

LEGISLATIVE REFERENCE LIBRARY
3 0307 00019 6413

900251

DEVELOPMENT & ACQUISITION STATUS

LEGISLATIVE REFERENCE LIBRARY
100 STATE STREET, SUITE 100
ST. PAUL, MINNESOTA 55102

Sakatah Lake
State Park



November 27, 1989

SB
482
.M6
D34
v.44

Printed on recycled paper.

This document is made available electronically by the Minnesota Legislative Reference Library as part of an ongoing digital archiving project. <http://www.leg.state.mn.us/lrl/lrl.asp>
(Funding for document digitization was provided, in part, by a grant from the Minnesota Historical & Cultural Heritage Program.)

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 SAKATAH LAKE STATE PARK

Sakatah State Park is located in south central Minnesota on the border of Le Sueur and Rice Counties, 14 miles west of Fairbault and approximately 65 miles south of the Twin Cities Metropolitan area. The main entrance is off of Trunk Highway 60 one mile east of Waterville. The statutory boundary of the park encompasses 842 acres. Of these 28.5 acres remain in private ownership.

Sakatah Lakes' gently rolling landscape originated from glacial activity some 10,000 years ago. The park is situated on a large moraine, a large mound of rock and mineral debris deposited at the end of a glacier, where the ice melted as fast as it advanced. In some places these deposits are up to 400 feet deep. The last receding glaciers left huge ice blocks which melted, leaving depressions which filled with water creating lakes such as Sakatah.

The park was established in 1963 to preserve a segment of southern Minnesota's original hardwood forest in what is referred to as the Big Woods Region of Minnesota.

Pre-settlement vegetation consisted largely of oak and other hardwoods. Over time small climatic changes saw occasional invasions of prairie into the area; however the recent moister climate has allowed the deciduous forest to reestablish in prairie areas.

The park is in a transition zone between forest and prairie communities. Small climatic changes over the decade has changed the park areas vegetation back and forth, so remnants of both communities are evident in the park. The present vegetation is a landscape dominated by agricultural fields. The natural areas that remain are primarily hardwoods (oaks, elms, walnut and other hardwood species) with small areas of open prairie.

The park boundaries include 3.5 miles of shoreline on Sakatah and Lower Sakatah Lakes. These lakes provide a variety of recreational opportunities including fishing and swimming. Existing facilities include a semi-modern 63 site campground, boat ramp, swimming beach, picnic ground, interpretive center (open June-September) and access to 50 miles of hiking, biking, skiing, and snowmobile trails.

LEGEND

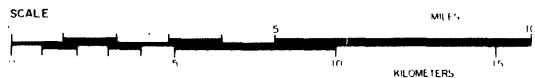
TRAILS

- Hiking
- State Trail (Multiple-use)

