

LEGISLATIVE REFERENCE LIBRARY
SB482.M6 M592 1988

- Minnesota state parks : status rep



3 0307 00061 7210

880798

This document is made available electronically by the Minnesota Legislative Reference Library as part of an ongoing digital archiving project. <http://www.leg.state.mn.us/lrl/lrl.asp>
(Funding for document digitization was provided, in part, by a grant from the Minnesota Historical & Cultural Heritage Program.)

MINNESOTA STATE PARKS

STATUS REPORT

SEPTEMBER 1988



LEGISLATIVE REFERENCE LIBRARY
645 State Office Building
Saint Paul, Minnesota 55155

SB
482
.M6
M592
1988

CONTENTS

Purpose

Introduction

I.	THE MINNESOTA STATE PARK SYSTEM DESCRIPTION	2
	- Facilities	
	- Some Examples of State Parks	
	- State Park Visitation	
	- State Park Visitor Survey	
	- State Park Visitors Wants and Needs	
	- Economic Impact	
II.	STATE PARK PROBLEMS	6
	- Budget Erosion	
	- Natural Resource Management	
	- Emergency and Accelerated Rehabilitation	
	- Development	
	- Equipment	
III	IMMEDIATE NEEDS - 1990-91 BIENNIUM	9
	- State Park Operations Funding Needs	
	- Capital Bonding Needs	
IV.	OTHER CRITICAL STATE PARK SYSTEM NEEDS	11
V.	1990-91 NEEDS SUMMARY	12

PURPOSE

The purpose of this document is to provide citizens with a brief analysis of what is happening to their Minnesota state park resources. The Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Division of Parks and Recreation personnel are charged with the responsibility of managing state park resources in the public interest. It is also the responsibility of DNR to inform citizens when state park resources and facilities are in danger of deterioration from heavy use and a shortage of financial resources. This document describes the park system, outlines current issues and problems and outlines proposed solutions. If you have specific questions, more information is available from DNR Parks and Recreation, 500 Lafayette Road, St. Paul, Minnesota 55155-4039; or from your local state park manager.

INTRODUCTION

The mission of the Division of Parks and Recreation is to provide a state park system that perpetuates Minnesota's scenic beauty and its natural and cultural resources, while being responsive to public needs and expectations and providing a diversity of recreational opportunities.

To accomplish this mission, Minnesota State Parks needs your help. That is why this brochure was made—to give you up-to-date information and statistics on Minnesota's state parks. Reading this brochure will let you know what the situation is and where the problems lie.

The Division of Parks and Recreation manages 64 state parks and 17 waysides across Minnesota. The state park system is a key element of Minnesota's tourism industry, which in many areas of the state is becoming the backbone of the economy. Individual state parks have become focal points for local tourism efforts and for many outdoor recreation activities. Minnesota's most unique and valuable cultural and natural resources are found within state park boundaries. It is the division's responsibility to protect and interpret these unique resources.

Minnesota's state parks are deteriorating because of increasing use and the level of funding currently available. Recent state funding deficiencies have seriously eroded the ability of the Division of Parks and Recreation to serve the rapidly increasing numbers of park visitors. Cost-saving measures have been implemented but they only reduce public service and speed up deterioration. It will soon be impossible to market and maintain acceptable levels of service to the public, contribute to the state's tourism economy, manage park resources and generate revenues without staff positions and financing in proportion to our public service and resource management mission. Please take stock of the situation. Read on and know the facts.

I. THE MINNESOTA STATE PARK SYSTEM DESCRIPTION

A variety of services and facilities are provided in Minnesota state parks to make visitor experiences with the natural resources more comfortable, educational and enjoyable.

Facilities

- More than 4,000 campsites are provided
 - * 3,525 modern vehicle campground sites with showers available
 - * 346 rustic vehicular campground sites
 - * 21 cart-in sites (small 2-wheel carts provided)
 - * 65 walk-in sites
 - * 97 backpack sites
 - * 63 canoe-in sites
 - 75 group camps are provided
 - * 8 group camps have dormitory cabins
 - * 15 are specially designed for campers with horses
 - Douglas Lodge Complex
 - * 5 rooms in Douglas Lodge
 - * 18 rooms in Nicollet Court
 - * 10 rooms in Club House
 - * 19 cabins
 - 33 designated swimming beaches
 - 4,200 picnic sites
 - * 53 picnic shelters
 - 43 visitor & interpretive centers
 - 29 parks have interpretive programs
 - * 9 year- round programs
 - over 1,600 buildings (900 are major buildings, larger than 100 square feet)
 - sewage disposal facilities in all parks
 - * 13 sewage lagoons
 - * 41 lift stations
 - 262 water wells
 - over 1,000 miles of trails
 - * 780 miles hiking
 - * 510 miles cross country skiing
 - * 390 miles snowmobiling
 - * 40 miles bicycling
 - * 210 miles horseback riding
 - 95 water accesses within state parks
 - 336 miles of road inside state parks
-

These recreational opportunities are dispersed across 200,000 acres of state land which were selected for their rare, sensitive and scenic natural resources.

