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DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

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# DEVELOPMENT & ACQUISITION STATUS

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Judge C. R. Magney  
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 JUDGE C.R. MAGNEY STATE PARK**

Judge C.R. Magney State Park is located in Cook County 14 miles northeast of Grand Marais on U.S. Highway 61. The park was established in 1957 as Brule River State Park. In 1964 the park was renamed in honor of Judge Clarence R. Magney, a Justice of the Supreme Court and strong advocate of Minnesota State Parks. Today the statutory boundary encompasses 4,514 acres. Of these 421 acres are privately owned.

Judge C.R. Magney State Park is situated on the Brule River in the Arrowhead Region of northeast Minnesota. Here, high rugged hills, volcanic rock outcrops, vertical cliffs and steep stream valleys dominate the park landscape. Many of these terrain features originated over 1.1 billion years ago. During this period a giant rift formed in the earth's crust that extended from what is now Lake Superior all the way to Kansas. Enormous volumes of basaltic lava flowed from this rift, forming virtually all of the bedrock of the North Shore. Known as the North Shore Volcanic Group some areas of this bedrock are estimated to be over 21,000 feet thick. Between 2 million and 10,000 years ago glaciers advanced and retreated across this region of Minnesota. Each time, enormous sheets of ice thousands of feet thick, gouged out basins, sheared off cliffs and scoured the landscape down to the bedrock. When the last glacier retreated it deposited a thin layer of rock and mineral debris. Since that time, weathering and stream erosion have contributed to the rugged quality of the park. This has been accomplished through the physical breakdown of exposed rock, removal of glacial deposits and downcutting of steep stream valleys and gorges.

The Brule River provides a striking display of stream down cutting. Racing the entire length of the park the river forms white water rapids, waterfalls, and drops nearly 700 feet on its way to Lake Superior. Within two miles of Lake Superior the river enters a series of spectacular waterfalls. The most notable of which is the mysterious Devil's Kettle Falls. Above the Devil's Kettle a jutting rock mass divides the river into two sections. The eastern section plunges about 50 feet to a pool below, while the western portion rushes into a huge pothole. It is not known where the water exits.

The park's varied terrain is host to many plant communities. Elevation variations over a thousand feet along with significant temperature and moisture differences allow for a diversity of plants not encountered in most areas of the state. Most of the park was logged at the turn of the century, and logging has been very thorough on the surrounding land, most of which was owned by Consolidated Paper Company. The relatively undisturbed habitats of Judge Magney are very important when compared to surrounding lands. Today, most of the forested uplands in the park are northern hardwoods, dominated by aspen and birch intermixed with some large white spruce. Several impressive white pine stands and cedar groves occur along the river with black spruce occupying the lowland areas.

## EXISTING FACILITIES

The wealth of plant communities is reflected in the variety of wildlife that inhabits the park. Of primary importance is the moose habitat. Whitetail deer are found in habitats close to State Highway 61, but areas of the park further from Lake Superior are prime for moose. The park is one of the few places on the north shore where white cedar are regenerating naturally. In addition to moose and deer, most northern mammals are represented in the park including the timber wolf, black bear, pine martin, fisher, river otter, and six species of bats. Along with its varied plant life, the park's location along the north shore also makes it attractive to many species of birds. Summer residents include the golden-crowned kinglet, solitary vireo, northern waterthrush and northern parula. During the fall migrating hawks and falcons numbering in the hundreds of thousands pass through the area to southern wintering grounds. Winter is an excellent time to observe northern owls and woodpeckers. Adding to the list of wildlife inhabiting the park and its waterways are at least 18 species of amphibians and reptiles, three species of trout, northern pike, walleye pike and smallmouth bass.

Judge C.R. Magney State Park offers visitors a variety of recreational experiences in the rugged beauty and solitude of the North Shore. Miles of hiking trails provide access to scenic river vistas, and opportunities to experience the diverse flora and fauna of the park. Other popular activities include fishing, camping, picnicking and cross country skiing.

The following is an inventory of the existing physical plant of Judge C.R. Magney State Park.

