

GREATER MINNESOTA REGIONAL PARKS & TRAILS COMMISSION

POLICY & PLANNING REPORT FOR 2023



Offer Tail County Phelps Mill County Park



Lyon County Garvin Park



Duluth Spirit Mountain Recreation Area



Isanti County Irving & John Anderson County Park



LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

Friends,

In 2023 the Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission continued to build on the good work done the past many years.

In May we were proud to launch a new guide, *Mountain Bike Trail Development – Guidelines for Successfully Managing the Process*. This collaboration with IMBA (International Mountain Bicycling Association) and Rock Solid Trail Contracting is a complete guide to sustainable trail construction that takes a builder, amateur or experienced, through the process from the very beginning to the final steps. The guide is available at no charge to anyone in Minnesota and for a nominal fee to those not residing in the state. It's also available on the Commission website in Flipbook form or as a downloadable PDF. The response has been very positive, and additional appendices are planned to cover areas that are outside the scope of the original project.

In June 2020 the Parks and Trails Legacy Partners embarked on a two-year research project to count visitors to all three system's parks and trails, including those facilities deemed designation eligible in Greater Minnesota. Coordination Among Partners funds paid for the research project for the benefit of all. A data scientist was hired and housed with research staff at the Metropolitan Council offices, working with support from their research team. The location-based services data provided unprecedented detail about when and where people recreate.

This groundbreaking report used aggregated and anonymized data to estimate and evaluate visitation. The report can be viewed at gmrptcommission.org.

The Greater Minnesota system continues to grow and there are now a total of 77 regionally designated parks, trails and special feature facilities across the 80-counties of Greater Minnesota, stretching from the Northwest Angle to the far southern border of the state.

As always, we offer our sincere thanks and appreciation to our colleagues and partners. We invite you to explore the amazing resources we are so very fortunate to have in the great State of Minnesota.

Sincerely,



Rick Anderson – Chair



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DISTRICT COMMISSIONERS

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 **Beth Pierce** | *Hibbing*

DISTRICT 2

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 **Reid Huttunen** | *East Grand Forks*


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 **Brad Bonk** | *Alexandria*


DISTRICT 4

Executive Committee Secretary/Treasurer
 **Barry Wendorf** | *Zimmerman*


 **Jonathan Wolf** | *St. Cloud*

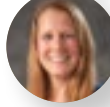
DISTRICT 5

Executive Committee Chair
 **Rick Anderson** | *Balaton*


 **Tom Schmitz** | *New Ulm*

DISTRICT 6

 **Tom Stoa** | *Winona*

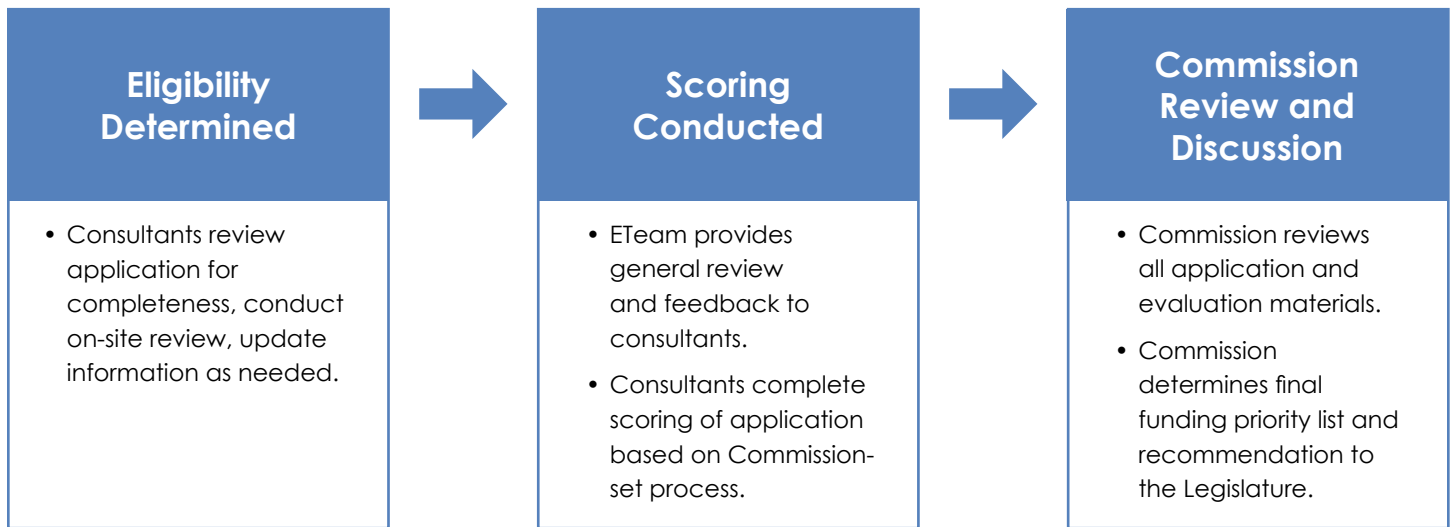
 **Karlin Ziegler** | *Hayfield*

AT-LARGE

 **Jen Foley** | *St. Cloud*

Executive Director: **Renee Mattson**, Duluth
 System Plan Coordinator: **Joe Czapiewski**, Bemidji
 Administrative Assistant: **Tess Dandrea**, Hermantown
 Special Projects Coordinator: **Karen Umphress**, Jordan

FUNDING RECOMMENDATION SELECTION PROCESS



SCORING CRITERIA

Park Criteria	Trail Criteria	Connecting People to the Outdoors Criteria
Completes a regionally substantial component in the applicants Master Plan.	Completes a regionally substantial component in the applicants Master Plan.	Supports the programming and marketing components in the applicants Master Plan.
Fills a gap and provides an outdoor recreation benefit of regional significance for that district.	Fills a gap and provides connectivity to users. Could also provide connectivity to a larger trail system to create a recreation benefit of regional significance.	Fills a gap and provides a proven outdoor recreation benefit of regional significance for that district.
Is significantly linked to one or more of the four pillars in the 25-Year Legacy Plan.	Is significantly linked to one or more of the four pillars in the 25-Year Legacy Plan.	Is significantly linked to the Connecting People to the Outdoors pillar objectives as well as additional pillars in the 25-Year Legacy Plan.
Project is a critical acquisition or critical rehabilitation and repair of a park facility or feature.	Project is a critical acquisition or critical rehabilitation and repair of a trail, trailhead facility or trail feature.	Provides significant and locally sustainable recruitment, retention or reactivation of outdoor recreation participation.
Provides access to quality natural and cultural resources within the district.	Provides access to quality natural and cultural resources within the district.	Provides access for underserved populations to quality natural and cultural resources within the district.
Has a financial match. A higher match will receive greater point awards.	Has a financial match. A higher match will receive greater point awards.	Has a financial match. A higher match will receive greater point awards.
Includes a fully detailed budget, implementation, and sustainability plan.	Includes a fully detailed budget, implementation, and sustainability plan.	Includes a fully detailed budget, implementation, and sustainability plan.

