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# DEVELOPMENT & ACQUISITION STATUS

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Father Hennepin  
State Park



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## MINNESOTA STATE PARK SYSTEM

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.

The Division of Parks and Recreation manages 64 state parks across Minnesota. The state park system is vital to Minnesota's tourism, an industry that is becoming the backbone of many economies in greater Minnesota. Our most unique and valuable cultural and natural resources are found within state park boundaries. It is the Division of Parks & Recreation's responsibility to acquire, protect and interpret these unique resources.

Prior to the 1989 legislative session, funding constraints and increasing visitor use seriously eroded the Division of Parks and Recreation's ability to provide quality recreational experiences and services. Since then the Governor and state legislators have responded to the need for increased funding for the operations budget. However, financing the maintenance of existing facilities and new development in the face of increasing visitor use remains a problem. This will be addressed during the 1990 legislative session when a capital bonding bill is considered.

The state park system has the Department of Natural Resource's (DNR) largest physical plant with over 2,800 major facilities requiring major rehabilitation. The Division of Parks & Recreation has identified more than \$55 million in capital budget needs. These projects include land acquisition, resource management, major rehabilitation or replacement of existing facilities and a few new facilities. Legislative funding requests to meet this need will be spread throughout future bienniums.

A recent study conducted by the Minnesota Historical Society identifies 515 historic structures located in the state park system. These structures are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Most of these structures are of Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) and Work Progress Administration (WPA) vintage. The CCC/WPA structures were constructed in the 1930's. These facilities are over 50 years old and many are in need of major rehabilitation which includes the electrical, sewage, and water systems associated with these buildings.

Many years of intensive use is also a consideration when looking at the current condition of campgrounds, picnic areas, group camps and trail systems. Lack of development and rehabilitation of these and other state park facilities will reduce park use. A reduction in state park use will adversely impact the economic development of adjacent communities and Minnesota's effort to improve tourism.

As capital development funds have become available we have completed the highest priority projects. As additional needs are identified, they are reviewed and placed on the statewide priority list for future completion.

In 1991, Itasca, Minnesota's oldest state park, will be 100 years old. For 100 years Minnesota has had a park system to be proud of. The present challenge is to manage the park resources and recreational development to ensure that Minnesotans will be proud of their state park system for another hundred years.

## AN OVERVIEW OF FATHER HENNEPIN STATE PARK

Father Hennepin State Park is located on the southeast shore of Mille Lacs Lake in east central Minnesota. The park entrance is located on State Highway 27 one mile west of Isle and three miles east of Wahkon. The statutory boundary encompasses 316 acres. Of these 45 acres are privately owned. The park was established in 1941, and named after Father Lewis Hennepin, a Jesuit Priest, who was among the first European explorers to visit the region now called Minnesota.

Rolling hills characterize Father Hennepin State Park. These are the result of glacial activity that occurred between 20,000 and 16,000 years ago. During this time mighty mile-thick ice sheets advanced south across Minnesota, crushing and scouring the land in the process. When the last glacier retreated from the area it left behind an extensive C-shaped deposit of sand, gravel and rock debris referred to as the Mille Lacs Moraine. This moraine served as a dam for glacial meltwater that eventually formed Mille Lacs Lake.

The original park vegetation was dominated by dense stands of red and white pine, representing the edge of the northern boreal forest. These stands were interspersed with scattered areas of mixed hardwoods, consisting primarily of birch and aspen with spruce and fir present in the lowland areas.