Some Examples of State Parks

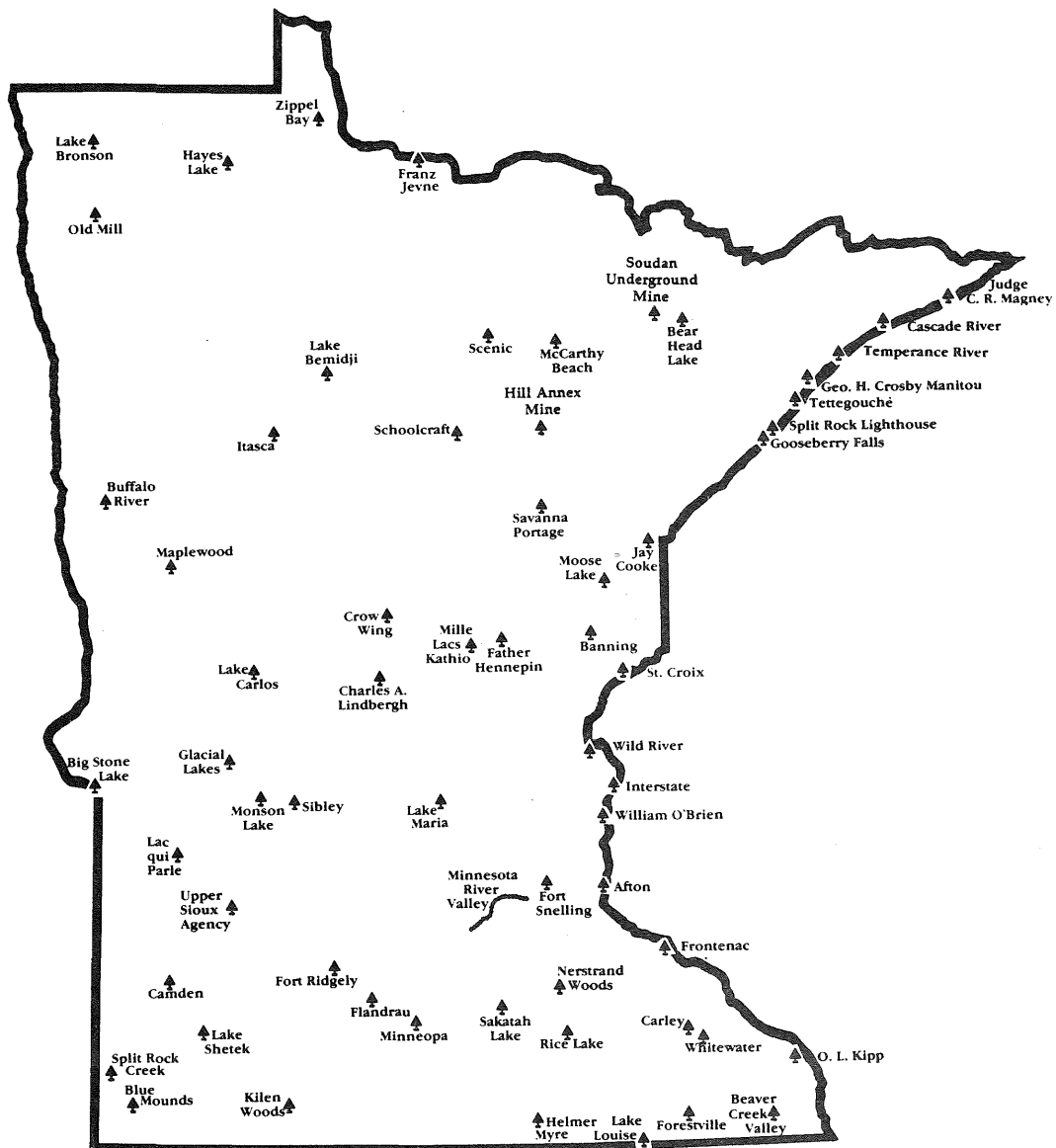
Each of the 64 Minnesota state parks offer a diversity of natural settings and scenic wonders to enjoy; from the tall pine forests to the rolling prairies; from small springs to the roaring waves of Lake Superior.

Itasca State Park in north central Minnesota contains 30,000 acres of pristine lake and virgin pine country surrounding the headwaters of the Mississippi. The historic Douglas Lodge, adjacent cabins and 218 campsites provide overnight accommodations for park visitors. Numerous hiking, skiing, bicycling and snowmobile trails, and the scenic Wilderness Drive, provide access to remote areas of the park.

The state parks along the North Shore are famous for their waterfalls, rocky shorelines, spectacular views and history. Included are Gooseberry Falls, Split Rock Lighthouse, Tettegouche, Temperance River, Cascade River and Judge C. R. Magney State Parks.