GUIDELINE CHANGES OPEN OPPORTUNITIES FOR GRANT ELIGIBILITY

During the 2023 legislative session Minnesota Statute 85.536 was changed relative to the granting opportunities for Legacy Parks and Trails in Greater Minnesota. The language is inclusive of Tribal governments and is an expansion of the previous funding authorization that was limited to cities and counties.

Minnesota Tribal governments are encouraged to apply for regional designation and funding for tribally owned parks and trails. A partnership between Tribal governments and Greater Minnesota holds the potential for a collaborative opportunity that contributes to the development, preservation and enhancement of outdoor spaces, while respecting the cultural and historical significance of Tribal land. Achieving regional designation is the necessary precursor to apply for Greater Minnesota Legacy parks and trails funding.

Another change to Minnesota Statute 85.536 was the instruction to expand cooperation with non-profit organizations. Historically designated facilities as well as the GMRPTC have worked with non-profit organizations for public engagement, research, policy development and facility operations. The Commission encourages and applauds the extensive non-profit partnerships found throughout the regional system that help cities and counties improve the value of their parks and trails. The Commission will continue to identify and document best practices in non-profit partnerships, then share those practices through seminars, conferences, connecting partners, and articles.

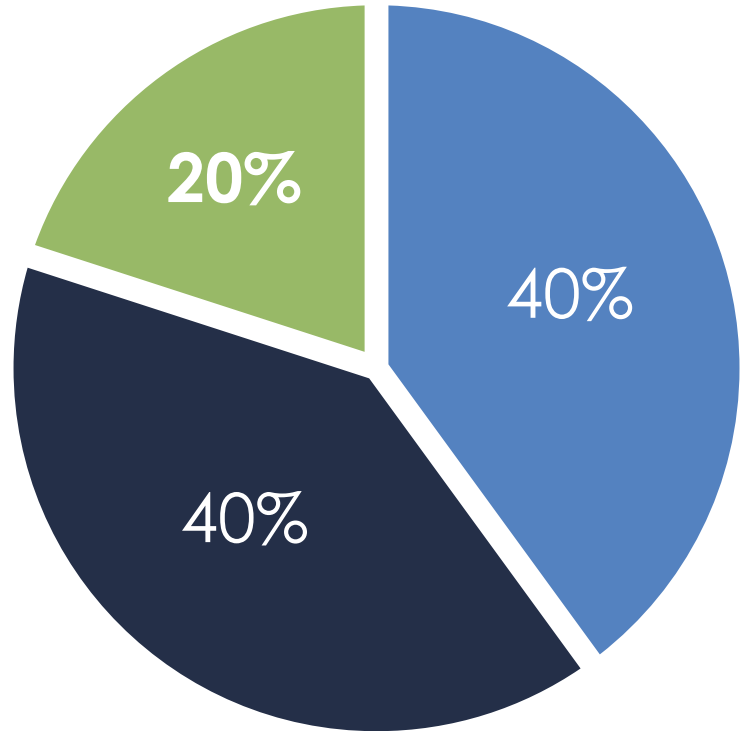


FY25 LEGACY FUNDING RECOMMENDATIONS

PROJECT	AWARD	DIST.
Sandstone Robinson Quarry Park Phase 2 builds on the work accomplished in Phase 1. Public water access improvements, trail improvements and extension, interpretation and wayfinding signage. Additional parking for the climbing walls for better access. Four new campsites and one group campsite.	\$2,257,200	1
Hubbard County Deep Lake Park Phase I is improved park access road and gravel parking lot. Removal of unusable buildings and structures as well as renovations of useable buildings. Upgraded power supply, lighting and signage and improved soft-surface trails.	\$1,042,300	2
Red Lake River Corridor - East Grand Forks East Grand Forks LaFave Park new boat access ramp that will increase the number of boats using the Red River and improve efficiency getting boats in and out of the water. This is the only boat access to the Red River of the North in East Grand Forks.	\$888,177	2
Warroad Point Park Phase I development includes a road extension to a new parking lot to accommodate 96 vehicles with boat trailers and a boat wash to keep out invasive species. Vinyl piling sheet retaining walls will stabilize the marina and four floating docks providing mooring for up to 40 boats. Two vault toilets will provide facilities for the marina visitors as well as park users.	\$2,760,333	2
Gull Lake Trail - Fairview Township and Nisswa The final segment of the Gull Lake Trail in Fairview Township, a .6 mile paved trail connecting the recently completed southern 4.1 miles and the northern 3.1 miles of trail. The final segment of the Nisswa section of the Gull Lake Trail is a paved .8 mile of trail beginning at the Cass County/Crow Wing County border running east to Lower Roy Lake Road.	\$1,456,951	2
Lac qui Parle County Park Phase 1 of the park improvements is a necessary pedestrian bridge connecting the east and west sides of the park which are separated by the Lac qui Parle river. Wayfinding signage will be installed on both sides of the bridge and a new gravel parking lot as well as shoreline restoration and natural surface trails will complete the Phase 1 work.	\$595,380	3
Morrison County Belle Prairie Park The projects at the park focus on enhancing river access and improving safety and accessibility. New features include an accessible fishing pier, new stairways, an ADA accessible walkway to the river, a picnic shelter and new restrooms.	\$924,516	4
Isanti County Irving and John Anderson County Park Acquisition of 3.36 acres fee title with a Life Estate. The property has dry upland oak forests and approximately 294 feet of shoreline on Horseleg Lake.	\$255,400	4
Isanti County Springvale Park Acquisition of 18 acres. The property consists of native prairie, upland forests and seasonal wetlands.	\$81,000	4
Sherburne County Two Inlets at Bdé Heháka - Omashkooz Zaaga'igaans Regional Park The Phase 1 developments will improve park access with a new road alignment and signage. A new parking lot with a bus drop-off area and parking for five buses. A new natural surface trail network and trail amenities including interpretive and wayfinding signage. Establishment of a Foraging Forest will offer a learning environment with programming, demonstrations and harvest celebrations.	\$1,985,875	4
Stearns County Rockville County Park Acquisition of 19.06 acres of land for additional outdoor recreational opportunities.	\$210,000	4
Lyon County Garvin Park Addition of four camper cabins, five tent campsites, upgraded electrical service and a new pavilion.	\$926,809	5
Greater Mankato River Valley Trail System Reuse and installation of the historic Kern Bridge, one of the oldest bridges in Minnesota, which was made of wrought iron and is a very rare structure. The bridge will connect the Land of Memories Park to Sibley Park and the Minneopa Trail over the Blue Earth River.	\$1,216,456	5
Cannon Valley Trail Replacement of a deteriorated 100 plus year old wooden bridge with a new steel truss bridge, replacement of 4.6 miles of poor quality 8' wide trail with new 10' wide bituminous trail and two sediment control structures to control sediment deposits from adjacent ravines.	\$1,720,593	6
Emerging Opportunities Fund Opportunity fund available for granting as new Connecting People with the Outdoors projects arise	\$33,045	
TOTAL	\$16,354,035	

