



DEVELOPMENT & ACQUISITION STATUS

Forestville
State Park

November 27, 1989



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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 FORESTVILLE STATE PARK

Forestville State Park is located in Fillmore County in southeastern Minnesota six miles off of U.S. Highway 16 between Spring Valley and Preston. The statutory boundary encompasses 2642.85 acres. Of these, 286.30 acres are privately owned.

The park is located in the stream dissected region of southeastern Minnesota. This region is characterized by rolling uplands, steep wooded valleys with exposed rock bluffs, and flat valley flood plains. Three geologic processes were instrumental in shaping the park's landscape and that of the surrounding area; sedimentation, stream erosion, and subsurface dissolution or karstification.

Initial interest in Forestville as a public park was due to its scenery, its trout streams, forests, and related plants and wildlife. This interest dates back at least to the early 1900's. The Forestville woods were a popular spot for picnics, fishing, hunting, and camping. A number of rustic cabins were located in the valley including Sunrise Camp on the bank of the South Branch Root River. A community cabin built in the early 1930's sat on the bank of Forestville Creek near the present picnic area.

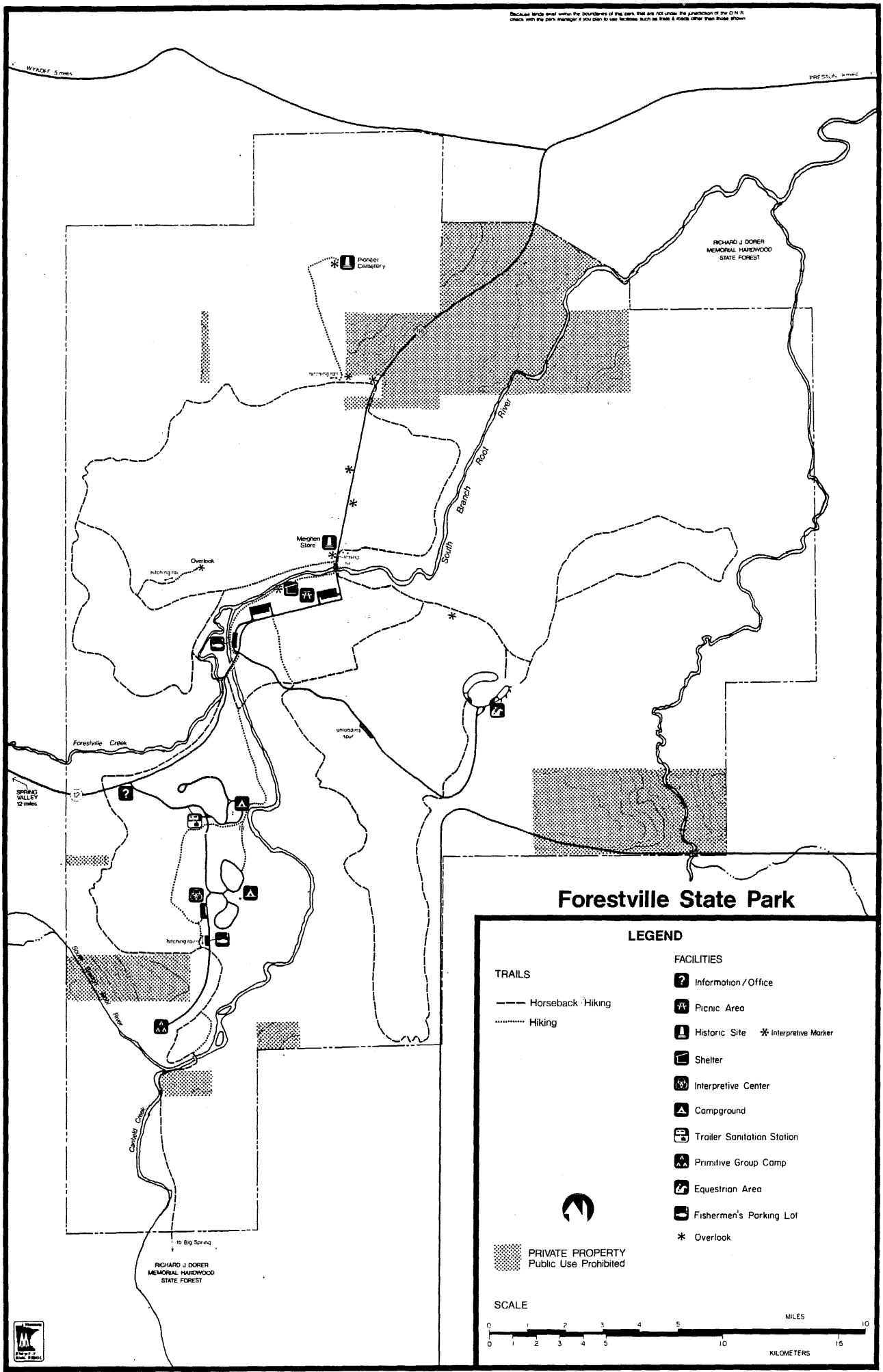
In the mid 1930's, the first efforts were made to establish a state park, based on the area's scenic and recreational values. When enabling legislation passed nearly thirty years later, the ghost town of Forestville had increased greatly in historical significance. The townsite which is centered in the park had enjoyed prosperity only briefly, from the mid 1850's to about 1870. The Meighen Store, a mercantile store had been a principle business in the town. Amazingly, the store, its inventory, and business records of the Meighens remained virtually intact after Thomas Meighen closed the store in 1910. The store, collection, and remaining townsite are key features of the park today. The store is now a state historic site and is administered by the Minnesota Historic Society.