Forestville State Park in southeastern Minnesota encloses a late 1800's townsite complete with a restored and stocked country store nestled into rugged limestone walled valleys and filled with rushing trout streams. This 2,600 acre park provides 73 vehicular campsites, a horse campground and a picnic ground with an enclosed shelter for visitor comfort. Hiking, cross-country skiing, snowmobiling and horseback riding trails provide access throughout this series of valleys and to trout fishing opportunities. Mystery Cave, with 13 miles of spectacular underground passageways, has recently been added to this park.

Blue Mounds State Park is a 2,000 acre park in southwestern Minnesota which encompasses 100 foot rock cliffs that rise out of the surrounding level cropland. Now buffalo again can be seen on the prairie in this beautiful state park. Swimming is provided in a small pond. There are 73 vehicle campsites, a picnic grounds, interpretive center and a buffalo herd to view, learn about and enjoy. Hiking and snowmobile trails provide access to the bluff top and the stone cliffs.



State Park Visitation

Minnesota state park use is increasing dramatically after several years of limited change. In 1986, state park attendance was 5,500,000 visitor occasions. By the end of 1987, attendance rose 22% to 6,700,000. Visitation for 1988 is up significantly again and is expected to reach 7,100,000 visitor occasions. Some of this increase is because of favorable weather conditions, but improved marketing, promotion, special events and quality public service are responsible for a large part of state parks increased popularity.

State Park Visitor Survey

As important as it is to find ways to provide quality service to park visitors, it is just as important to find new ways to improve state park visitor satisfaction. The division is on the right track. The 1987 State Park Visitor Survey showed that 94% of the state park visitors enjoyed their stay, 98% said they would return for another visit and 97% said they would recommend state parks to their friends.

WHAT FACILITIES/SERVICES SHOULD BE (OR SHOULD NOT BE) IN THE PARK FOR VISITOR ENJOYMENT?

(top 6 of 55 facilities/services in % of visitors)

'SHOULD BE'		'SHOULD NOT BE'	
Picnic area	97%	Amusement rides	82%
Hiking/walking trails	96%	Motorized ORV trails	75%
Campground	88%	Hunting area	68%
Visitor Center	83%	Golf course	58%
Showers	81%	Motel/lodge	53%
Beach	80%	Game room	51%

WHY DID VISITORS CHOOSE THIS PARK INSTEAD OF ANOTHER RECREATION AREA?

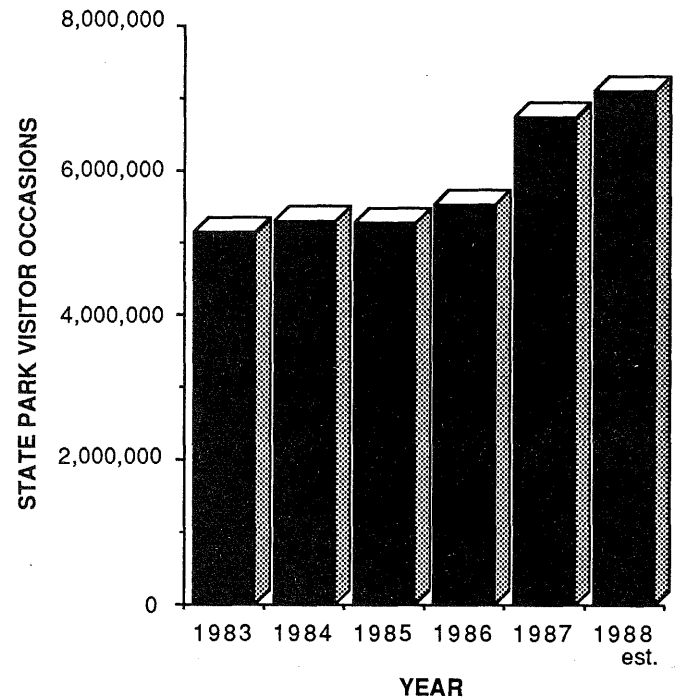
(top 6 of 15 reasons in % of visitors)

Been here before and enjoyed	45%
Natural features	36%
General area of park	33%
Near permanent home	31%
Chance to see wildlife	22%

WHO ARE OUR VISITORS?

- * 80% are Minnesotans, who come from all regions of the state
- * 82% are day users and 18% are campers
- * Half of the day users come directly from home and half are on trips away from home
- * 87% of visitors are traveling with family and friends

STATE PARK VISITOR GROWTH



- * 45% of parties contain children and 21% contain teenagers
- * Our adult visitors:
 - are younger than the general population;
 - have more formal education than the general population; and
 - are more 'middle income' than the general population

WHAT BENEFITS DID VISITORS EXPECT TO RECEIVE FROM THEIR VISIT?

- * High frequency: General 'natural' experience - enjoy scenery, nature, peace and calm; have fun and get exercise
- * Medium frequency: Educational and social experience
- * Low frequency: Challenging outdoor experience; be where social action is; and reflect on personal values

WHAT WERE THE MOST IMPORTANT ITEMS FOR AN ENJOYABLE VISIT?