FISCAL YEAR 2025 LEGACY FUNDS

- DNR
- Metropolitan Council
- Greater Minnesota



**Parks and Trails Legacy Funding
FY25 - \$12,762,000**

DNR 2.5% administration fee
\$319,050

Greater Minnesota operating budget
\$475,000

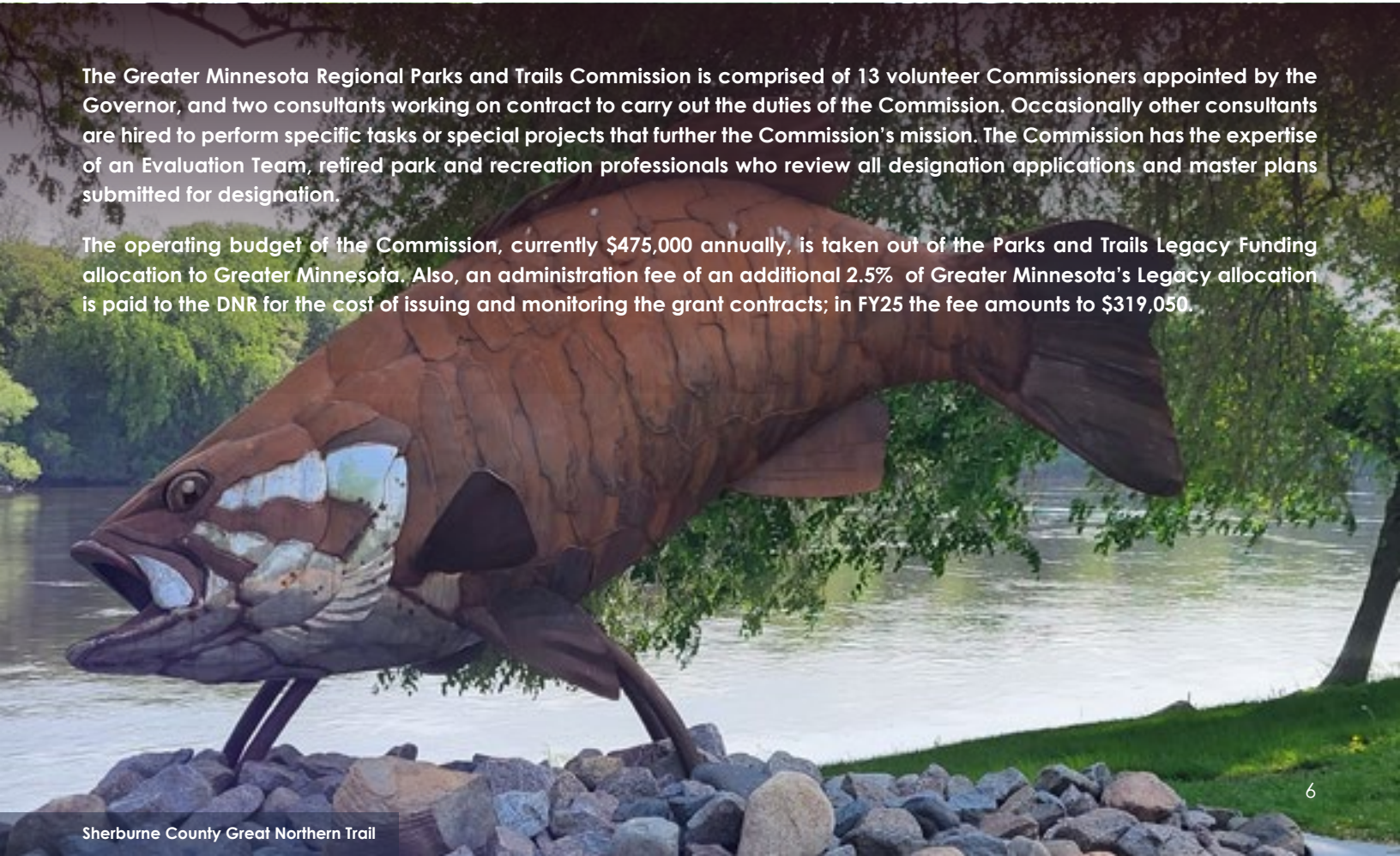
Carry over balance from FY24 = **\$2,055,085**

Balance remaining in grant dollars available from 2019 = **\$1,356,000**

Lottery-in-Lieu of Taxes - **\$400,000 FY24** and **\$600,000 FY25** less DNR administration fee yet to be determined.

The Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission is comprised of 13 volunteer Commissioners appointed by the Governor, and two consultants working on contract to carry out the duties of the Commission. Occasionally other consultants are hired to perform specific tasks or special projects that further the Commission's mission. The Commission has the expertise of an Evaluation Team, retired park and recreation professionals who review all designation applications and master plans submitted for designation.

The operating budget of the Commission, currently \$475,000 annually, is taken out of the Parks and Trails Legacy Funding allocation to Greater Minnesota. Also, an administration fee of an additional 2.5% of Greater Minnesota's Legacy allocation is paid to the DNR for the cost of issuing and monitoring the grant contracts; in FY25 the fee amounts to \$319,050.



WHAT CLEAN WATER, LAND AND LEGACY FUNDING CREATES IN GREATER MINNESOTA

These projects are just a fraction of what Legacy funding has done for parks and trails in Greater Minnesota over the past ten years. Park/picnic shelters for events from weddings to family reunions, school events and more. New and renovated restroom facilities to make outdoor recreation more comfortable and accessible. New and rehabilitated trails, both paved and natural surface as well as purpose built mountain bike trails. New equipment for both winter and summer activities and track wheelchairs that enable individuals with limited or impaired mobility to continue to enjoy nature and the outdoors.



