



STATE OF
MINNESOTA

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DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

DEVELOPMENT & ACQUISITION STATUS

Schoolcraft
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 SCHOOLCRAFT STATE PARK

Schoolcraft State Park is located on the banks of the Mississippi River in northern Cass County on County Road 72 approximately 16 miles west of Grand Rapids. Named in honor of Henry Rowe Schoolcraft, who identified the headwaters of the Mississippi River, the park was established in 1959. It has a statutory boundary encompassing 295 acres, all of which are state owned.

The flat landscape of Schoolcraft State Park is a result of glacial activity that occurred some 10,000 years ago, as the most recent glacier retreated from Minnesota. The park is situated on an outwash plain that overlies a portion of the Biwabik Iron Formation. This outwash plain consists of sorted and stratified rock and mineral debris deposited by glacial meltwaters.

During the period following glaciation, tundra was the dominant vegetative cover in the park area. The tundra was later succeeded by spruce and tamarack as the climate began to warm. This warming trend eventually allowed red and white pines to become established. Together with increasing numbers of aspen and birch, these tree species became the dominant forest cover types.

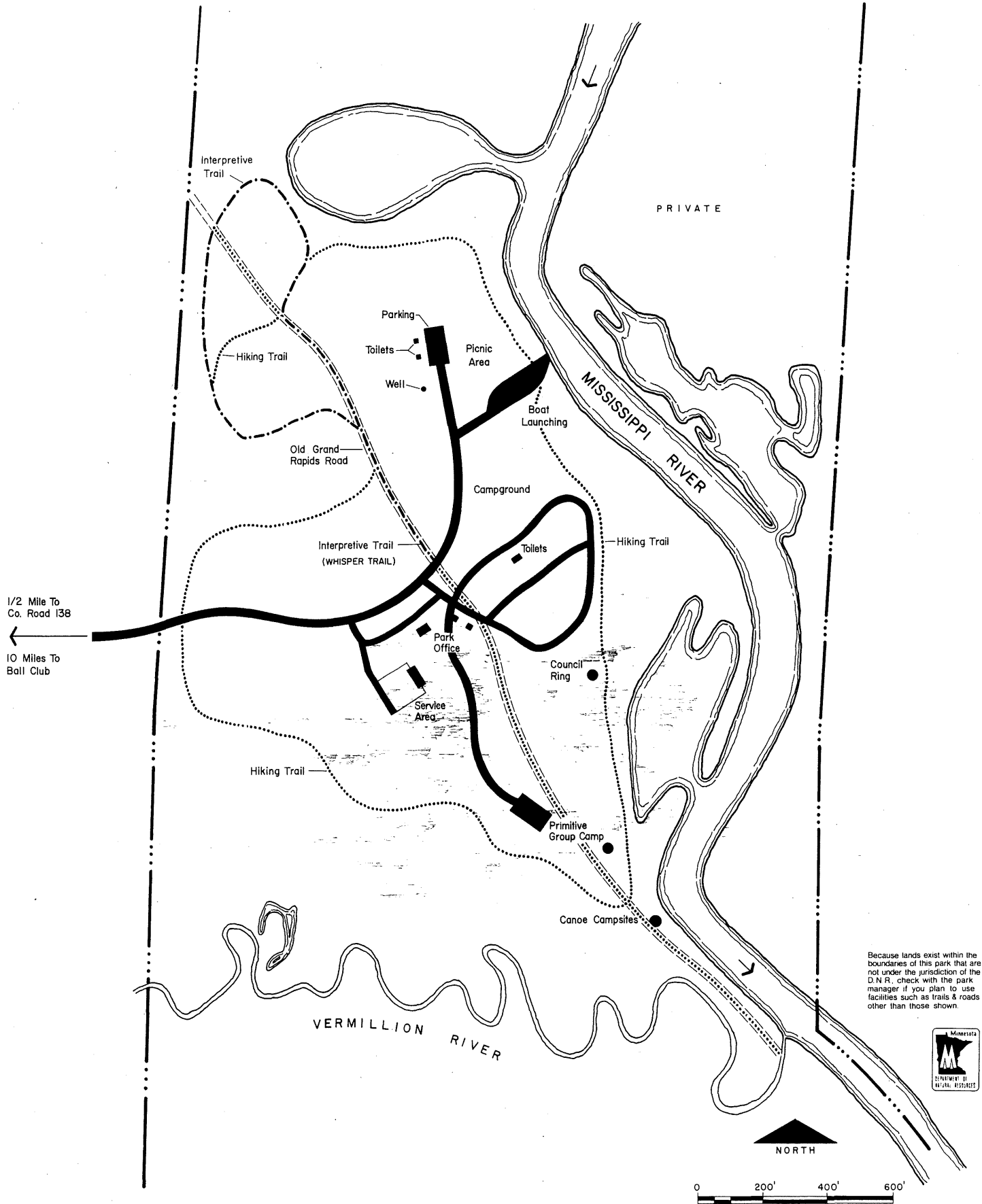
During the 1880's, lumberjacks began to harvest seemingly-endless stands of red and white pine. Logging still continues in the area today, but by about 1930 most of the large and accessible pine stands had been removed, leaving a few remnant groves and individual trees behind. Some pine regeneration occurred in the logged over areas, but aspen and birch became the dominant forest cover type over most of the region.