(top 6 of 35 items)

ITEM	PERCENTAGE OF VISITORS	ITEM RATINGS OF GOOD TO EXCELLENT
Beauty of park	77%	86%
Trails to walk/hike	66%	82%
Clean restrooms	60%	80%
Clean park grounds	54%	92%
Facilities in campground	51%	74%
Courtesy of park staff	46%	95%

Park Visitors Wants and Needs

Times change. People change. Any public service agency must evolve to meet the changes in needs and expectations of its clientele. The state park system needs to respond to and plan for changes and trends in outdoor recreation and the visitors who utilize the state parks.

Major influencing factors for the future of state parks will certainly include the aging of our population. The park system must be prepared for more senior citizens. This market segment has more leisure time, often more disposable income, more sophisticated camping units and higher expectations for comfort and services.

Utilization of recreational vehicles continues to increase. Longer units necessitate campground redesign or rehabilitation to accommodate both size and electrical requirements. Restrooms with showers are an expected service.

The baby boom generation is now moving into middle age with a higher standard of living and older children. The back to the earth movement of the 60's and 70's has given way to more stressful lifestyles and less interest in primitive camping.

Increased concern for personal fitness has resulted in more demand for hiking, bicycling and cross country ski trails. More people are taking shorter but more frequent vacations to escape the demands and stresses of their everyday life. Parks offer the opportunity to "get away" close to home.

As the interrelationships of environmental problems become more apparent, so has the recognition that state parks have tremendous potential for facilitating increased public awareness and concern for environmental issues such as groundwater contamination, acid rain and global warming. Interpretation and education in the state parks enables visitors of all ages to experience first-hand their opportunities and responsibilities for stewardship of their heritage of natural and cultural resources.

To retain the alignment of state park facilities and services with the clientele, it is imperative that the system consistently solicit public input and feedback regarding its quality and be prepared to make changes in keeping with trends and influences.

Economic Impact of State Parks

State parks have a significant impact on the economy of Minnesota. In 1986, the Public Area Recreation Visitors Survey (PARVS) was undertaken as a nationwide intergovernmental research project. Minnesota state parks summer visitors were questioned on their expenditures to determine the economic importance of state parks. These expenditures include lodging, food, transportation and other expenses incurred while traveling. The grounds, services and facilities

state parks offer attract millions of visitors, which in turn, bring millions of outdoor recreation travel export dollars. Travel exports are all expenditures made in a region by non-residents of that region. They are important to local economies because they bring income to the area that originates from outside that region. This income fuels growth in the local economy and contributes to a region's economic well-being.

In 1985, recreationists spent nearly \$2 billion in Minnesota. Of this \$2 billion in expenditures, \$68 million was spent during a five-month period (May to September) by state park visitors on travel expenses and goods and services near the park during their state park visit. Non-resident spending accounted for \$14.4 million of the total. That \$68 million expenditure generated \$98 million of business for the state and supported 1,941 full and part-time jobs. State of Minnesota revenues increased \$10,400,000 (\$4 million from park visitor fees, \$3.8 million from sales tax and \$2.6 million from indirect taxes).

Minnesota state park visitors were organized into three categories for analysis. Visitors who drove from home to visit a park during the day spent an average of \$7.50 per person. Visitors who visited a park during the day as part of a longer trip averaged \$25.69 per person per day. Visitors who camped overnight in the state park spent an average of \$18.89 per person per day.

II. STATE PARK PROBLEMS

There are a variety of major issues that must be addressed by the Division of Parks and Recreation and Minnesota citizens over the next two years. These issues are interrelated. They revolve around the state's need to provide quality outdoor recreation experiences for visitors while protecting the unique resources within state parks and enhancing the state's tourism industry.

Budget Erosion

Two major factors have had a negative impact on the state park system over the last few years. The parks staff and budget have grown very little while new programs, responsibilities, visitor use and visitor services have increased dramatically.

The Division of Parks and Recreation employs 168 full-time people. This permanent staff is assisted by approximately 600 seasonal and part-time employees and 40 needy/elderly people employed under contract with Greenview Inc. This staff operates 64 major state park units, seven days a week, 52 weeks a year.

State park staff has a broad variety of responsibilities.

They include:

1. Operate contact station, check in campers and provide visitors with information
2. Provide park security and protection
3. Provide low-key law enforcement
4. Operate leases and concessions
5. Develop, maintain and operate the park facilities (camp grounds, picnic grounds, trails, interpretive centers, toilets, sewage lagoons, wells, water systems, roads and parking lots)
6. Conduct interpretive programs for visitor enjoyment and education
7. Meet with local groups to discuss common issues
8. Conduct resource management (improve and restore natural vegetation and wildlife populations, control erosion, improve water quality, improve fish habitat and preserve historical/archaeological sites)
9. Conduct summer staff orientation/training programs relating to public relations, communications and enforcement
10. Conduct a marketing program (increase visitor satisfaction, improve public information, promote tourism and redistribute park use)

As operations and capital budgets shrink and demands for service by the public increase, more time is spent on those park responsibilities directly related to public service. These include the operation of the contact station (where visitors

check in and get park information), providing law enforcement and security and maintaining those facilities most used by visitors (1-5 above). Less time and personnel effort has been devoted to services and programs which have long range impacts that may not be immediately apparent to park visitors. These include resource management, long-term building and facility maintenance, interpretation, local public relations, staff training and marketing (5-10).