Halloween Fun and Lyon County with their newly acquired Track Wheelchair



Douglas County Lake Brophy Park Grand Opening



Elk River Woodland Trails Park – Picnic Shelter



Winona Bluffs Traverse



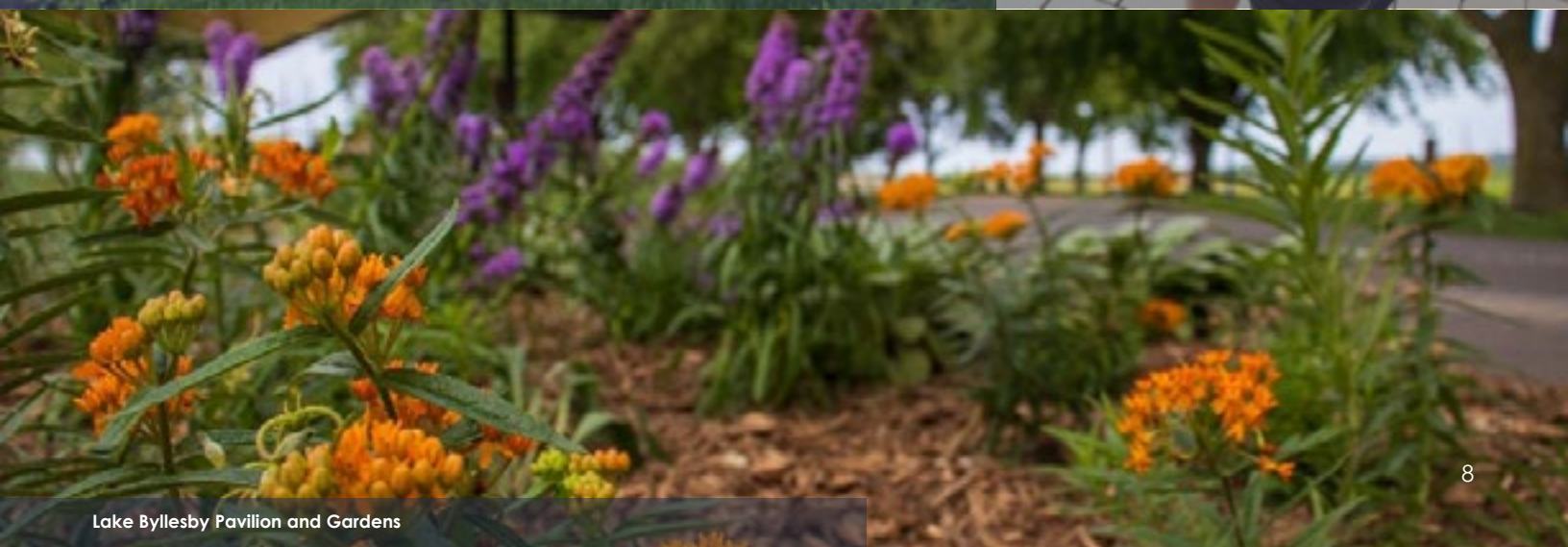
Gull Lake Trail



Luverne Loop and Blue Mounds Trail



Child Fishing at Duluth Hartley Nature Center



Lake Bylesby Pavilion and Gardens



DISTRICT 1

Take Care of What We Have/Connect People and the Outdoors

Cook County Mountain Bike Trail System

A Legacy grant was awarded to Cook County to rehabilitate 4.9 miles of the High Climber mountain bike trail connecting the Onion River Road and Lutsen Mountains. The trail system has been a popular mountain biking destination with riders of all skill levels. The last few years with high snowfall and big rain events took a toll on the trail; this rehabilitation is being done with emphasis on ensuring a safe and sustainable trail into the future. As well as the trail work, Cook County is constructing a bike skills park and youth bike lending program. The park will provide education, skills development and confidence building within a safe, controlled environment.

Acquire Land, Create Opportunities

Duluth Hartley Park is an environmental education hub for visitors and program participants of all ages. The park and nature center programs are so popular that the demand exceeded the space available in the building. A Legacy grant with strong community support enabled Hartley Park to expand classroom space, add additional accessible bathrooms and increase programming and events at the park to meet the demand. Additionally, the grant provided for much needed wayfinding within the 675 acres in this unique urban park.

Designation Eligible Facilities have submitted an application for designation, been reviewed and ranked HIGH by the evaluation team and approved by the Commission as designation eligible. To achieve designation the next step is submission of a master plan which will be reviewed by consultants, scored by the Evaluation Team and approved by the Commission.

DESIGNATION ELIGIBLE		CLASSIFICATION
1	Milaca Gateway to the North Park	N
2	Lake County Prospector Loop Trail	T
3	Lake County Trail	T
4	Mill Lacs County Great Northern Trail	T
5	Mille Lacs County Soo Line Trail - South	T
6	Grand Marais Sawtooth Bluffs	N
7	Grand Marais Recreation Area	S
8	Chisholm Redhead Mountain Bike Park	S

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

TOTAL FUNDING AWARDED

DISTRICT 1 (FY16-FY24)

This notes the total number of applications and the total amount of grants made to this district over time.

19 Projects Funded

31 Applications

\$14,809,660 Awarded

\$3,529,208 Community Match



Sandstone Robinson Quarry Park



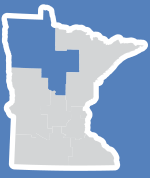
Lake County Mountain Bike Trails



Duluth Spirit Mountain Recreation Area



Big Falls Campground and Horse Camp - New ADA Campsite



DISTRICT 2

Take Care of What We Have

Hubbard County Deep Lake Park

Nestled in the north woods of Hubbard County, Deep Lake Park has a unique history of public recreation, including a ski hill and outdoor amphitheater. The beautiful 439-acre property encompasses Deep Lake and another smaller lake to the north. The former ski area, Val Chatel, operated from the 1950s to the 1980s and was a popular winter destination. The next chapter in this interesting park is building on the unique attributes of the land by adding camping, trails for biking, snowshoeing and hiking, canoe/kayak launches as well as picnic shelters, a nature play area and removing old structures.

Coordinate Among Partners

Gull Lake Trail

A stellar example of a coordination among partners effort, the Gull Lake Trail, upon completion, will travel 21-miles around Gull Lake through the communities of East Gull Lake, Fairview Township, Lake Shore and Nisswa. Additionally, the trail spans the counties of Crow Wing and Cass. After years of collaboration and successful funding efforts, through Legacy grants as well as others, the trail is close to completion. The popularity of the Gull Lake area and the inflow of summer residents and visitors makes the trail all the more important as a safe mode of transportation and a high quality recreation experience.

Designation Eligible Facilities have submitted an application for designation, been reviewed and ranked HIGH by the evaluation team and approved by the Commission as designation eligible. To achieve designation the next step is submission of a master plan which will be reviewed by consultants, scored by the Evaluation Team and approved by the Commission.

