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**MINNESOTA**  
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

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# DEVELOPMENT & ACQUISITION STATUS

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Split Rock Creek  
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 SPLIT ROCK CREEK STATE PARK

Split Rock Creek State Park is located in extreme southwestern Minnesota in southwestern Pipestone County, and just a few miles east of the Minnesota/South Dakota border. The park entrance is located just south of the town of Ihlen on CSAH 20. The park was established in 1937 and has a statutory boundary encompassing 402.74 acres, 164.74 of which are privately owned.

Split Rock Creek is located in the "Coteau des Prairies" region of Minnesota, which means "slope of the prairie". The Coteau is a high plateau of land consisting of several hundred feet of glacial material underlain by sedimentary rocks and Sioux quartzite. This glacial material was deposited during three glacial movements, the last of which ended about 10,000 years ago. The Coteau extends for several hundred miles from northwestern Iowa to near the South Dakota-North Dakota border forming a divide which separates the Mississippi River watershed, which flows to the northeast, from the Missouri River watershed, which flows to the south and southwest.

Split Rock Lake is both the dominant topographic feature and most significant recreational resource in the park. The lake was created in 1938 by the construction of a dam on Split Rock Creek. The lake covers 85 acres and has a maximum depth of 20 feet and an average depth of 6 feet.

Before European settlement the park area was a prairie consisting of a mixture of tall and mid grasses including big bluestem, little bluestem, Indian grass, green needle grass and porcupine grass. Other prominent prairie species were bluejoint, prairie, cordgrass, northern red grass, switchgrass and side oats.

Today little remains of the vast prairie that once dominated this region of Minnesota. Most of these lands were converted to agriculture production as they were settled. Parts of what is now the park were plowed and the rest was mowed or pastured. After the park's establishment, plowed fields within the boundaries were seeded to a brome grass mixture and green ash trees were planted in recreational areas.

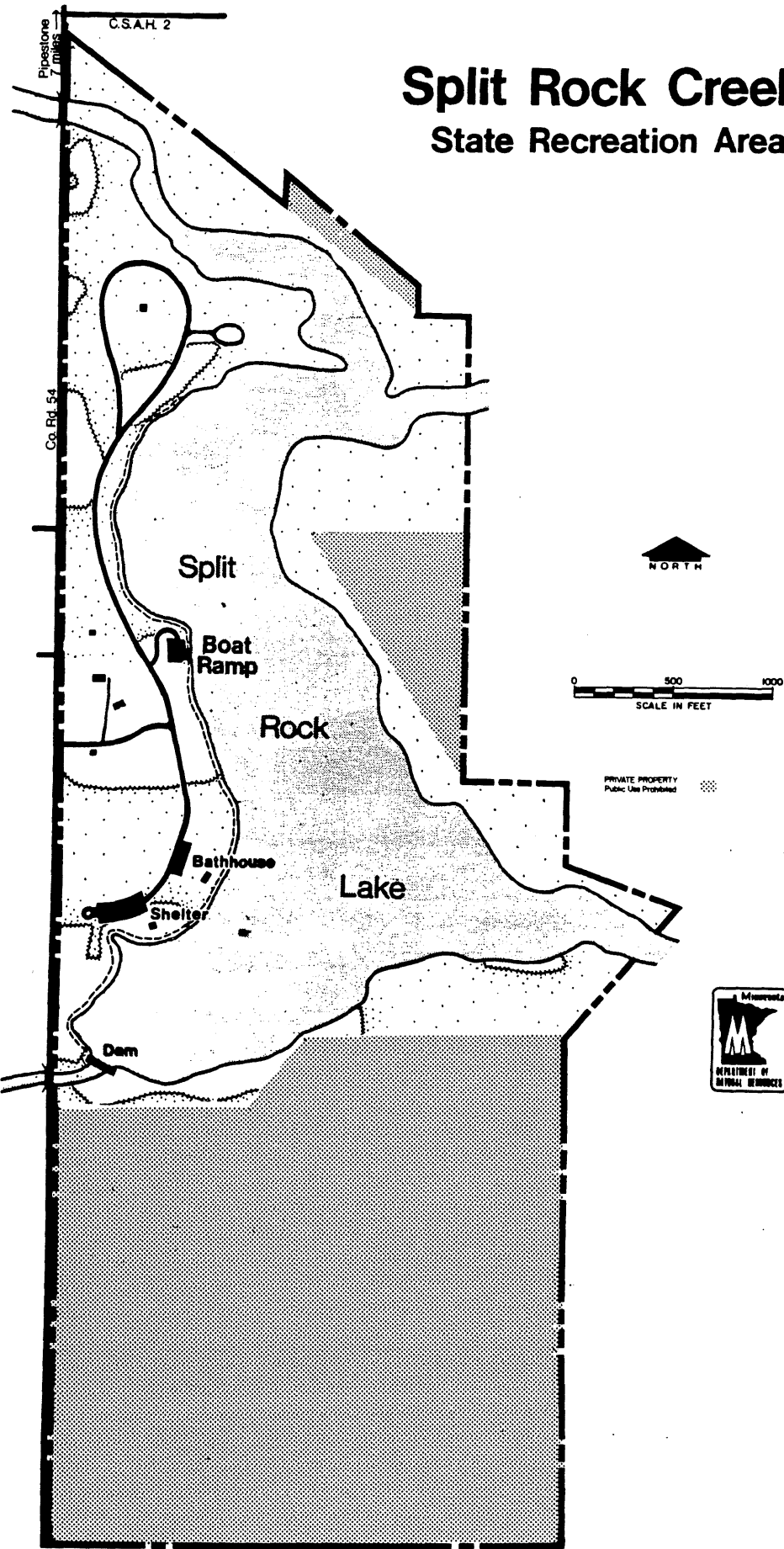
Split Rock Lake is the only sizable body of water in Pipestone County which makes it attractive to many species of wildlife especially waterfowl. Almost every species of Mississippi flyway waterfowl found has been observed using this lake. The best time to observe these and other birds is during the spring and fall migrations when swans, ducks, geese, pelicans, herons, and others use the areas as a nest stop. A variety of wildlife uses the park year round including ring-necked pheasants, great-horned owls, white-tailed deer, red fox, muskrat and mink.

