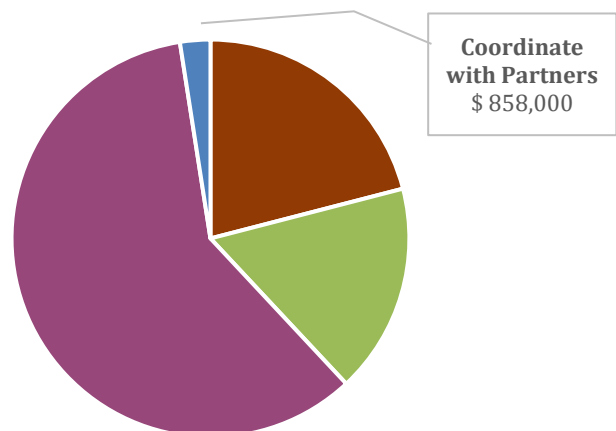
FY14/15 Biennium \$407,000

FY16/17 Biennium \$1,091,000*

FY18/19 Biennium: \$1,069,000

FY20/21 Biennium: \$1,028,000

*\$260,000 to University of Minnesota



Why is this Important?

The state and regional parks and trails system is made up of many parts, with different providers in different parts of the state, and funded through a variety of sources. This complex network poses a challenge to state and regional providers interested in meaningful coordination, as well as to our visitors, who seek high-quality, connected, and accessible opportunities. Coordination is essential to achieve the vision laid out in the 25-year

Parks and Trails Legacy Plan and to ensure that the principles the public developed for the use of Legacy Funds are achieved. DNR is working with partners - including, but not limited to, the Metropolitan Council and the GMRPTC – to achieve effective coordination that results in the best use of funds. Efficiency and effectiveness are enhanced through coordination.

Desired 25-Year Outcome from the *Legacy Plan*

Minnesotans and visitors see parks and trails of state and regional significance as a seamless network; they may not know which agency is responsible for management of the natural area they are enjoying—they simply want to enjoy time outdoors. Emphasis is on the user experience. Outdoor recreation providers must work together to offer visitors easy-to-use maps and other information.

Top *Legacy Plan* Priorities for the FY22/23 biennium:

1. Give visitors the opportunity to easily find what they want. Maintain integrated and standardized information about parks and trails of state and regional significance.
2. Promote and coordinate the implementation of the *25-year Parks and Trails Legacy Plan*, with strategic guidance and advice from the PTLAC.
3. Enhance coordination with other agencies, organizations and nonprofits.
4. Enhance coordination of Minnesota’s state and regional parks and trails at the regional and site levels.

DNR ‘Coordinate’ Programs

Coordinate with Partners (DNR, Metropolitan Council and GMRPTC):

- Coordinated research and planning across state and regional recreational systems.
- Integrated, web-based systems.
- Ongoing support for the PTLAC.
- Landscape restoration evaluation.
- Coordinated approaches to involve youth and diverse audiences in Legacy work.

FY22/23 Plan, Proposed Outcomes and Project Highlights

Coordinating Partners’ Proposed FY22/23 Plan

Coordination and cooperation are needed to do everything from providing information to park and trail visitors to ensuring that gaps in outdoor recreation opportunities are addressed. The PTLAC encourages and facilitates the coordinated development of a network of parks and trails, where all three Legacy coordinating partners are working together toward shared outcomes.

Proposed Results/Outcomes

Coordinating partners, in consultation with the PTLAC, will:

- Enhance, integrate and create accessible web-based information for park and trail visitors.

- Facilitate standardized, coordinated research and planning across state and regional park and trail systems.
- Support activities of the PTLAC.
- Involve youth and diverse audiences in Legacy work and outcomes.
- Coordinate projects and Legacy approaches with other agencies, organizations and nonprofits.

Project Highlights

- **Research and system planning.** Coordination continues to be needed across the three systems to understand who is using state and regional park and trail systems, where visitors are coming from, their satisfaction with facilities and programs, and how to better connect target markets to the outdoors. Coordinated research and planning is critical to ensuring Minnesotans' expectations for use of the Parks and Trails Legacy Fund are being met. These joint efforts build on existing data and use best practices for research and monitoring.
- **Web-based systems.** One of the goals in the Parks and Trails Legacy Plan is enhanced, integrated and accessible information for park and trail users. An integrated [web discovery tool](#) was developed in 2018 through collaborative efforts and is a resource that continues to offer users a truly seamless system to explore. This investment will continue to build on that effort by maintaining the tool and seeking new opportunities for marketing its use to Minnesota residents and visitors to our state.
- **Support for the PTLAC.** The [mission of the PTLAC](#) is to "champion the *25-year Parks and Trails Legacy Plan* by providing recommendations to enhance promotion, coordination, and accountability throughout implementation of the plan."
 - The PTLAC was created as a part of the implementation of the *25-year Parks and Trails Legacy Plan*. Committee members advise the convening sponsors (GMRPTC, Metropolitan Council and DNR) on the implementation of the plan.
 - The committee is comprised of volunteers from around the state. Reimbursement for travel expenses and support for their work makes participation possible for a diverse group of Minnesotans.
- **Restoration evaluation.** Evaluation of natural resource restoration projects helps measure progress toward habitat restoration goals. A significant portion of Legacy Funds has been invested in restoration projects, and annual assessments of progress will continue to guide future investments. This proposal will help achieve legislative mandates for restoration evaluation.
- **Other priority coordination needs such as joint marketing, public health promotion, and advancing diversity and inclusion.** Other coordination priorities include joint marketing and youth involvement, promoting the health benefits of outdoor recreation, and connecting racially and ethnically diverse audiences. This initiative will help ensure coordinated efforts among partnering agencies.