DESIGNATION ELIGIBLE		CLASSIFICATION
1	Marshall County Marshall Kittson Trail	T
2	Fertile Sand Hill Recreation Area	N
3	Roseau River Water Trail	SP

DESIGNATED		CLASSIFICATION
1	Beltrami County Northland Regional Sports Park	S
2	Cohasset Tioga Recreation Area	N
3	Crow Wing County Milford Mine Memorial Park	S
4	Hubbard County Deep Lake Park	N
5	Lake of the Woods County Northerly Park	N
6	Lake Shore Gull Lake Trail	T
7	Red Lake River Corridor	T
8	Warroad Point Park	S

N = Natural Resource Based Park S = Special Features T = Trail SP = Supportive Partnership

TOTAL FUNDING AWARDED

DISTRICT 2 (FY16-FY24)

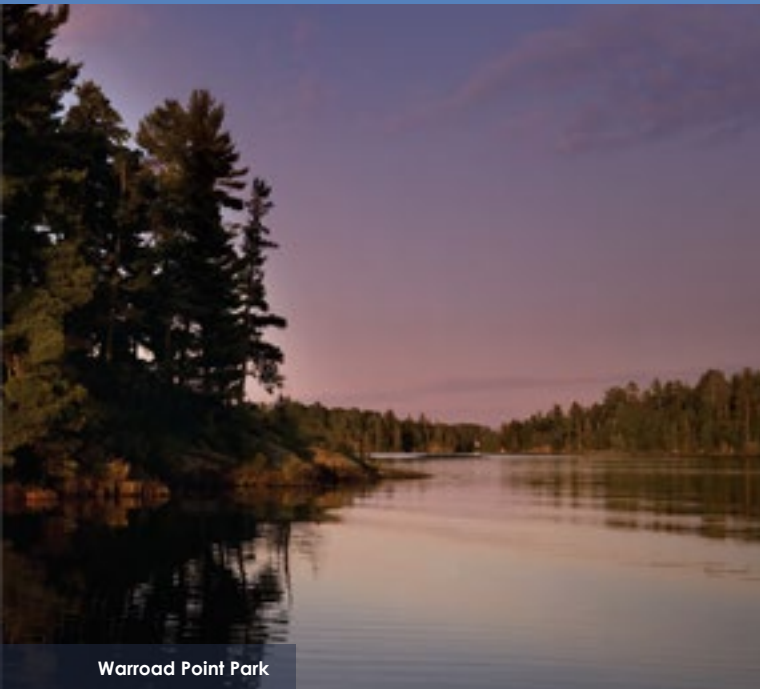
This notes the total number of applications and the total amount of grants made to this district over time.