While much attention has been focused on the history of Forestville, its geology is what sets the park apart. The steep topography results in unique and diverse plant and animal communities. The park provides the best example of karste features of any park in Minnesota. These features include caves, sinkholes, stream sinks, and underground rivers. They were formed when rainwater percolated through cracks in the limestone bedrock. Over time, the slightly acidic water dissolved the rock, enlarging the cracks into channels and caverns.

In 1988, a major addition to the park occurred with the purchase of Mystery Cave. This maze of subterranean corridors is Minnesota's largest known cave with over twelve miles of passages. This outstanding karste formation is recognized by experts as the most significant cave in the Midwest.

The diversity of natural and historical resources within Forestville State Park truly offers a variety of unique experiences for the visitor.

Because lands exist within the boundaries of this park that are not under the jurisdiction of the D.N.R. check with the park manager if you plan to use facilities such as trails & roads other than those shown



Forestville State Park

LEGEND

TRAILS

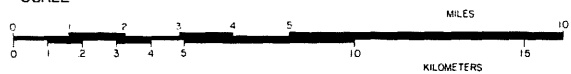
- Horseback/Hiking
- Hiking

FACILITIES

- Information/Office
- Picnic Area
- Historic Site
- Shelter
- Interpretive Center
- Campground
- Trailer Sanitation Station
- Primitive Group Camp
- Equestrian Area
- Fishermen's Parking Lot
- Overlook

PRIVATE PROPERTY
Public Use Prohibited

SCALE



EXISTING FACILITIES

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

Acres in Statutory Boundary - 2,691

Acres of state land - 2,404.70

Campsites

Drive in - 73

Horse

Showers

Modern toilets

Campsites with electricity - 23

Primitive Group Camp - 100 capacity

Miles of Trails

Hiking - 16

Horse - 14

Cross Country Ski - 6.5

Snowmobile - 9

Developed Cave Trail - 1.4

Miles of Road

Asphalt - 1.5

Gravel - 2.8

Township - 2

Open and Enclosed Picnic Shelter

Number of Picnic Tables - 60

Trailer Dump Station - 1

Number of Buildings

Over 100 sq.ft. - 14

Under 100 sq.ft. - 18

Miles of Posted Boundary - 11

Seasonal Visitor Centers

Park Utilities

Number of Septic Tanks - 5

Number of Wells - 6

Number of Individual

Water Distribution Systems - 9

PROBLEMS FACING FORESTVILLE STATE PARK

There are many public recreational facilities in Forestville to maintain. Many are in need of replacement or major rehabilitation. 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 parks natural and cultural resources are also in need of protection and management to perpetuate Forestville's resources. A detailed inventory and assessment of the park resources is necessary for effective management and planning. In the past, facilities were developed in prehistoric and historic use areas. These areas deserve to be protected and interpreted.

Forestville has the busiest horseback use of any Minnesota State Park. This use (approximately 5,000 riders per year) is nearly double the use of the next busiest horse parks (Wild River, Maplewood, St. Croix). This heavy use is concentrated on 14 miles of steep, erodable trails. Trails must cross fragile trout streams and many wet areas (springs). The heavy use combined with fragile topography has resulted in severe erosion over much of the trail system. Major rehabilitation of the trail system is needed along with a long term intensive maintenance program. This rehabilitation should include expanded trails in some cases to spread out erosion impacts.

Mystery Cave is one of the state's most precious non-renewable resources. A host of complex problems exist in preserving and managing the cave. Development of facilities which allow visitors to experience and enjoy the cave while protecting the cave are needed. Examples are entrances, lighting systems, trails, bridges, and above ground facilities such as roads, parking, toilets, and a visitor center. Development of these facilities may require additional acquisition. Many of the features within the cave are in need of restoration, having been impacted by years of use. Many speleothems (formations) need to be cleaned or repaired soon before mud and other foreign materials are cemented to them by new mineral deposition.