There are two negative effects on the state park system as a result of this situation. The maintenance and resource management work accumulates and becomes more costly over time. Repairs and resource work that are neglected become major projects and very expensive to correct. At some point, if care is not taken, buildings, facilities and resources may be lost forever or may require total replacement. The second negative impact of neglected responsibilities is a loss of revenue for the state treasury, the local economy and the state park system. If more time were spent on interpretation and local public relations and marketing, the potential to attract visitors would increase along with revenues both at the park and in the local economy.

In an effort to identify reasonable and credible operating standards from which funding needs can be identified, the Division of Parks and Recreation developed "minimum operating standards", based on a system used successfully by the Province of Ontario, Canada, Ministry of Parks. It was found that the current level of Minnesota's operational and maintenance funding is 30% below minimum standards.

Minnesota state park staff is continually striving to provide a better experience for state park visitors. During the past few years, the Division of Parks and Recreation has been providing new visitor services without increased staff or funding. These services were added at the expense of other programs that could be temporarily delayed.

Some of the new services provided include:

- Service orientation of staff - serving more visitors and striving to accommodate their needs
- New administrative responsibilities such as hiring processes, personnel functions, labor relations, fiscal accountability and visitor research and evaluation
- Campground Reservations - reservations can be made in all state park campgrounds
- Special Events - include day-long or weekend celebrations, often presented cooperatively with local communities
- Visa/Mastercard - provides a convenience for park guests
- Lifetimes and Landscapes - a special series of educational and entertainment programs with presentations distributed throughout Minnesota
- Marketing - provides the public with better information on the recreational and educational opportunities in state parks and parks staff with information on visitor needs and expectations.

Natural Resource Management

The State Park Resource Management program was established to carryout the following objectives:

- To perpetuate the natural plant and animal communities of state parks and the ecological processes upon which they depend
- To mitigate the impact of public use and facility development on natural resources
- To preserve rare and endangered plants, animals and communities
- To maintain or recreate examples of pre-settlement Minnesota
- To enhance the natural setting in which outdoor recreation and interpretation occurs

These objectives are not being accomplished. Major resource management problems are not being addressed. Resource management is often easy to put off. Often, results are not felt immediately. In fact, some activities such as the regeneration of a pine stand take 60 years to complete.

The resource management problems within state parks which are not being addressed include severe erosion, invasion by noxious weeds, soil compaction from high use, prairie and forest deterioration, old field restoration, and insect and disease infestations. In some parks vegetation is rapidly moving to a state where European buckthorn, box elder and other undesirable species are becoming predominant.

Emergency and Accelerated Rehabilitation

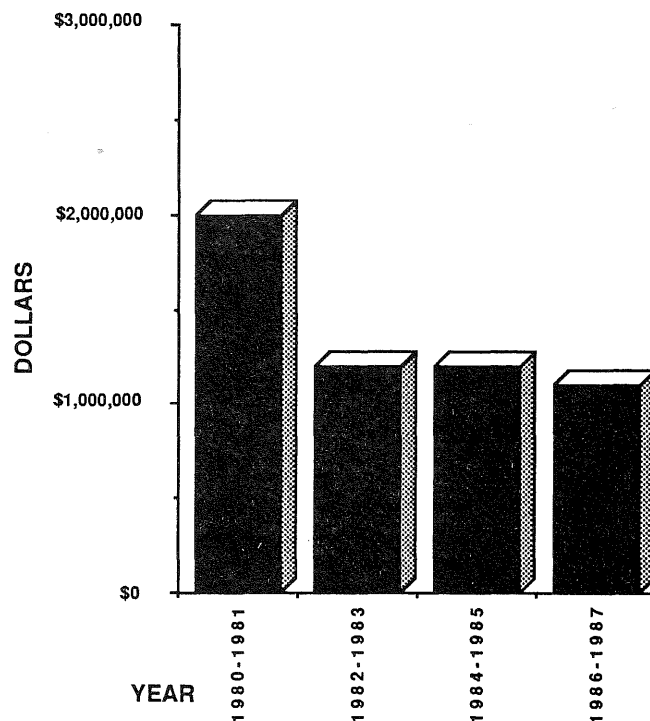
The objective of the Emergency and Accelerated Rehabilitation program is to provide funding for emergency repairs. Rehabilitation on seriously deteriorated facilities, where visitor health and safety are not in danger, is also funded by this program.

A good rehabilitation program of this type is essential in state parks to retain quality recreational facilities for guests and to minimize new development costs for taxpayers. A few dollars worth of rehabilitation now can save major replacement dollars. Rehabilitation will also bring existing facilities up to a standard where they can be maintained in a useful condition for many more years.

The program includes state park structures, roads, utilities and related facilities, many of which are old. For example, 380 major buildings are still in use which were built using Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) and Work Progress Administration (WPA) labor during the 1930's.