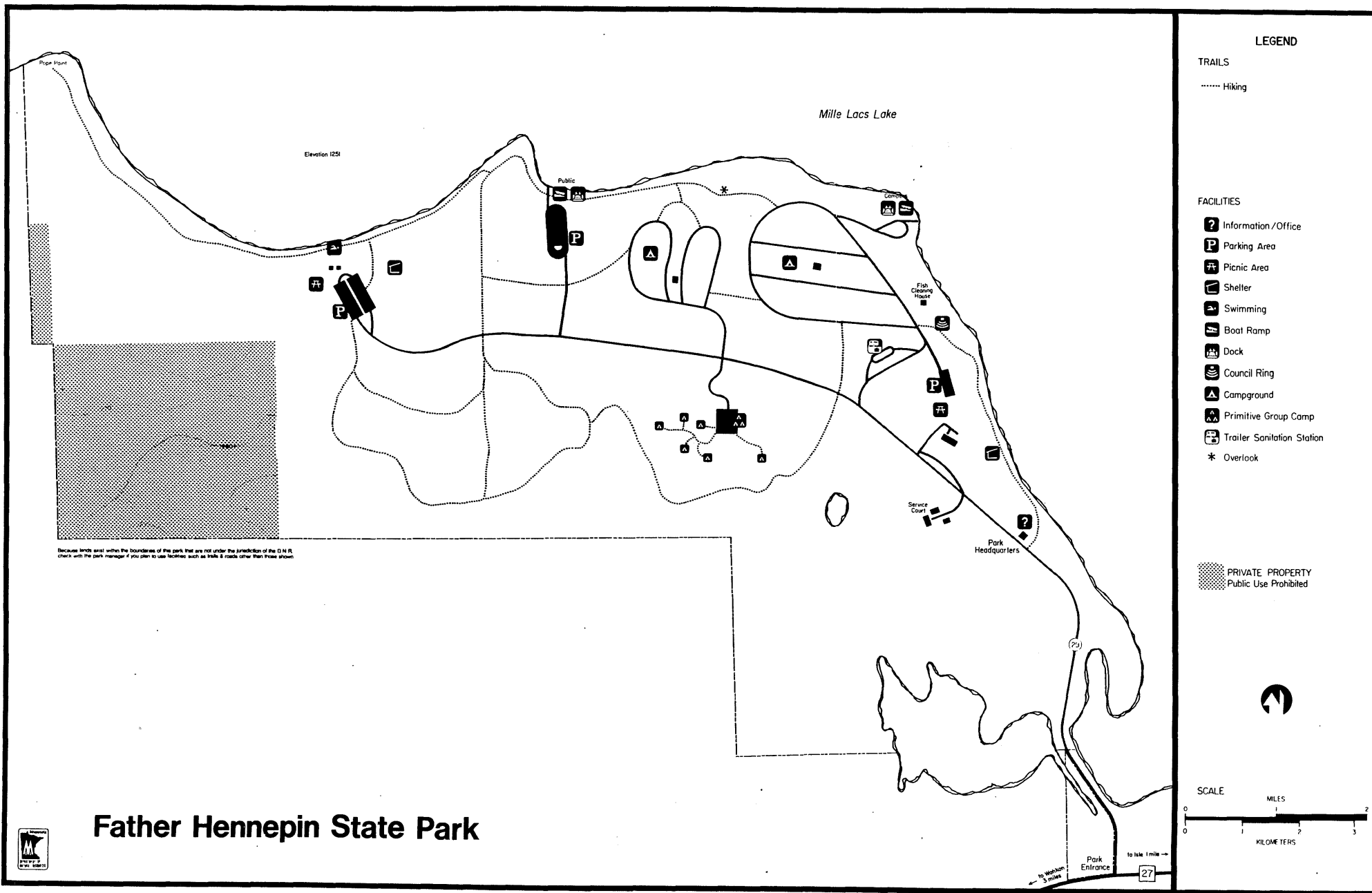
Beginning in about 1850, loggers entered the region to harvest the seemingly endless stands of red and white pine. For the next thirty years, timber was harvested during the winter months and floated down the Rum and Mississippi rivers during the spring and summer to waiting saw mills at the Falls of Saint Anthony. There, the logs were processed and shipped by riverboat to cities such as St. Louis and by train to markets in Chicago and eastward.

Today, the pioneer species of aspen and birch dominate the areas once occupied by pine. However, some stands and individual pines remain scattered throughout the park.

Father Hennepin State Park is home to a variety of wildlife. The extensive stands of aspen and small clearings in the park provide some of the best ruffed grouse habitat found anywhere in the state. Mille Lacs Lake and the marshes within the park provide habitat for a variety of waterfowl, shore birds and open water birds including common loons, herring-, ring-billed-, and Franklin's gulls, great-blue herons and osprey. Other important birds include the bald eagle, great-horned owl, barred owl, red-tailed hawk, rose-breasted grosbeak, American goldfinch, common snipe and American woodcock.

Many mammals also inhabit the park. These include coyotes, white-tailed deer, red fox, striped skunk, mink, long-tailed weasel, raccoon, porcupine, muskrat, beaver and four species of bats.

Father Hennepin State Park is centrally located between three population centers. St. Cloud is 60 miles to the southwest, Duluth is 90 miles to the northeast and the Twin Cities is 100 miles south of the park. This location makes the park accessible to over 2.5 million people in about a two hour drive. The number one recreational resource of the park and the surrounding area is Mille Lacs Lake. With its large size and abundant opportunities for fishing this large body of water provides great potential for water-related recreation. Popular visitor activities include fishing and swimming in Mille Lacs Lake, camping, hiking, cross-country skiing, picnicking and nature study.



## EXISTING FACILITIES

The following is an inventory of the existing physical plant of Father Hennepin State Park.

Acres in Statutory Boundary - 316

Acres of state land - 271

Acres of private land - 45

### Campsites

Drive in - 103

Showers - Yes

Modern toilets - Yes

Campsites with electricity - 30

### Miles of Trails

Hiking - 4

Cross Country Ski - 2.5

Snowmobile - 1.5

Playgrounds - 2

Beaches - 1

### Miles of Road

Asphalt - 3

Gravel - 1

Picnic Shelter - O/E

Number of Picnic Tables - 136

Trailer Dump Station - 1

Water Accesses - 2

### Number of Buildings

Over 100 sq.ft. - 10

Under 100 sq.ft. - 12

Miles of Posted Boundary - 4

### Park Utilities

Sewage Lagoon - 1

Number of Sewage Lift Stations - 1

Number of Septic Tanks - 5

Number of Wells - 5

Number of Individual

Water Distribution Systems - 4

## PROBLEMS FACING FATHER HENNEPIN STATE PARK

There are many public recreational facilities in Father Hennepin State Park to maintain. Most were constructed in the 1960's, and are now in need of rehabilitation. Many new facilities are needed to meet growing recreational demands.

