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MINNESOTA

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DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

DEVELOPMENT & ACQUISITION STATUS

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Old Mill
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 OLD MILL STATE PARK

Old Mill State Park is located in northwestern Minnesota in Marshall County and is eleven miles west of the town of Newfolden on County State-aid Highway 39. The park was originally known as Middle River State Park. Today the statutory boundary encompasses 287 acres all of which is state owned.

The landscape of Old Mill State Park is typical of other areas of the Red River Watershed, showing the terraced plateaus of this watercourse. The watershed is situated on the ancient lake bed of Glacial Lake Agassiz. Glacial Lake Agassiz was formed some 10,000 years ago when meltwater from a receding glacier was trapped behind a large glacial deposit of sand, gravel, rock and mineral debris. Glacial Lake Agassiz was enormous. At its peak this body of water was over 700 feet deep and covered over 120,000 square miles in parts of northwestern Minnesota, northeastern North Dakota and central Manitoba.

Over time sediments accumulated on the floor of this vast sea in depths ranging from 250 to 500 feet. When the lake receded the area was left relatively flat with a few minor rises in elevation. These rises are remnants of old beach ridges formed by the wave action the lake. Several small rivers drain the Red River Watershed. One of these is the Middle River which flows through the park.

Prior to European settlement, the Old Mill area consisted of a mosaic of prairie/oak savanna on the upland sites and bottomland hardwoods in the floodplain areas. As the area was settled much of the prairie was converted to cropland and pasture.

Today the park is a wooded oasis in a sea of agricultural fields. The lowland hardwood vegetation along the Middle River is still very similar to what it was during the mid 1800's. Oaks are still prevalent on the valley walls and small areas of oak savanna remain scattered throughout the park. Efforts are currently underway to re-establish prairie and oak savanna vegetation in areas formerly occupied by these species.

The wooded river valley and grass covered uplands provide an important source of wildlife habitat in an area surrounded by intensive agriculture. Over 150 species of birds are known to use the park. These include various migrating waterfowl, great blue herons, red tailed hawks, upland and spotted sandpipers, great horned owls, grey partridge, sharp tailed grouse and short-eared owls. The park is also home to a variety of mammals including the white-tailed deer, beaver, raccoon, woodchuck, white-tailed jack rabbit, and snowshoe hare.

Old Mill State Park offers a variety of recreational experiences from swimming and picnicking to camping and nature study. Seven miles of trails provide opportunities for hiking, cross-country skiing, snowmobiling and self interpretation. Special attractions include a working stream-powered mill built in 1889 and six scenic overlooks.