DNR FY22/23 Legacy Investment Plan At-A-Glance: Proposed Results and Project Highlights

The following is a brief summary of the proposed FY22/23 DNR Legacy Investment Plan. It excerpts and consolidates the “proposed results/outcomes” from each of the four strategic priorities and adds example projects to provide an at-a-glance reference to the proposal.

Connect People to the Outdoors

\$7,305,700 (21.5%) of DNR Parks and Trails Division Allocation

Interpretive services (in ways consistent with COVID-19 public health protocols):

- Introduce up to 49,000 participants per year to new outdoor activities through *I Can!* and other skill-building programs.
- Deliver up to 2,900 naturalist programs to about 100,000 visitors, program participants and school students.
- Examples of projects: bison tour vehicle, Spanish-speaking outreach, self-service interpretation, visitor center displays, brochures, mobile apps and maps.

Multi-platform content delivery:

- Provide motivating messages through media relations, multi-cultural media outreach, web-based content and social media to provide information about state parks and trails. Expand virtual-based skill-building and trip planning.
- Improve wayfinding, orientation, and general visitor information to create a safe and welcoming environment for all.
- Deploy new technologies to improve visitor experience, including digital and mobile-based tools.
- Expand and refine the use of social media to reach current and potential new visitors.

Marketing and retail:

- Implement new marketing and advertising campaigns. Focus on ensuring that all Minnesotans see themselves reflected in these campaigns, and therefore the outdoors.
- Expand digital and social media presence with multicultural media.
- Improve and expand Hiking Club and Passport Club loyalty programs.

Partnership development:

- As COVID-19 public health protocols allow, augment programming and services with volunteers.
- Expand partnerships that reduce the barriers for underserved populations.
- Support the Urban Outreach Program based out of Fort Snelling State Park.
- Build cross-cultural partnerships and contract with targeted vendors. Promote new and innovative partnerships through small “grants” available to support engagement of under-represented groups

Intercultural Competence:

- Continue to increase the DNR’s intercultural competence through training and development.

Acquire Land, Create Opportunities

\$5,946,500 (17.5%) of DNR Parks and Trails Division Allocation

State Park and Recreation Area Development Projects:

- Develop Itasca State Park bike rental and parking facility.
- Develop final Phase I Cuyuna Country State Recreation Area trails.
- Complete design for Glendalough State Park bicycle trail.
- Prepare Glendalough State Park trail center design.
- Fund necessary professional services and pre-design work for new biennium projects.

State Trail Development Projects:

- Finish design of Minnesota River State Trail segment between St. Peter and Mankato.
- Fund necessary professional services and pre-design work for new biennium projects.

State Park and Trail Land Acquisition:

- Acquire key state park inholdings and parcels for strategic state trail connections.
- Focus on high-priority connections/segments along existing state trails. Special attention will be given to trail connections that target under-served audiences.
- Focus on high-priority inholdings within state parks and recreation areas that connect people to outdoor recreation units.

Take Care of What We Have

\$20,727,800 (61.0%) of DNR Parks and Trails Division Allocation

Asset management:

- Complete two shower building rehabilitations at Core state parks.
- Complete a park portfolio upgrade of orientation, wayfinding, and vault toilets at one Rustic state park.
- Complete design and engineering for one state park campground redevelopment.
- Address backlog of site restoration projects, including building demolition and habitat restoration.
- Upgrade interpretive display at one state park.
- Rehabilitate and repair four to six state trail bridges.
- Rehabilitate five to seven miles of multi-use state trail.
- Maintain sustainable state park hiking trails at high-priority locations.
- Invest in energy efficiency and renewable energy projects across the state park and trail system.
- Complete assessments and design for future state park and trail system asset management.

Natural and cultural resource management:

- Reconstruct native plant communities, with a focus on high-quality, rare or aquatic communities.
- Conduct prescribed burns on state park and trail lands.
- Manage invasive species on state park and trail lands.
- Conduct natural and cultural resource assessments to avoid, minimize or mitigate impacts to resources.
- Contract with Conservation Corps of Minnesota and Iowa to engage youth workers in resource management.

Coordinate with Partners – In consultation with PTLAC

FY22/23 Proposed Biennial Legacy Allocation: \$858,000

Research and system planning:

- Facilitate standardized, coordinated research and planning across state and regional park and trail systems.

Web-based tools:

- Enhance, integrate and create accessible web-based information for park and trail visitors.

The Parks and Trails Legacy Advisory Committee:

- Support activities of the PTLAC, including six meetings annually with volunteers from across the state.

Restoration evaluation:

- Evaluate a set of natural resource restoration projects annually; measure progress toward habitat restoration goals.

Other priority coordination needs such as joint marketing, public health promotion, and advancing diversity and inclusion:

- Involve youth and diverse audiences in Legacy work and outcomes.
- Coordinate projects and Legacy approaches with other agencies, organizations and nonprofits.