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STATE OF
MINNESOTA
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

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DEVELOPMENT & ACQUISITION STATUS

Big Stone Lake
State Park



February 15, 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 BIG STONE LAKE STATE PARK

Big Stone Lake State Park is located in western Minnesota in Big Stone County, along the northern shore of Big Stone Lake. This park is comprised of three separate units. Meadowbrook, Overlook, and Bonanza which are respectively located 9, 18 and 19 miles northwest of Ortonville on State Highway 7. The combined statutory boundary includes 1,151 acres. Of these, 82 acres are privately owned.

Big Stone Lake lies in a valley that resulted from glacial activity that occurred 12,000 to 13,000 years ago. During this time a massive sheet of ice, thousands of feet thick, covering much of western Minnesota began to retreat. As the glacier melted it left thick deposits of sand, gravel, rock and mineral debris referred to as till. When the great ice sheet melted back to a location just north of Ortonville it held stationary for a time, depositing a broad ridge of till several miles wide. This ridge is now called the Big Stone Moraine.

When the glacier resumed its northward retreat, meltwater became trapped behind the Big Stone Moraine creating glacial Lake Agassiz. Over time Lake Agassiz became enormous. At its peak the lake covered over 120,000 square miles in parts of northwestern Minnesota, northeastern North Dakota, and central Manitoba.

As the lake level rose, it overflowed the Big Stone Moraine at what is now Brown's Valley. This outlet released a torrent of meltwater that created glacial River Warren, one of the largest glacial rivers in the Midwest. The volume of meltwater that flowed in this river was tremendous. Its powerful flow quickly eroded through hundreds of feet of loose glacial deposits and thin underlying layers of sedimentary rock carving the Minnesota River Valley we see today. Glacial River Warren drained Lake Agassiz for thousands of years and at its peak the river was seven miles wide in places and over two hundred and fifty feet deep.

Prior to European settlement most of the park uplands were covered by prairie and the valley wall and floodplains were mostly wooded. As the area was settled much of the prairie was converted to cropland and pasture.

Today, large areas of the prairie still exist in the park and efforts are being made to re-establish native prairie species on areas formerly devoted to agriculture. Oak and basswood forests dominate the valley and parts of the lakeshore while bottomland hardwoods such as elm, box elder and green ash occur along the floodplains.

The park's wooded valley slopes and floodplains combine with grass covered bluffs to provide much needed habitat. Two primary beneficiaries of the food and cover provided by the park are ring-necked pheasants and white-tailed deer. Many other forms of wildlife use the park including at least 107 species of birds known to nest locally. Big Stone Lake is especially popular with colonial nesting birds including the western grebe, great-blue heron, black-crowned night heron, double-crested cormorant, cattle, and snowy egrets, and little-blue heron. Other mammal species inhabiting the park area include red and gray fox, striped skunk, badger, raccoon and mink.