LEGEND

TRAILS

- Hiking
- Interpretive
- * Overlook

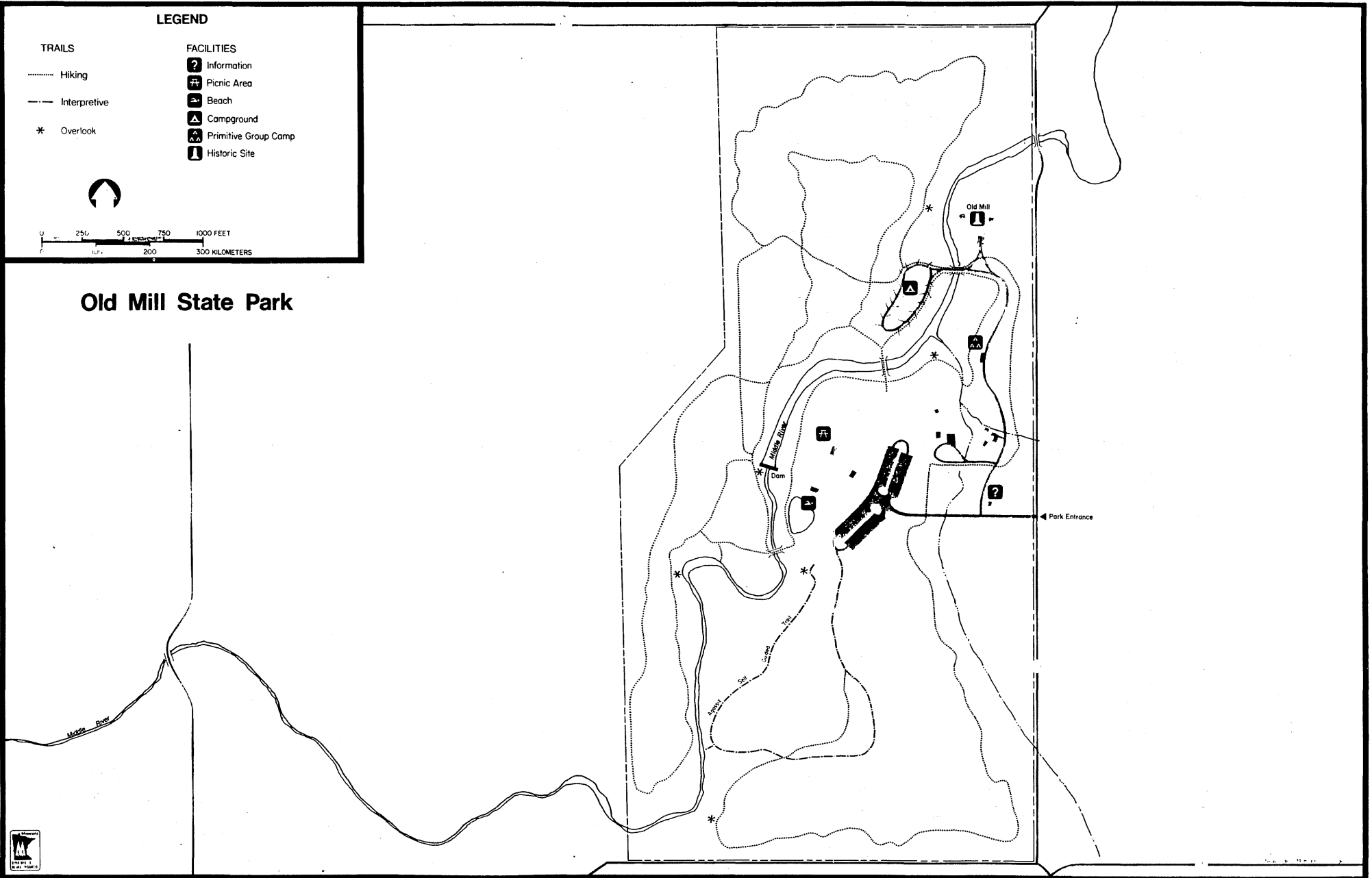
FACILITIES

- ? Information
- ⌘ Picnic Area
- ⌘ Beach
- ⌘ Campground
- ⌘ Primitive Group Camp
- ⌘ Historic Site



0 250 500 750 1000 FEET
0 200 300 KILOMETERS

Old Mill State Park



EXISTING FACILITIES

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

Acres in Statutory Boundary - 287

Acres of state land - 287

Campsites

Drive in - 26

Showers

Modern toilets

Campsites with electricity - 10

Miles of Trails

Self-guided Interpretive - 1

Hiking - 7

Cross Country Ski - 3.5

Snowmobile - 3.5

Playgrounds - 2

Beaches - 1

Miles of Road

Asphalt - 1

Enclosed Picnic Shelter

Number of Picnic Tables - 100

Number of Buildings

Over 100 sq.ft. - 11

Under 100 sq.ft. - 5

Miles of Posted Boundary - 3

Park Utilities

Sewage Lagoon - 0

Number of Sewage Lift Stations - 0

Number of Septic Tanks - 4

Number of Wells - 5

Number of Individual

Water Distribution Systems - 3

Miles of State Owned Power Line - 1

PROBLEMS FACING OLD MILL STATE PARK

There are many public recreational facilities in Old Mill State Park to maintain. Many are in need of replacement or major rehabilitation. Most were constructed in the 1930'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 Old Mill resources. In the past, facilities were developed in prehistoric and historic use areas. These areas deserve to be protected and interpreted.

Of special concern is the need to preserve the historic CCC buildings existing in the park. These facilities offer excellent examples of early architecture and workmanship of the 1930's.

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

RECENT DEVELOPMENT IN OLD MILL STATE PARK

Very little development has occurred in Old Mill State Park over the last few years.

OLD MILL STATE PARK CAPITAL NEEDS

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Prairie Restoration - \$14,000

Convert old fields and old landing strip to native prairie grasses and forbs.

Cultural Resource Assessment - \$4,000

Archaeological survey to be completed in the use areas of the park, to protect and preserve cultural resources.

Larson mill Preservation - \$2,000

Map and preserve the historic features associated with the Larson Mill.

Subtotal \$20,000

MAJOR REHABILITATION

WPA Building Rehabilitation - \$100,000

Rehabilitation of buildings to include tuck pointing stone work, repair of deteriorated logs and upgrading of utilities.

Rehabilitate Beach Building - \$30,000

Building rehabilitation to include tuck pointing stone, replacement of fixtures, floor surface repair and upgrading of building utilities.

Remodel Stone Tower to Observation Tower - \$25,000

Remodel consists of converting old stone water tower to a visitor observation tower. This has been done quite successfully in other parks.

Rehabilitate All Season Shelters - \$20,000

Rehabilitation to include tuck pointing, stone, wall finishes and general upgrading.

Subtotal \$175,000

NEW DEVELOPMENT

Office/Contact Station - \$100,000

New office contact station to serve as park office, public information area and visitor orientation.

Storage Building - \$20,000

New storage building to store state equipment and supplies.

Campground Improvements - \$12,000

Campground improvements include lengthening camping spurs, improved drainage, landscaping and replacement of old fire rings and tables.

Interpretive Displays - \$10,000

New displays at contact station and signs for self-guided interpretive trails, to improve interpretation of the mill.

Subtotal \$142,000

TOTAL DEVELOPMENT NEEDS - \$337,000

PARK POTENTIAL

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

Old Mill State Park development needs **\$337,000**

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