Recreational activities at Split Rock Creek focus on Split Rock Lake. The creation of the lake and subsequent stocking program which began in 1945 has resulted in the only viable fishing resource in the area.

Split Rock Lake is classified as a warm water game-fish lake and is currently stocked with walleye, channel catfish, perch, largemouth bass and panfish. Fishing occurs year round and is one of the most popular activities in the park. Other popular activities include swimming, camping, picnicking, hiking and birdwatching.

# Split Rock Creek

## State Recreation Area



## EXISTING FACILITIES

The following is an inventory of the existing physical plant of Split Rock Creek State Park.

Acres in Statutory Boundary - 402.74

Acres of state land - 238.00

Acres of private land - 164.74

### Campsites

Drive in - 26

Showers

Modern toilets

Campsites with electricity - 14

### Miles of Trails

Hiking - 3

Cross Country Ski - 2

Playgrounds - 1

Beaches - 1

Boat & Canoe Rental

Open Picnic Shelter

Number of Picnic Tables - 60

Water Accesses - 1

Fishing Piers - 1

### Miles of Road

Gravel - 2

### Number of Buildings

Over 100 sq.ft. - 7

Under 100 sq.ft. - 6

### Miles of Posted Boundary - 4

### Park Utilities

Number of Septic Tanks - 3

Number of Wells - 2

Number of Individual

Water Distribution Systems - 1

## PROBLEMS FACING

### SPLIT ROCK CREEK STATE PARK

There are several public recreational facilities in Split Rock Creek State Park to maintain. Some of these were constructed in the 1930's, and are now in need of rehabilitation. New facilities are needed to meet growing recreational demands.

The park's natural and cultural resources are in need of protection and management to perpetuate Split Rock Creek's identity. In the past, facilities may have been developed in areas of cultural significance. These areas must be protected and should be interpreted.

With increase camping in recent years, there is a demonstrated need for more campsites, as more people discover Split Rock Creek.

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

## RECENT DEVELOPMENT IN SPLIT ROCK CREEK STATE PARK

Major development projects over the past few years have included:

1. Split Rock Creek dam rehabilitation.
2. Installation of fishing pier.
3. Installation of campground electrical outlets.
4. Toilet building shower addition.

## **SPLIT ROCK CREEK STATE PARK CAPITAL NEEDS**

### **NEW DEVELOPMENT**

#### **New Toilet Building at Beach - \$100,000**

This facility would serve as toilet and change room building for the beach. Use in recent years has increased dramatically.

#### **New Shop - \$75,000**

Construct new park shop and combination storage building. State equipment and supplies are currently being stored outside.

#### **Office Contact Station - \$70,000**

Construct new office/contact station. This facility would also contain interpretive and orientation displays for the public.

#### **Enclosed Picnic Shelter - \$20,000**

New enclosed picnic shelter would allow for group picnics and gatherings.

#### **Campground Expansion - \$50,000**

Add one loop to the existing campground to meet rising demand. Project would include tree planting and necessary tables and fire rings.

#### **Accessible Walkways - \$5,000**

Improve existing walkways to allow for handicapped use.

**Subtotal \$320,000**

**TOTAL DEVELOPMENT NEEDS \$320,000**

## **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 SPLIT ROCK CREEK STATE PARK**

Parcel #	Acres
1	2.01
2	11.94
3	150.79
Total 164.74 acres	

## PARK POTENTIAL

What efforts will the completion of resource management, rehabilitation and new development projects have on Split Rock Creek 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 diversity of Minnesota's prairies, forests and wetlands.

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 Split Rock Creek 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 Split Rock Creek 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.

Split Rock Creek State Park acquisition costs will be determined by appraisals.

Split Rock Creek State Park  
development needs **\$320,000**.

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