Today, approximately one third of the park's forest cover remains as a magnificent pine grove. The balance is a mosaic of hardwood and lowland species. The dominant hardwoods include maple, basswood, iron wood, oak and ash. The lowland species are primarily spruce, tamarack and alder.

The variety of plant communities and the close proximity to the water resources of the Mississippi River provide habitat for a diversity of wildlife. Many species of birds use the park as residents or visitors. These include the bald eagle, great horned owl, sharp shinned hawk, cooper's hawk, saw whet owl, goshawk, eastern wood pewee, alder flycatcher, gray jay and black-backed woodpecker. The lakes and numerous backwaters along this stretch of the Mississippi attract large numbers of waterfowl, including mallards, wood ducks, ring-necked ducks and occasional black ducks.

Most northern Minnesota mammals are represented in the park. These include white-tailed deer, black bear, raccoon, beaver, snowshoe hare, red fox, red and gray squirrels, mink and river otter. In addition, the Mississippi River has northern pike, walleye, largemouth and smallmouth bass, muskellunge and crappies in good numbers.

Schoolcraft State Park offers visitors a variety of recreational experiences in a scenic and tranquil setting. This often-overlooked park provides opportunities for hikers, anglers, canoeists, campers and birdwatchers to experience the beauty and solitude of a northern Minnesota forest.



SCHOOLCRAFT STATE PARK

EXISTING FACILITIES

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

Acres in Statutory Boundary - 295
Acres of State Land - 295

Campsites
Drive in - 37

Miles of Trails
Self-guided Interpretive - 0.5
Hiking - 1

Miles of Road
Asphalt - 1
Gravel - 1

Number of Picnic Tables - 35

Water Accesses - 1

Number of Buildings
Over 100 sq.ft. - 4
Under 100 sq.ft. - 8

Miles of Posted Boundary - 3

PROBLEMS FACING SCHOOLCRAFT STATE PARK

Recreation facilities at Schoolcraft State Park were constructed in the 1960's, and are now in serious need of repair. The campground has been heavily used over the years, and needs intensive rehabilitation. Improvements to the campground, entrance road and amenity services would provide for greater visitor satisfaction as well as increase the visitation at this tremendous resource. Upgrading of facilities will allow for increased staff efficiency and improved service.

The park's natural and cultural resources are in need of protection, management, and interpretation to ensure their perpetuity. In the past, facilities may have been developed in areas of cultural significance. These sites must be protected and should be interpreted. Forests are becoming senescent. The once great stands of red and white pines can only be regenerated through active management. Efforts to restore this habitat should be undertaken.

Very little development work has been completed at Schoolcraft since the late 1960's. An increasing demand for modern sanitation facilities including showers is evident. New facilities should be developed to serve this growing demand. Efforts at maintaining and improving resources and facilities will help to ensure that future generations will enjoy recreation opportunities at Schoolcraft State Park.

RECENT DEVELOPMENT IN SCHOOLCRAFT STATE PARK

As a result of a shortage of fiscal and human resources, very little development work has been completed at Schoolcraft over the past few years.

SCHOOLCRAFT STATE PARK CAPITAL NEEDS

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Hazardous Tree Removal - \$15,000

Large, dying trees that are hazardous to visitors' safety should be removed.

Resource Inventory and Assessment - \$15,000

Conduct a comprehensive inventory and evaluation of the park's natural and cultural resources to facilitate appropriate management and interpretation.

Pine Management and Restoration - \$10,000

Manage the stands of mature red and white pine to ensure the perpetuation of this resource, including site preparation, planting and maintenance.

Subtotal \$40,000

MAJOR REHABILITATION

Campground Rehabilitation - \$20,000

This project includes improved drainage, landscaping, gravel for spurs and roads, and replacement of tables and fire rings.

Subtotal \$20,000

NEW DEVELOPMENT

Pave Entrance Road - \$100,000

Pave the existing entrance road to reduce dust problems and future maintenance costs.

New Campground Toilet/Shower Building - \$120,000

New building would provide handicapped accessible toilet and shower facilities.

Campground Electricity - \$5,000

Accommodate the growing demand for amenities by installing electric hookups to 10 campsites.

Play Area - \$7,500

Install a children's play area with equipment in the picnic grounds to facilitate use by families.

Improved Toilet Facilities - \$14,000

Install vault toilets in the entrance area, picnic area and group camp to meet visitors' needs.

Water-Based Interpretive Trail - \$5,000

Construct a self-guided interpretive trail, accessible by boat, to interpret the wetland and river resources.

Picnic Shelter - \$10,000

Construct a picnic shelter to facilitate family and group use.

Subtotal \$261,500

TOTAL DEVELOPMENT NEEDS \$321,500

PARK POTENTIAL

What effects will the completion of resource management, rehabilitation and new development projects have on Schoolcraft State Park? Completion of these projects will assure the preservation of these unique resources and facilities for future generations. Active management will be required to maintain and regenerate existing wetlands and forest stands. These will ensure that future visitors will be able to experience Minnesota's diverse habitats.

Some improvements will not only increase park use but will greatly enhance 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.

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

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.

Schoolcraft State Park development needs **\$321,500**

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