In the past several years, the increased use of state parks and their aging facilities has lead to increased emergency types of problems which can affect public health and safety.

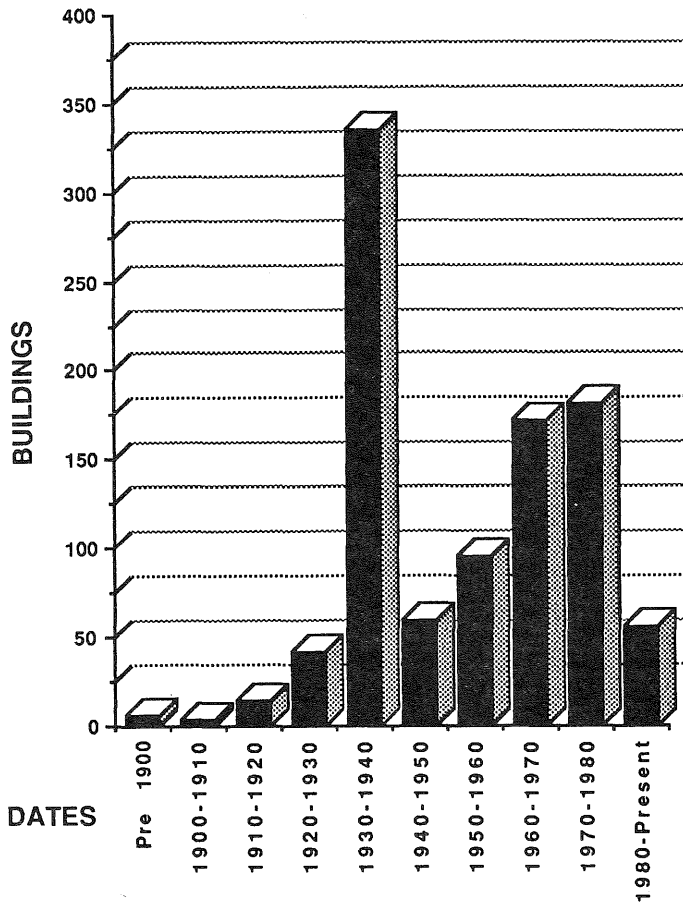
EMERGENCY & ACCELERATED REHABILITATION PROGRAM



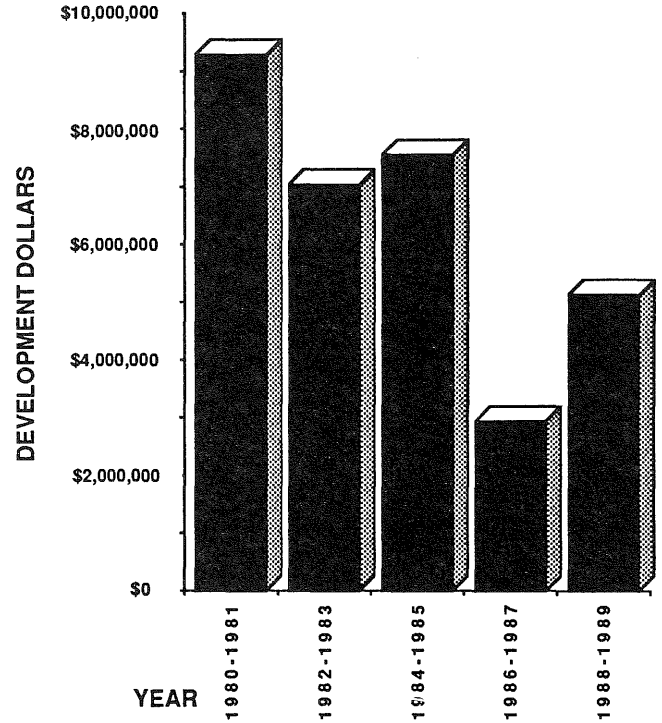
Development (Capital Improvements)

State parks need to be constantly improved for the enjoyment of the park guests and for the presentation and restoration of the natural and cultural environment. Over the years, facility maintenance has not kept up with the needs. This neglect has resulted in the need for funds to conduct major rehabilitation projects and replace buildings. The state park system has the largest amount of buildings and facilities in the Department of Natural Resources with over 2,800 major facilities requiring continuous maintenance and replacement. However, the Park Development program has been decreased significantly in the past 10 years. The development budget was drastically cut from approximately \$10,000,000 per biennium to \$5,000,000 for the current biennium.

AGE OF STATE PARK BUILDINGS



STATE PARK DEVELOPMENT FUNDING



Equipment

While attendance and the demand for services is increasing, the condition of the division's equipment has been slowly deteriorating.

A few years ago, many park workers drove vehicles that had over 100,000 miles and were normally replaced with used vehicles with slightly less mileage. The department's new Fleet Program was started in 1987 and has begun to take care of the problem of timely replacement.

However, the Fleet Program does not address smaller, motorized equipment and non-motorized equipment such as two-way radios, cash registers, safety equipment, computers, mowers, chainsaws, shop equipment, snowplows, movie and slide projectors, office furniture and power tools. Equipment of this kind is needed to provide for visitor enjoyment and safety and efficient service. Many of the radios are so outdated that parts cannot be found to repair them when they break down.