12 Projects Funded

18 Applications

\$7,999,716 Awarded

\$2,483,111 Community Match



Warroad Point Park



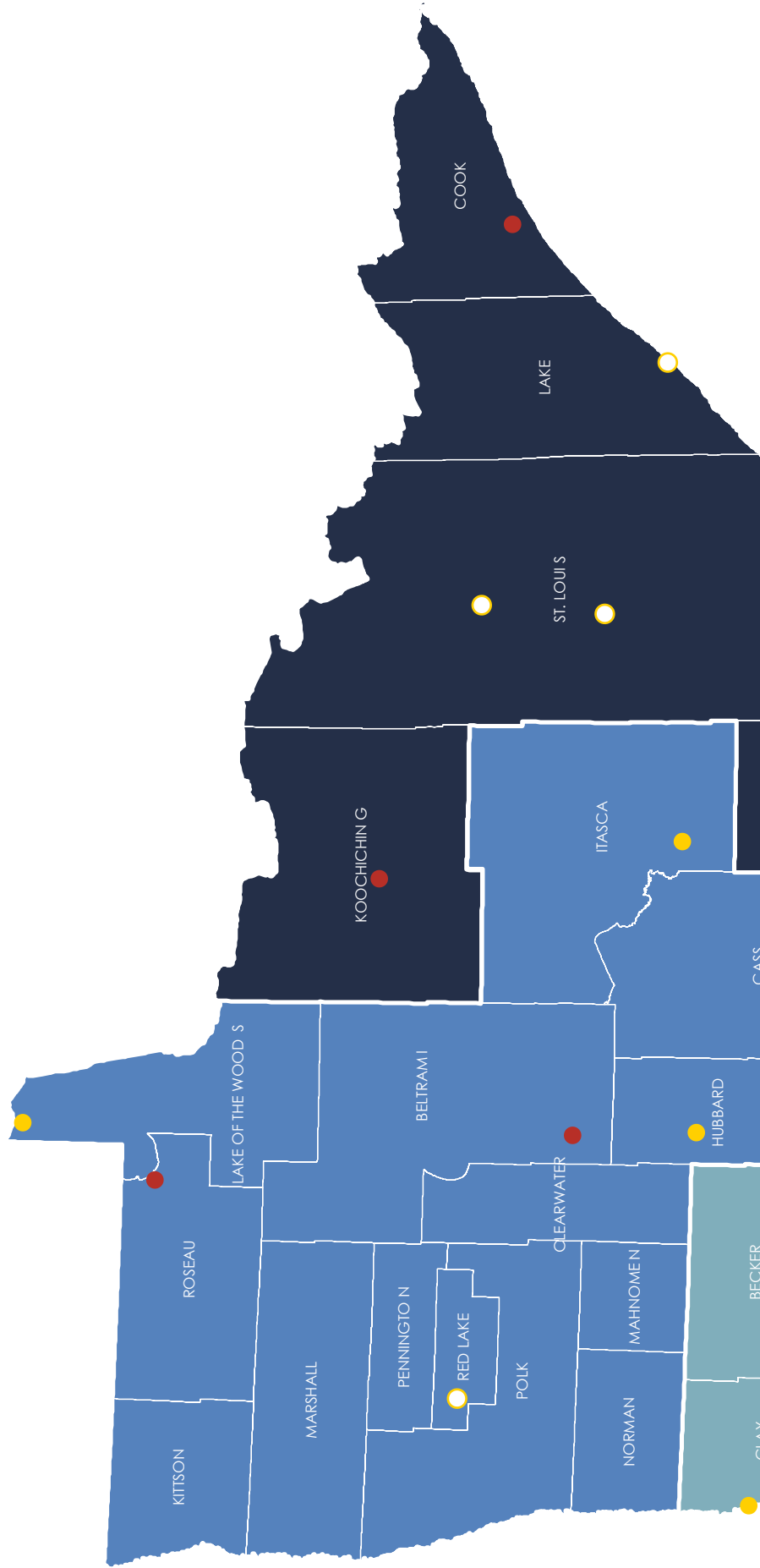
Cohasset Tioga Recreation Area



Beltrami County Northland Regional Sports Park

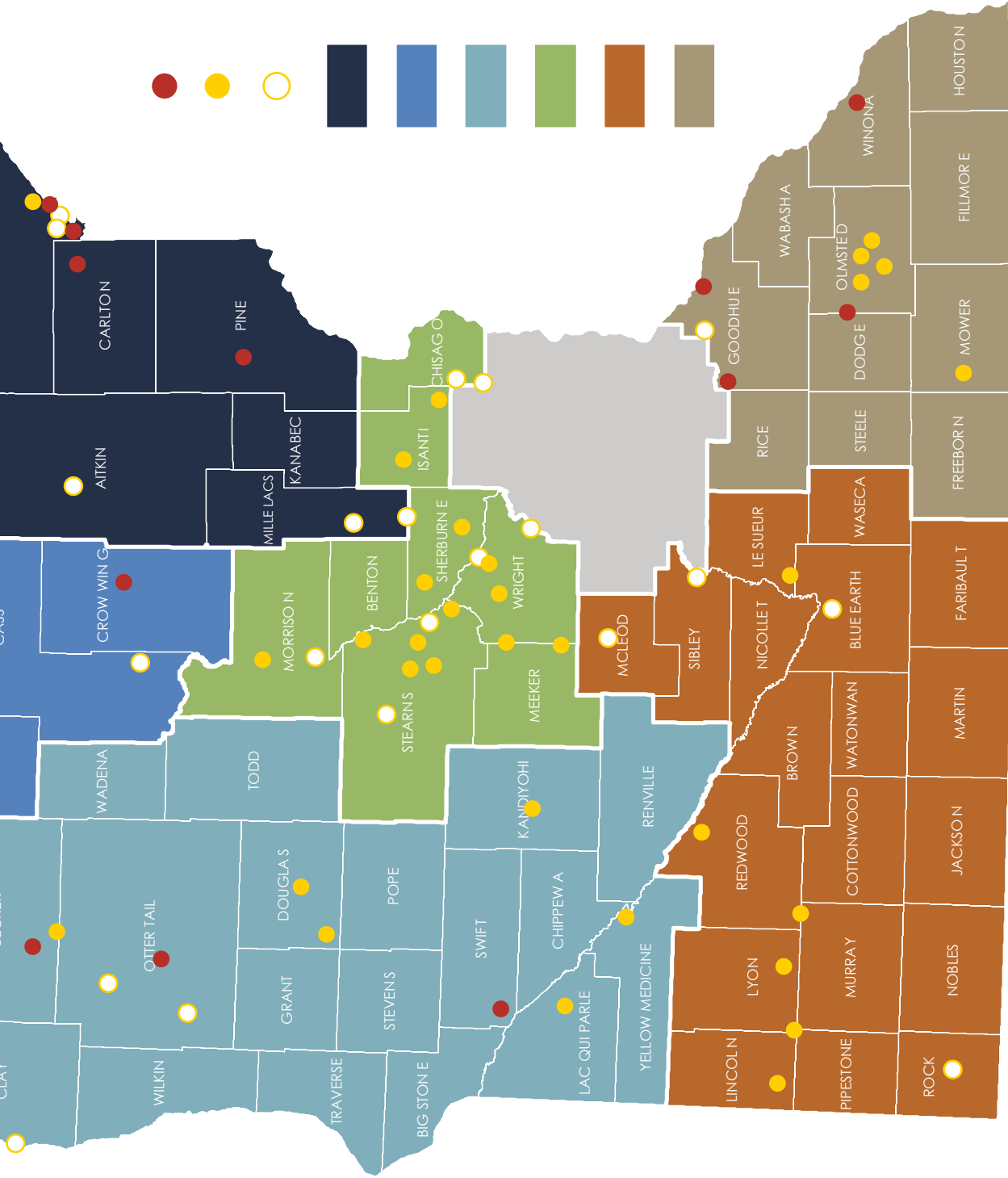
DESIGNATED REGIONALLY SIGNIFICANT PARKS & TRAILS

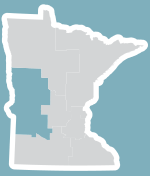
(AS OF 12/31/23)



Special Features

- Parks
- Trails
- Trails
- District 1
- District 2
- District 3
- District 4
- District 5
- District 6





DISTRICT 3

Take Care of What We Have

Otter Tail County Phelps Mill County Park

One of the more unique park structures is located in Phelps Mill County Park in Otter Tail County. The 127-acre park on the Otter Tail River boasts a National Register of Historic Places designation for the Philips Mill, dam and several preserved buildings. The historic mill was built in 1889 and offers a glimpse of how wheat is ground to make flour. The location on the river provides opportunities for canoeing and kayaking, while the park wetlands provide habitat and beautiful scenery. A current project funded by Legacy dollars will construct 1400 feet of boardwalk and viewing platforms through the restored wetlands.

Acquire Land, Create Opportunities

Swift County Appleton OHV Park

The Appleton OHV Park is located on a former gravel mining site with a small, man-made lake in the northern section of the park. The park is currently 348-acres, with more land identified to be added as it comes up for sale. The rolling topography of the park provides for a variety of riding experiences and regularly draws enthusiasts from 200 to 300 miles away because there are so few OHV parks in the southwest part of the state. A rare asset of the park is the spring fed lake that is an ideal location for kayaking, swimming and fishing.

Designation Eligible Facilities have submitted an application for designation, been reviewed and ranked HIGH by the evaluation team and approved by the Commission as designation eligible. To achieve designation the next step is submission of a master plan which will be reviewed by consultants, scored by the Evaluation Team and approved by the Commission.

DESIGNATION ELIGIBLE		CLASSIFICATION
1	Battle Lake to Ashby Trail	T

DESIGNATED		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	Frazee Wannigan Park	N
6	Granite Falls Memorial Park	N
7	Lac qui Parle County Park	N
8	Moorhead MB Johnson Park	N
9	Moorhead River Corridor Trail	T
10	Otter Tail County Heart of the Lakes Trail	T
11	Otter Tail County Phelps Mill County Park	S
12	Swift County Appleton OHV Park	S
13	Willmar Robbins Island Park	N

N = Natural Resource Based Park S = Special Features T = Trail SP = Supportive Partnership

TOTAL FUNDING AWARDED

DISTRICT 3 (FY16-FY24)

This notes the total number of applications and the total amount of grants made to this district over time.

20 Projects Funded

35 Applications

\$16,208,975 Awarded

\$5,533,620 Community Match



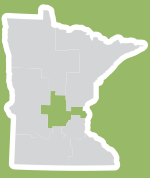
Granite Falls Memorial Park



Swift County Appleton OHV Park



MB Johnson Park Ribbon Cutting



DISTRICT 4

Connect People and the Outdoors

Wright County Stanley Eddy Park Reserve

The Stanley Eddy Park Reserve encompasses 940-acres in four separate units, making it one of the largest parks in District 4. As the park is a reserve it is managed with limited intrusion to the native landscape. The park has abundant rolling terrain covered with red oak, sugar maple, basswood and many wetland basins. The area provides habitat for wildlife, rare plant communities and songbirds. The draw for park users is the many undeveloped acres as well as trails for hiking, cross-country skiing, snow shoeing and horseback riding. Stanley Eddy Park Reserve is the only park in the Wright County Parks system that allows backpack camping.

Take Care of What We Have/Connect People and the Outdoors

Morrison County Belle Prairie Park

Located outside Little Falls on the east bank of the Mississippi River, Belle Prairie Park is a well established 145-acre natural resource based park owned and managed by Morrison County. With a highly desirable location on the shores of the Mississippi River, the park provides much needed public access to the river. A recent update to the master plan placed an emphasis on better ADA accessibility. Future plans call for an ADA accessible concrete fishing pier, picnic shelter and restroom facilities. These features would replace three stairways that are in need of repair with an accessible walkway to the river.