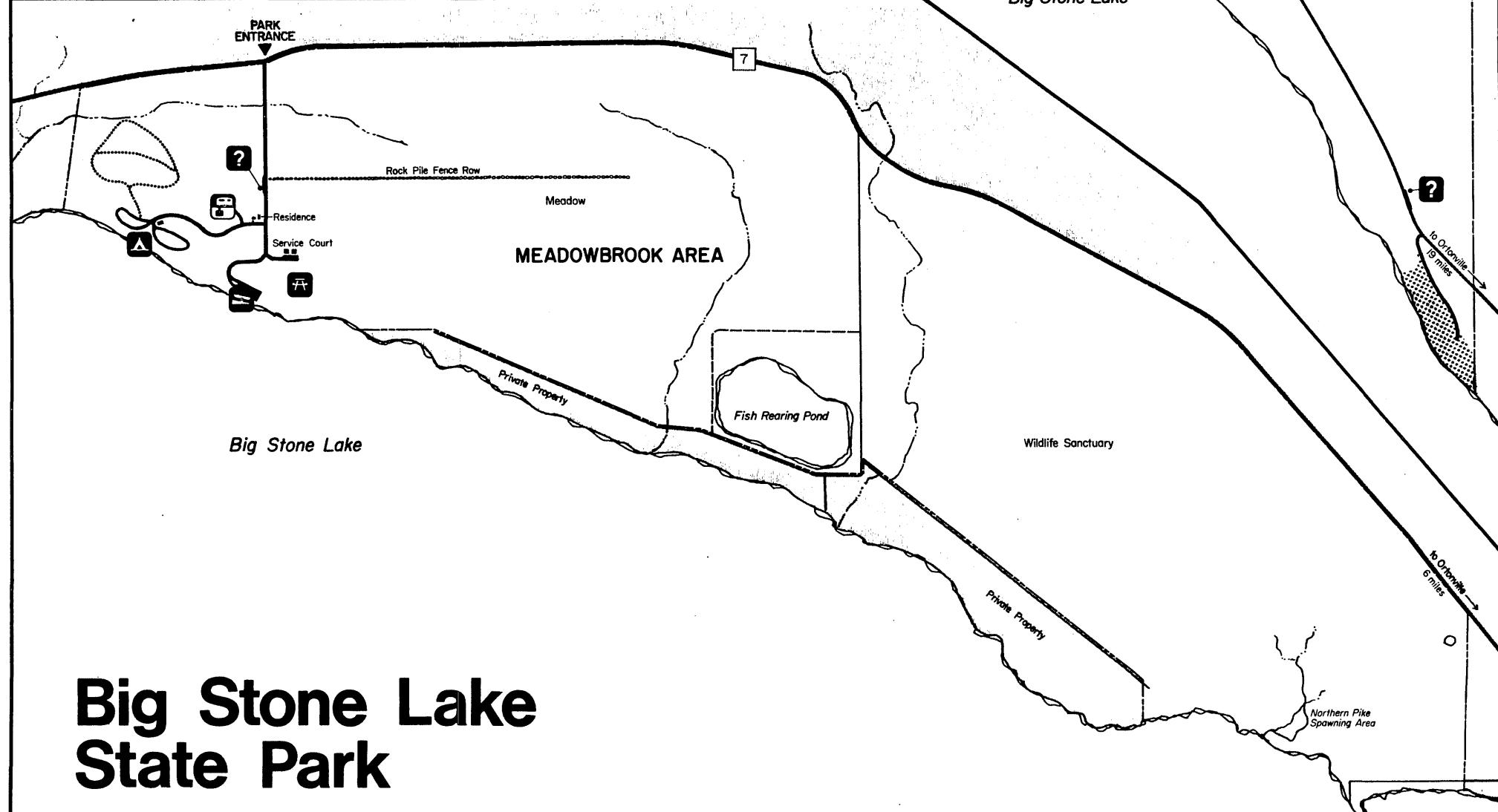
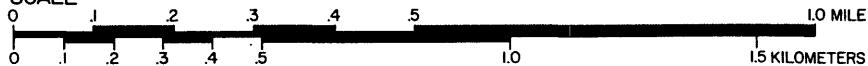
Big Stone Lake State Park offers visitors a variety of recreational experiences. The lake provides fishing for walleye, northern pike, bass and panfish. Other popular activities include picnicking, camping, hiking and nature study.

TRAILS

----- Hiking

FACILITIES

- ? Information
- Boat Ramp
- Visitor Center
- Campground
- Picnic Area
- Trailer Sanitation Station
- Swimming Beach
- Primitive Group Camp

**PRIVATE PROPERTY**
Public Use Prohibited**SCALE**

Big Stone Lake State Park

EXISTING FACILITIES

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

Acres in Statutory Boundary - 1,151

Acres of state land - 1,069

Acres of private land - 82

Campsites

Drive in - 42

Campsites with electricity -10

Miles of Trails

Hiking - 1.5

Snowmobile - 3.5

Playgrounds - 1

Beaches - 1

Boat Rental

Miles of Road

Gravel - 2

Number of Picnic Tables - 100

Trailer Dump Station

Water Accesses - 2

Number of Buildings

Over 100 sq.ft. - 8

Under 100 sq.ft. - 12

Miles of Posted Boundary - 7

Park Utilities

Number of Septic Tanks - 2

Number of Wells - 4

Number of Individual

Water Distribution Systems - 4

Miles of State Owned Power Line - .5

PROBLEMS FACING BIG STONE LAKE STATE PARK

There are several public recreational facilities in Big Stone Lake State Park to maintain. Some of these are in need of replacement or major rehabilitation. Most were constructed in the 1960's. New facilities are needed to meet growing recreational demands.

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

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

RECENT DEVELOPMENT IN BIG STONE LAKE STATE PARK

Major development projects over the past few years have included:

1. Water access improvements.
2. New water access at Bonanza.

BIG STONE LAKE STATE PARK CAPITAL NEEDS

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Tree Planting in Use Areas - \$10,000

Planting trees will provide shade for visitors and prevent soil losses due to erosion.

Subtotal \$10,000

MAJOR REHABILITATION

General Rehabilitation of Park Structures - \$20,000

Interior improvements, fixture replacement and utility upgrading.

Subtotal \$20,000

NEW DEVELOPMENT

Swimming Beach at Meadowbrook Area - \$25,000

Installation of a swimming beach to meet recreational visitors' needs.

Subtotal \$25,000

TOTAL DEVELOPMENT NEEDS - \$55,000

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 BIG STONE LAKE STATE PARK

Parcel #	Acres
1	57
2,3, &4	25

Total 82 acres

PARK POTENTIAL

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

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 Big Stone 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 Big Stone 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.

Big Stone Lake State Park acquisition costs will be determined by appraisals.

Big Stone Lake State Park
development needs \$55,000

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