Another area of concern is the inability to keep up with visitor's expectations for snow grooming. Many parks groom trails with older, inadequate snowmobiles and homemade tracksetters. When these machines do work, they are slow and cannot handle deep or old icy snow.

III. IMMEDIATE NEEDS - 1990-91 BIENNIUM

The future for the Minnesota state park system looks bright despite the problems. The future is bright because of the extremely high quality and value of our park resources, our dedicated staff and because the means to address the problems are at hand. The solutions to state park issues inevitably involve people and financing. This is primarily because the parks and recreation operational budget is about 80% salaries. Serious problems with natural resources, customer service, buildings and facilities can be reduced with staff positions and necessary funding to do the job.

The most complex problem facing state parks in attempting to put the state park system back on track is determining the correct level of funding necessary to rehabilitate and maintain our state's natural treasures. The DNR, Division of Parks and Recreation, analyzed the state park system during the past year and identified the most critical needs. If these needs can be met Minnesota's state park system can be rehabilitated and can play an even more important role in the areas of social well-being and economic development.

The immediate needs described in this brochure are for the upcoming 1990-91 biennium. They are needed as additions to the base level Parks and Recreation budget. When secured, they will become part of the base level budgets of the future.

The Division of Parks and Recreation has traditionally used its dedicated revenue account (funds generated by permit fees, camping fees and merchandise sales) to pay for one-third of its operating expenses. Increased attendance at state parks has resulted in a corresponding increase in the funds dedicated to this account. Therefore, in keeping with the traditional formula, one-third of the 1990-91 operations funding needs could be paid for out of the Division of Parks and Recreation's dedicated revenue account.

State Park Operations Funding Needs

The established base funding level that state parks has operated under in the past is grossly inadequate. The four programs with the most critical need for increased annual funding levels are:

1. Interpretation/Education Program

The State Park Interpretation-Education Program currently has only one full-time naturalist. The recently completed Statewide Interpretive Plan has identified conversion of ten 90% part time naturalists to full-time as an initial step in fulfilling visitor expectations. These positions are critical to provide quality interpretive programming for park visitors, particularly school groups. The stability and status of full-time positions are essential to recognize the professional nature of interpretive responsibilities.

1990-91 NEED: \$110,000 and conversion of 10 part-time field positions to full-time.

2. **Planning, Maintenance and Operations Program**
The State Park Maintenance and Operations Program has been operating at a level 30% below minimum quality standards. This was determined using the State Parks Minimum Standards guidelines. Planning has been minimal to nonexistent. This request will provide state parks with the seasonal and full-time personnel and supplies needed to meet the demands of new programs and increasing numbers of visitors. This budget request will not provide for anything new in parks but will simply bring them up to minimum quality facility maintenance and public service operating standards.

1990-91 NEED: \$4,170,000 and 10 full-time field positions

3. **Natural Resource Management Program**
The State Parks Resource Management Program is handled primarily by regional resource management specialists. They are charged with the responsibility of assisting park managers in protecting, preserving and managing natural resources within state parks. These positions are absolutely critical to the state park system, but at this time only four of the six DNR regions have a resource management specialist. This budget request would put positions in the Central Region in Brainerd and in the Metro Region in St. Paul.

1990-91 NEED: \$150,000 and 2 full-time field positions

4. **Emergency and Accelerated Rehabilitation Program**
The Emergency and Accelerated Rehabilitation Program is the sole source of funds for emergency repairs in the state park system. With the large number of facilities in the state park system, including buildings, campgrounds, sewage systems, wells, residences, roads and others, breakdowns are inevitable. This request, in addition to the maintenance and operations request, would allow state parks personnel to stay on top of facility problems and take care of emergency needs.

1990-91 NEED: \$570,000

Capital Bonding Needs

1. State Park Development Program

The purpose of the State Park Development Program is to finance and manage those aspects of the state park system which are not considered operational. The components of

this program are:

- Handicapped accessibility projects
- Itasca State Park improvements
- Soudan Underground Mine improvements
- Interpretive exhibits and self guided trails
- Resource management
- Major rehabilitation of facilities
- Development of new facilities
- Major new interpretive facilities
- Replacement of picnic and campground equipment

The Capital Bonding Program is responsible for the construction and major rehabilitation of state park buildings and facilities and for natural resource management projects. The source of financing for these projects is the sale of state revenue bonds.

A major problem with developing and operating a state park system using this kind of bonding program is that there is no continuous source of funds. The value of buildings and facilities in our state park system is estimated at \$150,000,000. A continuous amount of funding is necessary for the replacement of buildings and facilities every year. The amount of money available from the bonding program can vary greatly from year to year. With 1,650 buildings, plus the resources and facilities in 64 state parks, there is a need for funds to remain stable and continuous.

