

LEGISLATIVE REFERENCE LIBRARY  
3 0307 00019 6439

000251

# DEVELOPMENT & ACQUISITION STATUS

Scenic State Park

November 27, 1989



SB  
482  
.H6  
D34  
v.46

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 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. These 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 SCENIC STATE PARK

Scenic State Park is located in Itasca County approximately 7 miles east of Bigfork on County Road 7. The statutory boundary encompasses 2922 acres. Of these 349.50 acres are privately owned.

The hills and lakes that typify Scenic State Park's landscape are the result of glacial activity. About two million years ago, something happened to the climate of the northern hemisphere. The average temperature in the northern part of the earth dropped causing ice caps in the Arctic regions to grow. Each year more snow was added increasing the thickness of the ice until the sheer weight caused the ice caps to flow out as glaciers.

Soon the glaciers advanced south, crushing and scouring the landscape in the process. Four major advances have been recorded in the state, the first beginning about two million years ago and the last ending some 10,000 years ago. Each successive advance altered the landscape created by the glacier before it. When the last glacier retreated it left behind deposits of sand, gravel, and rock debris. Large ridges of glacial deposits, some hundreds of feet thick, form the hills found throughout the park.

Coon and Sandwich Lakes are water filled depressions left over from Old Glacial Lake Agassiz. Lake Agassiz was an enormous body of water covering thousands of square miles. Lake Agassiz was created when meltwater from a receding glacier was dammed by a large ridge. Other area lakes were created when large chunks of glaciers broke off. After these blocks of ice melted large depressions remained and filled with water.

The park's original vegetation consisted of pine, spruce-fir, conifer bogs and swamps. During the early 1900's much of the area pine forests were logged off. The park was established in 1921 to protect the remaining virgin pine shorelands of Coon and Sandwich Lakes and all or parts of six other lakes.

The logged over areas have since been succeeded by pioneer hardwood species comprised mainly of aspen and birch. With the absence of logging and fire most of the park's ecological communities are succeeding towards a spruce-fir climax forest. The spruce-fir association is shade tolerant and can reproduce under canopies of pine and hardwood forests.

A variety of plant communities and numerous wetlands provide habitat for many species of wildlife. Loons, eagle, osprey, mergansers, and goldeneyes are seen regularly; otters, moose, and beaver are possible, but more difficult to see. Birdwatchers consider this one of the best places in the state to see the hard to find spruce grouse.