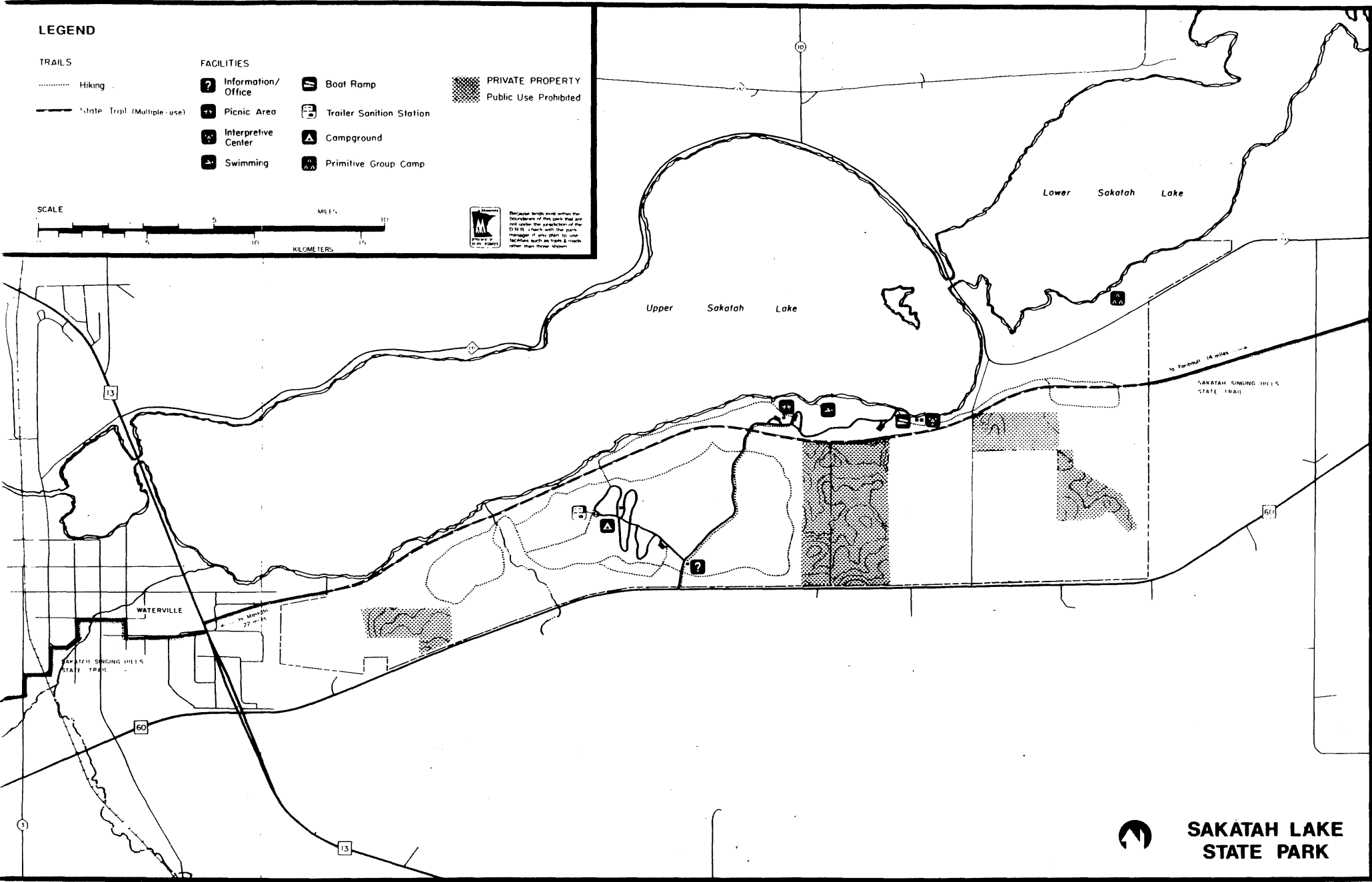
FACILITIES

- Information/Office
- Picnic Area
- Interpretive Center
- Swimming
- Boat Ramp
- Trailer Sanitation Station
- Campground
- Primitive Group Camp

- PRIVATE PROPERTY
- Public Use Prohibited



Because birds move within the boundaries of this park that are not under the jurisdiction of the DNR, in accordance with the provisions of the state law, it is the policy of the DNR to leave the management of this park to the local landowners, such as trails & roads, rather than those shown.



**SAKATAH LAKE
STATE PARK**

EXISTING FACILITIES

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

Acres in Statutory Boundary - 842
Acres of state land - 813.5
Acres of Private Holdings - 28.5
Acres of Life Estates - 107.8
Campsites
Drive in - 63
Showers - Yes
Modern toilets - Yes
Campsites with electricity - 14
Miles of Trails
Hiking - 5
Bicycle - 42 (Sakatah "Singing Hills" state trail)
Cross Country Ski - 5
Playgrounds - 2
Beaches - 1
Canoe Rental
Miles of Road
Gravel - 2
Number of Picnic Tables - 28
Trailer Dump Station - 1
Water Accesses - 1
Number of Buildings
Over 100 sq.ft. - 11
Under 100 sq.ft. - 15
Miles of Posted Boundary - 7
Interpretive/Trail Center
Park Utilities
Sewage Lagoon - 1
Number of Septic Tanks - 5
Number of Wells - 5
Number of Individual
Water Distribution Systems - 3
Miles of State Owned Power Line - .1

PROBLEMS FACING SAKATAH LAKE STATE PARK

There are many public recreational facilities in Sakatah Lake 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 Sakatah Lake's resources. In the past, facilities were developed in prehistoric and historic use areas. These areas deserve to be protected and interpreted.

A cultural and natural resource assessment of the park should be initiated. This information could be interpreted for visitors to help tell the story of the park and surrounding area. With this assessment the significant cultural and natural sites can be preserved. Sakatah Lake State park is long, narrow and fragmented. It is difficult to provide significant new recreational opportunities without impacting the resource.

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

RECENT DEVELOPMENT IN SAKATAH LAKE STATE PARK

Major development projects over the past few years have included:

1. Remodeled old office to a fish cleaning facility. (1988)
2. Moved and remodeled old cabin to serve as park office/contact station. (1989)
3. Remodeled residence to serve as a interpretive/trail center. (1989)
4. Major campground rehabilitation. (1987)
5. Addition of 14 electrical campsites. (1987)
6. Rerouted some trails and rehabilitated 3 miles. (1989)
7. Initiated restoration of 53 acres of prairie (1983 and 1989)

SAKATAH LAKE STATE PARK CAPITAL NEEDS

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Resource Inventory \$20,000

A comprehensive cultural and natural resource assessment is needed to identify and protect the park's resources.

Subtotal \$20,000

MAJOR REHABILITATION

Shop Rehabilitation \$20,000

General rehabilitation of the shop building and service court, including upgrading utilities, windows, insulation and exterior.

Erosion Control \$25,000

Work is needed mainly along the existing trail system, to prevent further erosion and enhance park visitor safety.

Rehabilitate Interpretive Center \$30,000

To educate visitors about the park's resources, an interpretive/trail center for environmental education and winter trail use is necessary.

Subtotal \$75,000

NEW DEVELOPMENT

New Picnic Shelter \$15,000

Construction of a new picnic shelter with electricity will allow groups, such as family reunions to enjoy the park during inclement weather.

New Storage Building \$30,000

Construction of a new storage building in the service area will provide for inside storage of state owned equipment.

State Trail Access \$10,000

Will provide adequate parking and access to Sakatah Singing Hills State Trail from the park.

New Campground Sanitation Building \$120,000

Construction of a new campground toilet/shower building would replace the old pit toilet units.

Pave Entrance Road - \$250,000

Revision of the park entrance road will provide safer site lines, and reduced dust and erosion.

Subtotal \$425,000

TOTAL DEVELOPMENT NEEDS - \$520,000

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.

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

**PRIVATE LANDS TO BE ACQUIRED IN
SAKATAH LAKE STATE PARK**

Private Land - 28.5

Parcel #	Acres
----------	-------

7a	28.5
----	------

Life Estates (land already purchased but control resides with living previous owner.)

Parcel #	Acres
----------	-------

1b	19.7
----	------

5a	68.0
----	------

8a	20.1
----	------

Total 28.5 acres.

PARK POTENTIAL

What efforts will the completion of resource management, rehabilitation and new development projects have on Sakatah Lake 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 vegetation communities. These will ensure that future visitors will be able to experience the diverse nature of Minnesota's natural communities.

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 Sakatah Lake 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 Sakatah Lake 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.

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

Sakatah Lake State Park
development costs - **\$520,000**

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

