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DEVELOPMENT & ACQUISITION STATUS



Banning
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 BANNING STATE PARK

Banning State Park is located in Pine County in east central Minnesota. The park's main entrance is located four miles north of the City of Sandstone and just east of Interstate Highway 35W. The park was established in 1963 and has a statutory boundary that encompasses 6,237 acres. Of these 1,211.40 acres are privately owned.

The focus of this beautiful park is a ten mile segment of the Kettle River, a State Wild and Scenic River. The river valley extends the entire distance of the park exhibiting a variety of terrain. In the northern section, the river flows through a relatively shallow and narrow valley cut into glacial deposits left by receding glaciers some 10,000 years ago. In the central portion of the park, the river valley narrows to a deep gorge worn through layers of sandstone to a depth of 100 feet.

At the Banning Rapids, the Kettle River best exemplifies the rugged beauty that has made this river a favorite with white-water canoeists, kayakers, and hikers. Here the river is comprised of five spectacular segments: blueberry slide, mother's delight, dragon's tooth, little banning, and finally hell's gate where vertical cliffs rise 40 feet above the rushing water. Below the rapids the valley again widens as the river flows through a gently rolling glacial till plain.

The original vegetation of the park consisted primarily of white and red pine stands intermingled with aspen and birch on the upland sites. The now lying, wet areas of the park were mainly conifer bog and swamps communities dominated by spruce tamarack and balsam fir. Since the latter part of the nineteenth century, forest fires and logging have dramatically impacted park vegetation.

Today, the dry areas, including the valley slopes have been converted to mixed hardwood species comprise mainly of aspen and birch with some maple and elm. A few ridges of completely or partially exposed bedrock along the river support dense stands of red and jack pine. A few remnants of the original white and red pine are also found scattered throughout the park. The wet areas along the floodplain are now dominated by maple, ash, elm, and spruce.

The park is home to a variety of wildlife. One hundred eighty-four species of birds inhabit or visit the park. Among them are the peregrine falcon, bald eagle, cooper's hawk, saw-whet owl, bank swallow, white-breasted nuthatch, and cedar waxwing. Thirty-four species of mammals and seventeen species of reptiles also live in the park. Common mammals include white-tailed deer, black bear, coyote, raccoon, beaver, ruffed grouse, snowshoe hare and red squirrels.

Banning State Park offers visitors a wide range of recreational experiences. The Kettle River offers one of the state's most challenging white-water river experiences. Miles of trails provide opportunities for hikers, naturalists, and snowmobilers to discover the rugged beauty of this scenic park. Other visitor favorites include fishing on the Kettle River, camping in the park's rustic campgrounds and canoe campsites and exploring the park's bat cave. Abundant recreational opportunities combine with scenic qualities and historical features make Banning State Park a popular choice among state park visitors.

**Hell's Gate
Rapids Area**

EXISTING FACILITIES

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

Acres in Statutory Boundary - 6,237

Acres of state land - 5025.60

Acres of private land - 1,211.40

Campsites

Drive in - 31

Canoe in - 4

Modern toilets - Yes

Campsites with electricity - 11

Miles of Trails

Self-guided Interpret - 1.8

Hiking - 15

Bicycle - 12

Cross Country Ski - 12

Snowmobile - 4

Playgrounds - 1

Miles of Road

Gravel - 3

Number of Picnic Tables - 15

Water Accesses - 3

Number of Buildings

Over 100 sq.ft. - 5

Under 100 sq.ft. - 3

Miles of Posted Boundary - 11

Visitor Centers - 5

Park Utilities

Number of Septic Tanks - 2

Number of Wells - 4

Number of Individual

Water Distribution Systems - 3

PROBLEMS FACING BANNING STATE PARK

There are many public recreational facilities in Banning State Park 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 Banning's resources. Banning's history as an early stone quarry area needs to be interpreted. This river corridor was also one of the earliest travel routes in Minnesota.

The parks road system is in need of major rehabilitation. Many of the existing roads are impassible in the spring. The trail system is also in need of completion and rehabilitation.

We have completed some important improvements at Banning State Park in recent years yet have fallen far behind our goals as identified in the first management plan completed ten years ago.

RECENT DEVELOPMENT IN BANNING STATE PARK

Major development projects over the past few years have included:

1. Construction of new contact station/office.
2. Addition of showers to campground toilet building.

BANNING STATE PARK CAPITAL NEEDS

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Resource Management \$15,000

Re-establishment of original vegetation.

Subtotal \$15,000

MAJOR REHABILITATION

Road Rehabilitation \$70,000

Project includes improvement to road base and paving existing gravel roads and parking lots.

Subtotal \$70,000

NEW DEVELOPMENT

Combination Picnic/Trail Shelter \$55,000

Construct combination building to be used for summer picnic shelter and enclosed wood heated winter trail shelter.

Trailer Dump Station \$20,000

Construct trailer dump station as recommended by the Health Department.

Subtotal \$75,000

TOTAL DEVELOPMENT NEEDS - \$160,000

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.

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 reduce public use of existing park facilities and lands because of their location.

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

PRIVATE LANDS TO BE ACQUIRED IN BANNING STATE PARK

Parcel#	Acres	Parcel#	Acres
27	120.00	66	80.00
30b	8.00	67	1.61
31	267.52	68	65.00
31a	80.00	69	12.00
35	8.00	70	6.90
39	72.29	72	10.60
39a	9.80	73	14.93
46	40.00	74	3.21
48a	2.00	76	3.41
51	14.00	77	.39
54a	8.00	78	.39
56	181.36	79	.64
60	5.24	80	1.22
61	2.76	81	.39
62	39.48	82	7.14
63	44.95	83	3.08
64	58.66	84	1.41
65	37.02		

Total 1,211.40 acres.

PARK POTENTIAL

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

Banning State Park acquisition costs will be determined by appraisals.

Banning State Park development needs - \$160,000.

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