1990-91 NEED: \$10,000,000

2. Land Acquisition Program

A second state parks program which is financed through the Capital Bonding Program is the Land Acquisition Program. The total dollar amount needed to acquire 21,000 acres of private land within legislatively established park boundaries is \$21,000,000. A stable funding level of \$5,000,000 per biennium would allow timely acquisition of needed properties in the future.

1990-91 NEED: \$5,000,000

IV. OTHER CRITICAL STATE PARK SYSTEM NEEDS

As indicated, Parks and Recreation has identified immediate additional funding needs of \$5,000,000 for park operations and \$15,000,000 for capital bonding. These are by no means the only needs of the state park system. This funding is intended to bring the Division of Parks and Recreation up to acceptable levels of public service and resource management.

Additional critical needs for the state park system will be deferred to future bienniums. It is hoped that through planned additions to the budget, an appropriate base level can be established so that state park staff members can address other critical needs. Funding for the following needs will be pursued over the next several bienniums.

Critical unmet needs fall into the following categories:

- 1. Development** - The Minnesota state park system contains over 2,800 facilities such as buildings, roads, picnic grounds, wells, sanitation systems and trails, among others. In addition, DNR manages 200,000 acres of the most unique and spectacular resources in the state. State park buildings, facilities and resources need constant maintenance and certain facilities need replacement. New facilities are also needed to keep pace with user needs. As of July 1988, the capital budget project list contained 450 development projects for a total cost of \$41,552,000. These costs can be spread over several years, but a continuous source of funds is needed to take care of the backlog of facility and natural resource rehabilitation projects and to ensure that facilities and resources remain available for public use.
- 2. Non-Fleet Equipment** - The new DNR Fleet Management program has improved DNR's fleet equipment needs. The department is also addressing the problem of non-fleet equipment but the total need will not be met in 1990-91. Parks cannot operate properly and the public cannot be served without the equipment necessary to do the job. The estimate of the dollars needed for non-fleet equipment is \$2,000,000.
- 3. Management Information Systems** - Only about one-third of our state parks currently have computers. Additional computers are also needed in the St. Paul Office. Some records are still kept by hand and communication is woefully lacking throughout the system. Additional staff and training is needed to establish an information system that facilitates sound management and improves public responsiveness.
- 4. Interpretation/Education** - The ten positions in the 1990-91 budget request will improve this program, but these positions are just the foundation of the Interpretation/Education program. All 64 state parks have visitors

who expect and want educational opportunities. The needs identified in the Statewide Interpretive Plan include 19 full-time naturalist positions at a cost of \$1,140,000 per biennium and \$470,000 for much needed seasonal naturalist positions. These changes would allow Minnesota to take full advantage of the environmental education potential of state parks.

- 5. Marketing** - The Division of Parks and Recreation is continuing to learn more about its customers, but efforts in this area could be greatly accelerated. There is a constant need for information regarding the wants and needs of state park visitors. This information should be acquired on an annual basis. There is also a need to learn about citizens who do not now use our parks and what their reasons are. This information could result in changes that would initiate increased use which would benefit citizens and the state and local economies. The State Park Merchandise program is part of a marketing and promotion effort. This program has the potential to generate income for the state park system. Modest efforts in this area would pay large dividends. The State Park Information program could also be improved. Additional information in the form of brochures, news releases, magazine and newspaper articles, radio and television shows and videos would help residents and non-residents alike decide where to spend their tourist dollars.

Other Areas of Concern

There are a number of additional areas of concern which are under funded and which need attention. The Division of Parks and Recreation will continue to seek innovative ways to resolve these program issues. They include real estate management, grants and gift administration and training among others.

V. 1990-91 NEEDS SUMMARY

State parks play an important role in Minnesota's quality of life and economy and that role is increasing as the use of parks increases. The critical operational and capital needs of the state park system must be addressed if the system is to continue to operate. Based on acceptable management standards, Minnesota is operating parks 30% below minimum levels. There is a need for a continuous funding source to replace decaying buildings and facilities and deteriorating resources. The need for action is immediate. There is an extensive list of capital budget projects that must be addressed now. Minnesota must take steps to rehabilitate its state park system starting with the 1990-91 biennial budget request.

The Minnesota state park system needs for the 1990-91 biennium are:

STATE PARK OPERATIONS

Interpretation/Education	\$110,000
Planning, Maintenance and Operations	4,170,000
Resource Management	150,000
Emergency & Accelerated Rehabilitation	570,000
TOTAL	\$5,000,000

STATE PARK CAPITAL BONDING

Park Development	\$10,000,000
Land Acquisition	\$5,000,000
TOTAL	\$15,000,000

**TOTAL 1990-91
INCREASE NEEDED** **\$20,000,000**

All figures represent biennial (2 year) needs. These needs reflect an increase over historic funding levels.

SB 482 .M6 M592 1988

Minnesota state parks

SB 482 .M6 M592 1988

Minnesota state parks

DATE	DESCRIPTION
APR 18 9	[REDACTED]
	[REDACTED]
	[REDACTED]
	[REDACTED]

LEGISLATIVE REFERENCE LIBRARY
645 State Office Building
Saint Paul, Minnesota 55155