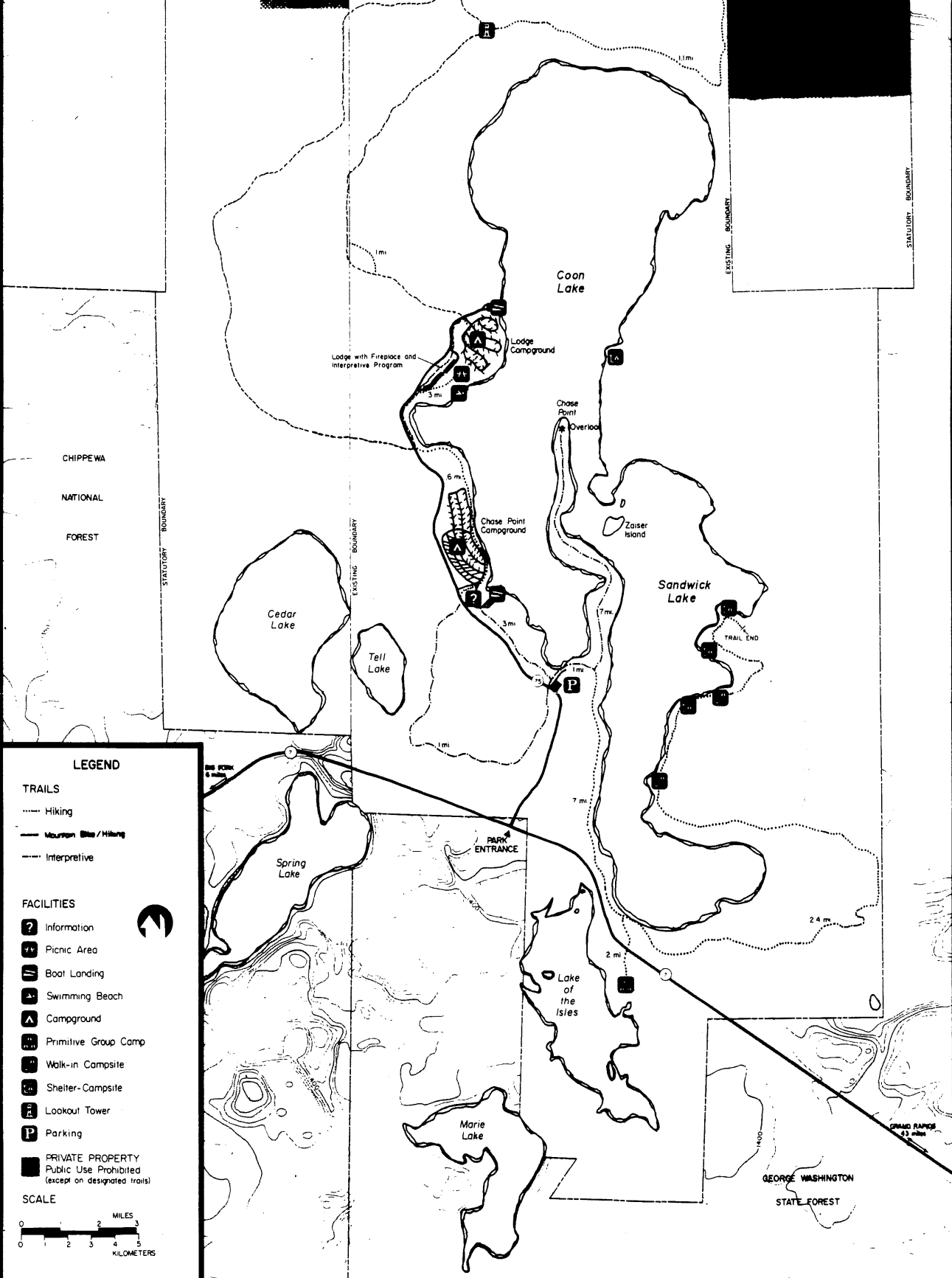
Scenic State Park is located in a high quality recreation area. The park's western boundary borders the Chippewa National Forest and lies completely with George Washington State Forest. Diverse ecological communities, varied terrain, excellent fishing, lakes combine with existing park facilities to provide a variety of outstanding recreational experiences.

In addition to an extensive old growth pine resource, there are seven lakes within the statutory boundary of Scenic Park. Large stands of pioneer hardwoods and bog conifers add to the diversity and make Scenic unique. Only a small portion of Scenic's 3,000 acres have been actively managed. Pine and aspen regeneration and tree transplanting have been the major resource management focus.

# Scenic State Park



Scenic State Park is within the boundaries of the park that are not under the jurisdiction of the DNR. Maps within the park boundaries of the park are shown on the map.



## LEGEND

### TRAILS

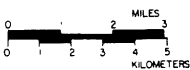
- ..... Hiking
- Mountain Bike / Hiking
- ..... Interpretive

### FACILITIES

- Information
- Picnic Area
- Boat Landing
- Swimming Beach
- Campground
- Primitive Group Camp
- Walk-in Campsite
- Shelter-Campsite
- Lookout Tower
- Parking

PRIVATE PROPERTY  
Public Use Prohibited  
(except on designated trails)