The park's natural and cultural resources are also in need of protection and management to perpetuate Father Hennepin's resources. In the past, facilities were developed in areas of ancient encampments. These encampments must be protected and should be interpreted.

In order to interpret the natural and cultural identity of the park, a facility must be constructed to tell the story of this area of Mille Lacs Lake.

Many trees have been damaged or lost as a result of tree disease, soil compaction, and windstorms. Hazardous trees in the use areas of the park must be removed and shade trees replanted. There are many shoreline erosion problems along Mille Lacs Lake; stabilization of the shoreline is necessary.

Improvements to the entrance area are also needed to eliminate vehicular and pedestrian traffic problems. Improved accessibility to fishing opportunities is also needed.

## **RECENT DEVELOPMENT IN FATHER HENNEPIN STATE PARK**

Major development projects over the past few years have included:

1. Construction of new contact station/office building.
2. Improvements to public water access.
3. Campground rehabilitation.

## **FATHER HENNEPIN STATE PARK CAPITAL NEEDS**

### **RESOURCE MANAGEMENT**

#### **Hazardous Tree Removal and Reforestation \$20,000**

This project includes the removal of dead and dying trees in use area where a potential of property damage and threat to visitor safety exists. Shade trees that are removed must be replaced.

#### **Shoreline Stabilization \$10,000**

Install shoreline rip-rap to stop erosion.

**Subtotal \$30,000**

### **MAJOR REHABILITATION**

#### **Road Rehabilitation \$60,000**

Major rehabilitation of existing park roads and parking lots including new base and paving.

#### **Service Area Improvements \$15,000**

Project includes service court improvements to buildings and parking lot.

**Subtotal \$75,000**

### **NEW DEVELOPMENT**

#### **Entrance Road Parking Lot and Fishing Pier \$25,000**

Build a new lot and fishing pier near the park entrance to the park. This area is a favorite shore fishing area for park visitors.

#### **Improved Access from State Highway 27 \$15,000**

Project includes turn lanes and new entrance signing.

#### **Interpretive/Orientation Displays \$20,000**

New displays would be constructed at the entrance station and campground areas.

## LAND ACQUISITION

### Office Parking Lot \$15,000

Construct a service drive and parking lot to get cars off the entrance road.

Subtotal \$75,000

**TOTAL DEVELOPMENT NEEDS - \$180,000**

There are approximately 20,000 acres of private land within the boundaries of Minnesota State Parks. Acquisition of these lands is an ongoing process that occurs as parcels become available for purchase and funds are available. Present acquisition costs are averaging about a \$1,000 per acre across the state. It would therefore cost about \$20,000,000 to acquire all the private land within state parks at present values.

The park map shows the location of private holdings within the park. These properties should be purchased before private development increases within the park's statutory boundary.

The following issues highlight problems associated with private property within state parks.

- \* Private lands within state parks are being sought out by developers.
- \* Subdivision for residential use will cause such lands to be too expensive to acquire in the future.
- \* Land uses such as gravel extraction and clear cut logging adversely impact state parks and adjoining public lands.
- \* Some private lands limit public use of existing park facilities and lands because of their location.

Parcel #	Acres
1	40.00
2	5.00
Total 45.00 acres.	

## PARK POTENTIAL

What efforts will the completion of resource management, rehabilitation and new development projects have on Father Hennepin State Park? These projects, along with the acquisition of private lands within the park will assure the preservation of these unique resources and facilities for future generations. Active management will be required to maintain and regenerate existing forest stands. These will ensure that future visitors will be able to experience the ever-changing forests.

Some improvements will not only increase park use but will greatly increase the quality of the visitors' experience. Many of the rehabilitation projects will increase staff efficiency and cut the costs of maintaining facilities.

New facilities will improve customer service while giving the visitor a greater opportunity to learn about Minnesota's natural and cultural resources, following the mission of the Minnesota State Park System.

The acquisition of private lands within the park will assure that private and commercial development do not distract from the natural beauty of Father Hennepin State Park.

Stable funding is essential for effective long term resource management and capital budget planning for the Minnesota State Park system and Father Hennepin State Park.

### SUMMARY

Currently, statewide capital needs for development and acquisition are **\$55,000,000**. The mission of the Minnesota State Park System can be achieved by funding support to meet this need over the next several bienniums.

Father Hennepin State Park acquisition costs will be determined by appraisals.

Father Hennepin State Park  
development needs -**\$180,000**

**Help us celebrate the 100th anniversary of the  
Minnesota State Park System in 1991!**