Designation Eligible Facilities have submitted an application for designation, been reviewed and ranked HIGH by the evaluation team and approved by the Commission as designation eligible. To achieve designation the next step is submission of a master plan which will be reviewed by consultants, scored by the Evaluation Team and approved by the Commission.

DESIGNATION ELIGIBLE		CLASSIFICATION
1	St. Cloud River Bluffs Park	N
DESIGNATED		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	Isanti County Springvale Park	N
6	Morrison County Belle Prairie Park	N
7	Morrison County Soo Line Trail	T
8	Sherburne County Two Inlets at Bdé Heháka - Omashkooz Zaaga'igaans Regional Park	N
9	Sherburne County Great Northern Trail	T
10	St. Cloud Beaver Island Trail	T
11	Stearns County Kraemer Lake Park	N
12	Stearns County/Benton County Great River Park Complex	N
13	Stearns County Lake Wobegon Trail	T
14	Stearns County Rockville Park	N
15	Stearns County Quarry Park	N
16	Stearns County Warner Lake Park	N
17	Wright County Bertram Chain of Lakes Park	N
18	Wright County Collinwood Park	N
19	Wright County Crow River Trail	T
20	Wright County Great River Trail	T
21	Wright County Robert Ney Park	N
22	Wright County Stanley Eddy Park Reserve	N

TOTAL FUNDING AWARDED

DISTRICT 4 (FY16-FY24)

This notes the total number of applications and the total amount of grants made to this district over time.

30 Projects Funded

38 Applications

\$20,231,356 Awarded

\$5,757,268 Community Match



Wright County Bertram Chain of Lakes Park



Morrison County Belle Prairie Park



Stearns County Lake Wobegon Trail



DISTRICT 5

Connect People and the Outdoors

Lyon County Twin Lakes Park

Twin Lakes Park offers diverse water features. West Twin has among the highest water quality and most diverse aquatic plant life in Southern Minnesota while East Twin has excellent fishing. Twin Lakes Park has a long history as a draw for families to enjoy the swimming beach and fishing. Over time Legacy grants have funded a variety of amenities that create more activities for families and individuals who did not previously use the park. Additional campsites and a group camping area, new bath/shower building, picnic shelter and naturescape play area all add to the regional appeal of the park.

Acquire Land, Create Opportunities

Lincoln County Hole in the Mountain Park

Hole in the Mountain Park is a beautiful 647-acre park located on Bemis Moraine, more commonly known as Buffalo Ridge, in Lake Benton and the park is among the highest points of the ridge, which reaches 1,995 feet above sea level. Hole in the Mountain was recently awarded a Legacy grant to complete the first phase of improvements to the park which were identified in a recent master plan update. The phasing includes development of a sledding hill which will bring new users to the park and increase the year round outdoor activities available. The sledding hill will be a unique recreational opportunity for Southwest Minnesota. As well, the grant will improve the existing trail system which is widely used by hikers and horse enthusiasts.

Designation Eligible Facilities have submitted an application for designation, been reviewed and ranked HIGH by the evaluation team and approved by the Commission as designation eligible. To achieve designation the next step is submission of a master plan which will be reviewed by consultants, scored by the Evaluation Team and approved by the Commission.

DESIGNATION ELIGIBLE		CLASSIFICATION
1	Lyon County Camden Regional Trail	T
2	LeSueur County Ney Nature Center	N

DESIGNATED		CLASSIFICATION
1	Greater Mankato River Valley Trail System	T
2	Le Sueur County Lake Washington Park	N
3	Lincoln County Hole in the Mountain Park	N
4	Luverne Loop & Blue Mounds Trails	T
5	Lyon County Garvin Park	N
6	Lyon County Twin Lakes Park	N
7	McLeod County Dakota Rail Trail	T
8	Redwood County Plum Creek Park	N
9	Redwood Falls Ramsey Park	N
10	Sibley County Henderson Scenic Byway Trail	T

N = Natural Resource Based Park S = Special Features T = Trail SP = Supportive Partnership

TOTAL FUNDING AWARDED

DISTRICT 5 (FY16-FY24)

This notes the total number of applications and the total amount of grants made to this district over time.

16 Projects Funded

22 Applications

\$8,642,378 Awarded

\$1,233,850 Community Match



Le Sueur County Lake Washington Park



Redwood County Plum Creek Park



Redwood Falls Ramsey Park



DISTRICT 6

Take Care of What We Have

Red Wing He Mni Can - Barn Bluff Park

He Mni Can-Barn Bluff Park has been successful in gaining two Legacy grants for significant improvements to this amazing park in the bluffs near the Mississippi River. The most recent grant will provide ADA trail access to the historic G.A. Carlson Lime Kiln, a new overlook trail spur at the top of the kiln and an elevated view platform at the base of the kiln, among other amenity enhancements. The G.A. Carlson Lime Kiln is one of 30 kilns in use in Red Wing from 1870 to 1908. The limestone quarries were a significant source of building materials not only for Red Wing, but for building projects in many other communities as well. The kiln at He Mni Can was used to convert raw limestone into commercial lime for use in mortar and plaster. Visitors will learn about the industry and the kiln through the interpretation done at the site.

Acquire Land, Create Opportunities

Olmstead County Chester Woods Park

With 1,333-acres, Chester Woods Parks is the largest of the parks in the Olmsted County Parks system. The park encompasses mature upland forest, oak savannah, nature and restored prairies, bluff lands, wooded valley and bluff valley streams. Additionally, there is a 118-acre lake within the boundaries. Camping is a popular feature of the park as well as trails for hiking and equine access. Now under construction, an amphitheater will provide another park amenity to draw people and provide a new activity to enjoy. With the lake as a backdrop, the amphitheater will have stone benches and a natural sloping grassy area for additional seating.

Designation Eligible Facilities have submitted an application for designation, been reviewed and ranked HIGH by the evaluation team and approved by the Commission as designation eligible. To achieve designation the next step is submission of a master plan which will be reviewed by consultants, scored by the Evaluation Team and approved by the Commission.

DESIGNATION ELIGIBLE		CLASSIFICATION
1	Olmsted County Root River Park	N
2	Lake City Hok Si La Park	N
3	Houston County Trail	T
4	Oronoco Zumbro River Water Trail	T

DESIGNATED		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 Features T = Trail SP = Supportive Partnership

TOTAL FUNDING AWARDED

DISTRICT 6 (FY16-FY24)

This notes the total number of applications and the total amount of grants made to this district over time.