### SCALE



## EXISTING FACILITIES

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

Acres in Statutory Boundary - 2922  
Acres of state land - 2572.5  
Acres of private land - 349.5  
Campsites  
    Drive in - 117  
    Back Pack - 7  
    Canoe in - 5  
    Showers  
    Modern toilets  
    Campsites with electricity - 20  
Miles of Trails  
    Hiking - 14  
    Bicycle - 10  
    Cross Country Ski - 10  
    Snowmobile - 12  
Beaches - 1  
Boat & Canoe Rental  
Miles of Road  
    Asphalt - 3  
    Gravel - 7  
Enclosed Picnic Shelter  
Number of Picnic Tables - 100  
Trailer Dump Station  
Water Accesses - 2  
Number of Buildings  
    Over 100 sq.ft. - 17  
    Under 100 sq.ft. - 28  
Miles of Posted Boundary - 10  
Seasonal Visitor Centers  
Park Utilities  
    Sewage Lagoon - 1  
    Number of Sewage Lift Stations - 4  
    Number of Septic Tanks - 11  
    Number of Wells - 8  
    Number of Individual  
        Water Distribution Systems - 4  
Miles of State Owned Power Line - 2

## PROBLEMS FACING SCENIC STATE PARK

There are many public recreational facilities in Scenic 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 Scenic's resources. In the past, facilities were developed in areas of ancient encampments. These encampments deserve to be protected and interpreted.

A major concern at Scenic State Park is the continuing loss of the big pines due to storms and old age. More pine regeneration is needed as we have barely scratched the surface of what needs to be done. New additions to the park need to be inventoried and plans

Most of the parks buildings are CCC/WPA era stone and log structures that are currently at a stage of needing major rehabilitation work. If work can be done soon these structures will serve park visitors another 50 years.

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

## **RECENT DEVELOPMENT IN SCENIC STATE PARK**

Major development projects over the past few years have included:

1. Major rehabilitation of the campground sanitation building.
2. Conversion of a park residence to a rental cabin.
3. Removal of hazardous trees in use areas.
4. Improvements to interpretive displays.

## **SCENIC STATE PARK CAPITAL NEEDS**

### **RESOURCE MANAGEMENT**

#### **Pine Understory Treatments - \$20,000**

The removal of a balsam fir, birch and brush understory from under the large pine and subsequent replanting of pine. Funding would allow a contractor to remove undesired species and replant.

#### **Use Area Tree Replacement - \$15,000**

Remove and replace wind-damaged and hazard trees in the use areas.

**Subtotal \$35,000**

### **MAJOR REHABILITATION**

#### **Campground Rehabilitation \$70,000**

This project would include planting trees, improved drainage, lengthen camping spurs and installation of new picnic tables and fire rings and 20 additional electrical sites in Chase Point Campground.

#### **Shoreline Erosion Control \$35,000**

Project includes erosion control along shoreline adjacent to campground area. Construct walkways and fishing access areas.

#### **General CCC/WPA Building Rehabilitation \$75,000**

Project includes log repair and replacement, upgrading of utilities and replacement of fixtures where necessary.

**Subtotal \$180,000**

## **NEW DEVELOPMENT**

### **Pave Roads \$400,000**

This project would involve major rehabilitation to entrance road base and repave existing road. it would also pave other gravel roads in the park.

### **Office Addition \$75,000**

This project would provide space for park orientation displays, sale of park merchandise and provide adequate space for park staff.

### **Underwater Observatory \$1,000,000**

Construct an underwater observatory on Coon Lake adjacent to the campground. This facility would serve as an interpretive and environmental education resource.

**Subtotal \$1,475,000**

**TOTAL DEVELOPMENT NEEDS - \$1,690,000**



## 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 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 SCENIC STATE PARK

Parcel #	Acres
1	40.00
2	40.00
3	40.00
10	40.00
12	40.00
13	40.00
18	40.00
19	40.00
33	29.50

Total 349.50 acres.

## PARK POTENTIAL

What efforts will the completion of resource management, rehabilitation and new development projects have on Scenic 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 ever-changing 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 distract from the natural beauty of Scenic 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 Scenic 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.

Scenic State Park acquisition costs  
will be determined by appraisals.

Scenic State Park development needs - **\$1,690,000**

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