RECENT DEVELOPMENT IN FORESTVILLE STATE PARK

Cultural resources of Forestville State Park area also in need of protection and management. Ancient encampments by early native peoples exist with the park. There are also many important remnants of the early white settlement period. These resources deserve to be protected and interpreted.

The Meighen Store Historic site has been closed to the public since 1985. It had been operated as a museum since the early 1970's first by the DNR and since 1978 by the Minnesota Historical Society. The site was closed by the Minnesota Historical Society due to cuts in operating funding and also for restoration work. As a key feature of the park, closure of the historical site is a significant problem. Additional restoration funds are critically needed.

Important improvements have been completed at Forestville State Park in recent years. However, the goals identified in the ten year old management plan have not been achieved.

Major development projects over the past few years have included:

1. Picnic shelter/sanitation building (1980).
2. Office/contact station (1982).
3. Trail bridge construction (1981).
4. Limited rehabilitation of existing trail system (1980-88).
5. Stream bank erosion control - 1,000 feet (1986).
6. Campground A loop expansion - 13 sites (1987).
7. Horse area road construction - 2,150 feet (1983).
8. Group camp landscaping (1983).

FORESTVILLE STATE PARK CAPITAL NEEDS

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Historical and Cultural Survey \$15,000

Complete records research and limited site testing to locate significant archaeological sites.

Natural Resource Assessment/Mapping - 20,000

Survey flora and fauna and complete land use history. This process will identify rare and unique elements and is essential for future resource management

Camping Area Transplanting - \$30,000

Transplant trees into main campground, group camp, and horse area. Loss of trees and lack of shade is limiting use.

Exotic Species Removal - \$10,000

Remove exotic invading plant species including buckthorn, honeysuckle, phlox, and musk thistle.

Prairie Restoration - \$10,000

Restore additional 15 acres of townsite where native prairie flourished at one time.

Subtotal \$75,000

MAJOR REHABILITATION

Mystery Cave Rehabilitation \$295,000

Project involves the completion of Mystery Cave rehabilitation including bridge replacements, parking improvements, lighting rehabilitation and general facility improvement, and development of cave interpretive displays.

Trail Rehabilitation \$195,000

Major repair of erosion problems, installation of water bars, steps and railings where necessary. Gravel surfacing of horse trails.

Pave Campground Road \$40,000

Pave existing gravel roads to eliminate dust problems.

Campground Road Overlay \$25,000

Overlay with filter cloth to protect existing road which has broken up badly.

Office Addition \$100,000

Expand office to handle expanded staff and storage needs.

Redesign, Pave Fishing/Picnic Parking \$30,000

Redesign parking lot access from CSAH 12 and surface to reduce dust and maintenance.

Subtotal \$685,000

NEW DEVELOPMENT

Visitor Center \$750,000

This will be a multi-disciplinary facility that will address forestry, wildlife, fisheries, water resource management in the karste area, and their effects on groundwater.

All Season Group Camp Shelter \$160,000

Project includes the construction of a shelter including toilets, showers and meeting area.

Service Area Warehouse \$45,000

Construct a storage facility to eliminate outside storage of state equipment and supplies.

Interpretive Displays \$40,000

Construct self guiding interpretive trail and visitor center orientation displays.

Horse Area Development \$230,000

Construct toilet/shower building, install electrical sites, complete road surfacing and landscape horse area. This project will reduce overcrowding of existing toilet building and enhance the quality of the camping experience.

Subtotal \$1,225,000

TOTAL DEVELOPMENT NEEDS \$1,985,000

LAND ACQUISITION

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.

The Forestville State Park Management Plan advocates purchase of lands upstream from the park through the State Forest acquisition program. This approximately 6,000 acres would include lands adjacent to Canfield Creek, Forestville Creek, and the South Branch Root River. Acquisition of these areas as State Forest Land is a major priority for the park.

The addition of Mystery Cave has presented some additional acquisition needs. Purchase of underground easements from the surface owners is first priority. Over 90% of the cave is still privately owned. Future facility development may depend on additional surface acquisition near the cave. Additional acres may be needed for construction of parking, toilets, improved access, and interpretive trails.

These issues associated with privately owned lands within state parks threaten existing public investment and limit public use.

PRIVATE LANDS TO BE ACQUIRED IN FORESTVILLE STATE PARK

Parcel #	Acres
4	154.90
13	6.50
13a	2.00
13b	5.00
17	27.50
22a	5.00
23	5.40
24	70.00
27	10.00

Total 286.30 acres

PARK POTENTIAL

What efforts will the completion of resource management, rehabilitation and new development projects have on Forestville 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.

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.

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

Forestville State Park acquisition costs will be determined by appraisals.

Forestville State Park development needs - **\$1,985,000**.

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