Acres in Statutory Boundary - 4,514  
Acres of state land - 4,013  
Acres of private land - 421

Campsites  
Drive in - 36

Miles of Trails  
Hiking - 6  
Cross Country Ski - 5

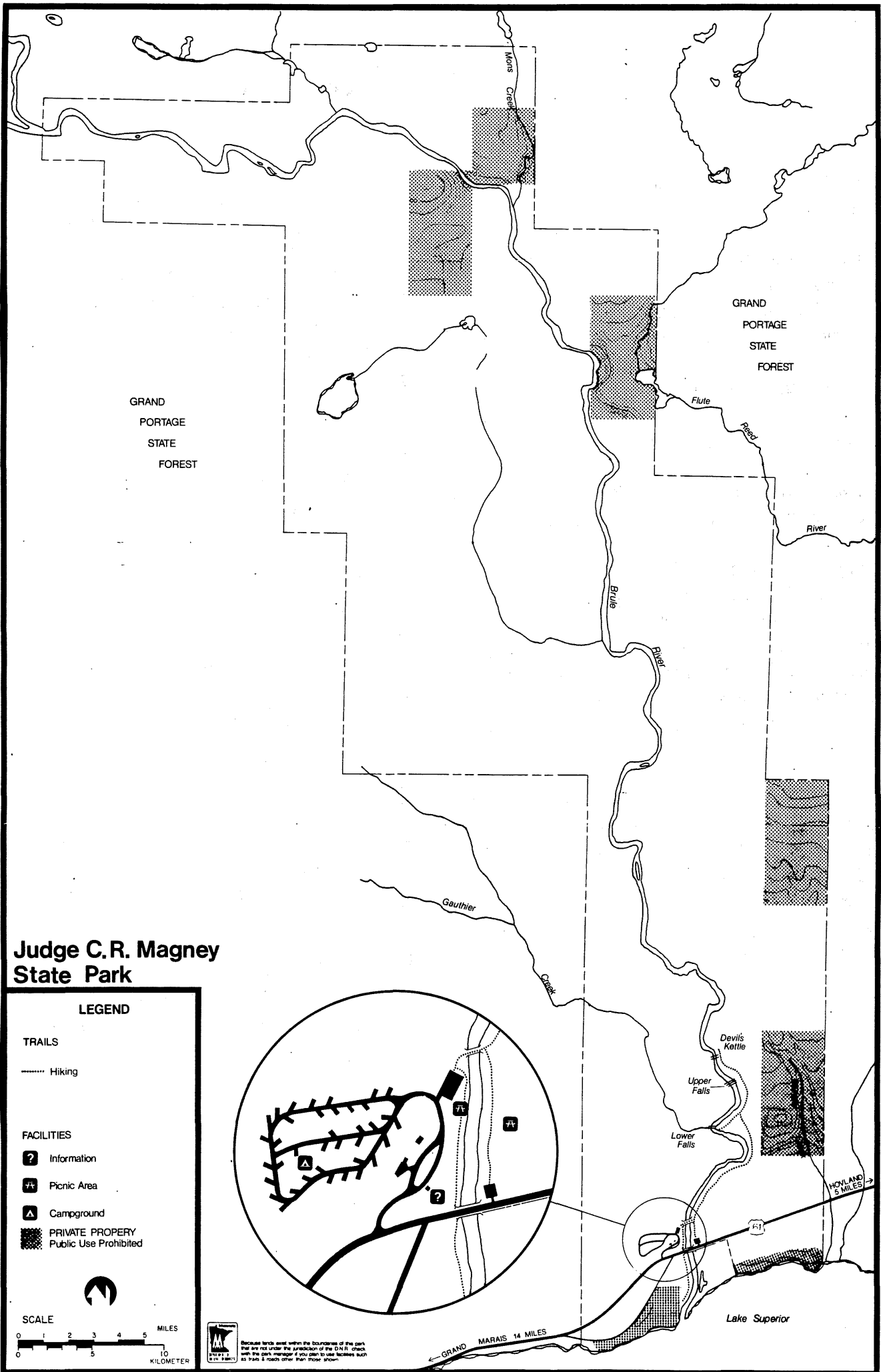
Miles of Road  
Gravel - 2

Number of Picnic Tables - 12

Number of Buildings  
Over 100 sq.ft. - 7  
Under 100 sq.ft. - 5

Miles of Posted Boundary -

Park Utilities  
Number of Septic Tanks - 1  
Number of Wells - 3  
Number of Individual  
Water Distribution Systems - 2  
Miles of State Owned Power Line - .5



## **PROBLEMS FACING JUDGE C.R. MAGNEY STATE PARK**

There are many public recreational facilities in Judge C.R. Magney State Park to maintain. Many are in need of replacement or major rehabilitation. Most were constructed in the 1960's and 70's. Some 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 Judge C.R. Magney's identity. In the past, facilities may have been developed in areas of cultural significance. These areas must be protected and should be interpreted.