26 Projects Funded

33 Applications

\$18,029,639 Awarded

\$10,882,857 Community Match



Olmstead County Oxbow Park/Zollman Zoo - New Nature Center Exhibit Space



Red Wing He Mni Can - Barn Bluff Park



Rochester Cascade Lake Playground

PARKS AND TRAILS 25-YEAR LEGACY PLAN

In 2008, Minnesotans passed the Clean Water Land and Legacy Act, commonly referred to as the “Legacy Amendment”. The amendment is funded by a 3/8 percent increase in the state sales tax. State and regional parks and trails of regional significance receive 14.25% of the funds generated by the tax. As a condition of the new Amendment, the Minnesota State Legislature mandated that the Department of Natural Resources, in collaboration with other park and trail providers and user organizations, develop a 25-year, long-range plan to help guide and inform how the Legacy Funds should be spent. Over 18-months, an extensive public outreach effort was conducted throughout the state. The 25-Year Legacy Plan was developed as a result of the public engagement by teams of recreation and conservation professionals.

The future direction of this thoughtful 25-year plan is distilled down from the input and engagement of the Minnesotans who contributed their voices to shape the plan.

The strategy is based on four pillars that describe the priorities:

Connect People and the Outdoors

Participants in the Legacy Plan Public Engagement Workshops emphasized the importance of building Minnesota's next generation of stewards for the state's natural areas. One of the most effective ways to do that is by increasing outdoor recreation participation. Building new opportunities for recreation is one step, connecting people with the outdoors and building a lifelong habit of recreating in our natural environment is the most important step.



Cohasset Tioga Recreation Area

Acquire Land, Create Opportunities

Minnesotans are by nature avid outdoor enthusiasts. While there are many rich opportunities to enjoy and recreate in parks and trails throughout Minnesota, new and expanded opportunities are needed to satisfy current users as well as to create opportunities for new users. This pillar speaks to the need to acquire land to meet nature-based outdoor activities and to create opportunities through new trails and park facilities.



Otter Tail County Phelps Mill County Park

Take Care of What We Have

The 25-year plan addresses the need to invest in the aging infrastructure across Minnesota's well used and loved parks and trails system. This pillar does not address the routine maintenance of parks and trails, which should be part of ongoing maintenance operations, but promotes investment in the protection of assets through preservation, rehabilitation and renewal.



Coordinate Among Partners

Coordination across systems is essential to achieve the vision encapsulated in the 25-year plan. It is universally understood that users want and expect quality parks and trails and may not know, or care, what agency is responsible for the management of the resource. It is incumbent upon the outdoor recreation providers to communicate with each other and work to provide a quality experience.



Legacy Investment

Over time, the Legacy investment in Greater Minnesota Regional Parks & Trails totals more than \$83 million dollars with community investments of almost \$30 million dollars.

2023 MILESTONES

American Planning Association – MN Chapter Conference Participation

Commissioners and staff participated in two successful presentations at the American Planning Association - MN Chapter conference. The first highlighted the ground-breaking partnership between Sherburne County and three Tribal Historic Preservation Offices, giving those partners a chance to tell the visionary story of the ongoing development of Two Inlets at Bdé Heháka - Omashkooz Zaaga'igaans Regional Park, formerly known as Big Elk Lake Park. The second presentation highlighted the Commission's deliberate leveraging of Legacy development funds to improve planning practices among our regional partners, resulting in facilities and programming with significantly more impact.

System Site Visits

The Commission purposefully reached out and visited dozens of current and prospective partners this year in an effort to reconnect and encourage their participation in the Greater Minnesota System following the lifting of pandemic restrictions. This effort was very well received and is already resulting in new partnerships, improved planning processes, and enhanced visions for many of Greater Minnesota's parks and trails, even if they aren't a part of the regional system.

Connecting People and the Outdoors Track Wheelchair Grants

Commissioners made a deliberate effort to focus on how to make the outdoors, and recreation more accessible to those with limited mobility by offering designated facilities the opportunity to apply for a grant to purchase a track wheelchair. Three parks applied for the available funds and after much discussion, the decision was made to make grants to all three applicants. One grant was made with the available Connecting People with the Outdoors funds from the FY24 grant cycle while the other two grants were made out of the Commission's operating budget.

Mountain Bike Trail Development – Guidelines for Successfully Managing the Process

On May 15, 2023 the Mountain Bike Trail Development Guide was introduced to the public with a press conference held at the State Capital. The guide is a comprehensive "how to" that breaks the process down from start to finish and will provide trail builders, no matter their expertise or skill level, with a roadmap to build a sustainable and environmentally responsible trail. GMRPTC partnered with the International Mountain Bicycling Association (IMBA) and Rock Solid Trail Contracting to produce the manual. It's been hailed as the most comprehensive guide to be published since 2017 and the interest in the publication from Canada will see it published in French by Velo Quebec in the coming months. The guide is available in Flipbook and pdf on the Commission website: www.gmrptccommission.org and hard copies are available at no charge to anyone in Minnesota and a nominal cost for those outside the state. Already requests for printed copies have come from organizations in Colorado, Texas, Washington and Denmark.



Renee Mattson-GMRPTC, Jake Carsten-author, Mike Repyak-IMBA, Aaron Rogers-Rock Solid Trail Contracting and Rep. Leon Lillie, House Chair of Legacy Finance Committee

Data Management System Upgrades

The Commission's online Data Management System serves as the backbone of the Commission's information system for our statewide partners. The annual upgrades tackle different areas of the system each year. In 2023 the focus was on a survey and reporting system, enhanced newsletter capabilities and new and improved back of the house functions.

Commissioner Departures and New Appointments

2023 saw changes to the make up of the Commission as we bid farewell to longstanding Commissioners and hello to new Commissioners. Leaving the GMRPTC after many years of service were Past Chair Tom Ryan representing District 6, Past Secretary/Treasurer Bryan Pike from District 2 and Ted Suss from District 5. We extend thanks and gratitude to these hard working volunteers! We welcomed new Commissioners Reid Huttunen District 2, Rob Mason District 2, Tom Schmitz from District 5 returned to the Commission after a few terms away and also Karlin Ziegler from District 6. All GMRPTC Commissioners are volunteers providing their wisdom and insight at meetings, site visits and grand openings throughout the year.

Granting Policy Changes

Commissioners and consultants regularly review the grant policy guidelines to ensure the process evolves and policies are adjusted as needed for a dynamic rather than static application process. With the FY25 grant cycle, archeological surveys, SHPO, THPO and other pre-project environmental work are now eligible for funding. As costs for these services and inflation have increased, making grant funding available to help offset the costs was a high priority. Another change in the guidelines is the allowance of contingency as match component, which must be spent as part of the project whether or not it is needed.

Summary

Parks and trails in the State, Metropolitan and Greater Minnesota systems are all incredible assets, and places where one can enjoy quiet, calm and peace, or entertainment, adventure and exploration. We are fortunate to live in a state that places high value on building and maintaining our beautiful park and trail systems for the enjoyment of all.



Goodhue County Lake Bylesby Park



Detroit Mountain Recreation Area



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