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Lake Louise

State Park

January 10, 1990

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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 LAKE LOUISE STATE PARK

Lake Louise State Park is located in southeastern Minnesota in Mower County, about 30 miles southeast of Austin and just north of the Town of LeRoy. The park was established in 1963 and has a statutory boundary that encompasses 1,168 acres. Of these 352.44 acres are privately owned.

The landscape of Lake Louise State Park was primarily influenced by two geologic processes; sedimentation and glaciation. The first, sedimentation, occurred hundreds of millions of years ago when a vast shallow sea occupied much of the central part of the U.S. including southeastern Minnesota. Over time sediments accumulated on the floor of this ancient sea. As the thickness of the sediments increased the lower layers were compressed to form the sandstone and limestone that underlie the park today.

Approximately two million years ago the climate of the earth changed causing glaciers to advance southward across North America at four different times, covering much of Minnesota in the process. When the glaciers last receded from Minnesota, a thin layer of sand, gravel, rock and mineral debris remained over what is now the park. This thin layer of glacial till left the underlying limestone bedrock near the surface, and has allowed rainwater to dissolve a portion of the limestone causing it to collapse, creating what are called sink holes or karst topography. Several of these depressions can be viewed along park trails.

Since the last glacial retreat about 10,000 years ago, various conditions such as soil, climate, topography and disturbance (fire and flooding) have influenced plant community succession. Prior to European settlement, the majority of Mower County was covered by oak savannah, a grassland community interspersed with islands of bur oak. Many of the oaks in upland areas have been stunted and knarled as a result of repeated fires. Areas nearer the river were occupied by white and bur oak woodlands. With the advent of European settlement came fire suppression and intensive farming. Most of the oak brushlands and woodlands were cleared, and put under the plow. As a result, vegetation communities have been significantly altered. Today, two distinct vegetation types can be found in Lake Louise, including hardwood forests featuring red oak and basswood, and old fields with occasional bur oaks.

The park's forests and old fields provide a valuable source of wildlife habitat in an area dominated by agricultural uses. Only one-percent of the land in Mower County is forested, making the park highly attractive to woodland wildlife species, and an important wintering area for white-tailed deer. Many species of birds use the park either as residents or seasonal migrants. These include the turkey vulture, red-tailed hawk, bobwhite quail, rough-winged swallow, Bell's vireo, Indigo bunting, belted kingfisher and great-horned owl. Other mammals inhabiting the park include Virginia opossum, spotted and striped skunks, meadow mole, gray fox, white-footed mouse and fox squirrels. At least fourteen species of reptiles and amphibians are also known to inhabit the park including the threatened Blanding's turtle.

Lake Louise State Park offers visitors a variety of recreational experiences from camping and picnicking to canoeing and nature study. Miles of trails provide opportunities for hiking, horseback riding, snowmobiling and self-interpretation. Visitor favorites include the Hambrecht Historical Cottage and Museum, spring and summer wildflowers, cross-country skiing, nature study, and birdwatching.



## EXISTING FACILITIES

# PROBLEMS FACING LAKE LOUISE STATE PARK

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

Acres in Statutory Boundary - 1,168 Acres of state land - 815.56 Acres of private land - 352.44 Campsites Drive in - 22 Horse - 6 Showers Campsites with electricity - 11 Primitive Group Camp Miles of Trails Self-guided Interpretive - 1.0 Hiking - 11.6 Horse - 9.7 Cross Country Ski - 2.2 Snowmobile - 9.3 Beaches - 1 Miles of Road Asphalt - .6 Gravel - 1.7 Number of Picnic Tables - 40 Trailer Dump Station Number of Buildings Over 100 sq.ft. - 8 Under 100 sq.ft. - 6 Miles of Posted Boundary - 7 Seasonal Visitor Center Park Utilities Number of Septic Tanks - 3 Number of Wells - 2 Number of Individual Water Distribution Systems - 2 Miles of State Owned Power Line - 0.6 There are many public recreational facilities in Lake Louise 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 existing management plan does not address the need to relocate the horse area/ campground and the primitive group camp, or to expand the semi-modern campground. These actions, if implemented, would require additional funding of \$125,000.

The parks natural and cultural resources are also in need of protection and management to perpetuate Lake Louise's identity. In the past, facilities may have been developed in areas of cultural significance. These areas must be protected and should be interpreted.

Much of the park consists of old farm fields, many of which should be restored to native vegetation. The woodlands are being invaded by European buckthorn, and damaged by heavy deer populations and oak wilt. These problems demand resource management action.

Water quality and resource management issues are directly related to land-use practices adjacent to the park. Lake Louise is being silted-in. The heavy silt load is caused by practices on agricultural lands outside of the park. Restoring the lake by dredging would cost well over one-half of one million dollars.

Comprehensive baseline resource inventory information is necessary for active resource management and planning. This information is seriously lacking, therefore limiting resource management options.

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

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# RECENT DEVELOPMENT IN LAKE LOUISE STATE PARK

Major development projects over the past few years have included:

1. Construction of an open picnic shelter.

2. Development of the self-guided interpretive trail.

# LAKE LOUISE STATE PARK CAPITAL NEEDS

## RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

#### Vegetation Management - \$30,000

Removal of problem species such as European buckthorn from the oak woodlands, control oak wilt, increase the regeneration of white oak, and replace trees and shrubs in use areas.

Subtotal \$30,000

#### MAJOR REHABILITATION

Restoration of Historical Cabin/Museum - \$10,000 Restoration of the Hambrecht Historical Cabin/ Museum to preserve the structure and the displays.

#### Rehabilitate Sanitation Buildings - \$20,000

Rehabilitation of two sanitation buildings, one in the campground and one in the picnic area.

Subtotal \$30,000

#### NEW DEVELOPMENT

Picnic area Shelter/Program Space - \$20,000 Enclose picnic shelter to provide winter trail center space and an area for summer interpretive programming.

#### Contact Station/Office - \$70,000

Construct a new contact station/office to provide increased office space, and public orientation and interpretive displays.

#### Shop/Cold Storage Facility - \$60,000

Construct a new shop and cold storage building to facilitate more efficient park maintenance.

## Play Area - \$7,000

Construct a children's play area in the picnic grounds.

## Swimming Beach Rehabilitation - \$10,000 Removal of silt from the swimming area, and addition of beach sand.

#### Canoe Access - \$12,000

Construct a short, one lane gravel road to the lakeshore for unloading canoes and small boats, and a dock for loading and unloading.

#### Subtotal \$179,000

#### TOTAL DEVELOPMENT NEEDS - \$239,000

# 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.
- \* Difficulty in implementing consistant and effective resource management.

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

PRIVATE LANDS TO BE ACQUIRED IN LAKE LOUISE STATE PARK			
· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·	Parcel	# Acres	
\$	1	43.00	e e de la companya de
	2a	97.30	· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·
	2b	7.00	
	<b>2</b> c	3.70	-
-	3	14.00	
1	4	20.44	- 
	5	158.00	
	20	9.00	
	Total 3	52.44 acres	5

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## PARK POTENTIAL

What efforts will the completion of resource management, rehabilitation, interpretation and new development projects have on Lake Louise 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 the park's native vegetation communities. These will ensure that future visitors will be able to experience the diverse nature of Minnesota's prairies and 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 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 Lake Louise State Park, and will provide for effective natural resource management.

A stable funding source is essential for effective long term resource management and capital budget planning for the Minnesota State Park system and Lake Louise 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.

Lake Louise State Park acquisition costs will be determined by appraisals.

Lake Louise State Park development needs \$239,000

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