The rugged terrain of the park has limited development of park facilities to a small area. Improvements need to be made within the high use area.

Since the park is a combination of pristine and disturbed habitats, special management is necessary. There is considerable potential for the development of a cross-country ski/hiking trail system back to the far reaches of the park. Elevation change from the furthest inland portions of the park to Lake Superior is 900 feet over five miles. Much of the trail system could be built on existing logging roads with few environmental consequences.

A considerable list of rare plants could potentially be found in the park. The Natural Heritage Program listed 15 species that have been found locally and could be in the park. A basic rare species inventory is a much needed insurance that resources are not damaged during development.

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

## **RECENT DEVELOPMENT IN JUDGE C.R. MAGNEY STATE PARK**

Major development projects over the past few years have included:

1. Some trail improvements.
2. Parking lot construction to serve day use traffic.

## **JUDGE C.R. MAGNEY STATE PARK CAPITAL NEEDS**

### **RESOURCE MANAGEMENT**

#### **Resource Inventory - \$15,000**

More fully determine land use history, identify rare, threatened and endangered species, and identify plant communities to aid in management strategies.

#### **Tree planting - \$5,000**

Planting 10,000 white-cedar and 10,000 white pine in areas not heavily used, to enhance wildlife habitat, and restore vegetation to pre-settlement conditions.

**Subtotal \$20,000**

### **MAJOR REHABILITATION**

#### **Campground Rehabilitation - \$20,000**

Project includes lengthening camping spurs, graveling road, improving drainage and landscaping, replacing of fire rings and picnic tables.

#### **Trail Rehabilitation - \$10,000**

Rehabilitate heavily used trail sections, restore areas that have suffered erosion.

#### **Gauthier Creek Bridge - \$20,000**

Replace the Gauthier Creek Bridge, to safely accommodate visitors and to reduce long-term maintenance needs.

**Subtotal \$50,000**

### **NEW DEVELOPMENT**

#### **Campground sanitation/shower building - \$125,000**

Construct a new toilet/shower combination building. Showers are not available at the park at this time.

#### **Construct a Primitive Group Camp - \$40,000**

A 25 person capacity group camp is often requested at this park and would provide a needed service.

#### **Develop Hiking Trails - \$65,000**

Construct 22 miles of hiking trails in the park with overlooks and bridges.

#### **Develop Trail Along Gauthier Creek - \$40,000**

Construct 2 miles of trail in very rugged sensitive terrain. This would provide public access in a safe and controlled fashion to spectacular areas of the park.

#### **Develop a Surfaced Trail - \$8,000**

Construct a short 1/3 mile trail through the high use area of the park that will accommodate high use and is accessible to special populations.

#### **Boundary Survey and Posting - \$20,000**

Clarify the park's boundaries and provide adequate signage to keep conflicting land uses out of the park.

**Subtotal \$298,000**

**TOTAL DEVELOPMENT NEEDS \$368,000**



## 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 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 extensive 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.

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

### PRIVATE LANDS TO BE ACQUIRED IN JUDGE C.R. MAGNEY STATE PARK

Parcel #	Acres
1	10.00
2	15.00
3	5.00
4	50.00
5	5.00
6	40.00
7	80.00
8	80.00
9	80.00
10	40.00
12	8.00
13	8.00

**Total 421 acres.**

## PARK POTENTIAL

What efforts will the completion of resource management, rehabilitation and new development projects have on Judge C.R. Magney 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 diverse nature of Minnesota's 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.

The acquisition of private lands within the park will assure that private and commercial development do not detract from the natural beauty of Judge C.R. Magney State Park.

A stable funding source is essential for effective long term resource management and capital budget planning for the Minnesota State Park system and Judge C.R. Magney 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.

Judge C.R. Magney State Park acquisition costs will be determined by appraisals.

Judge C.R. Magney State Park  
development needs - **\$368,000**

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

