



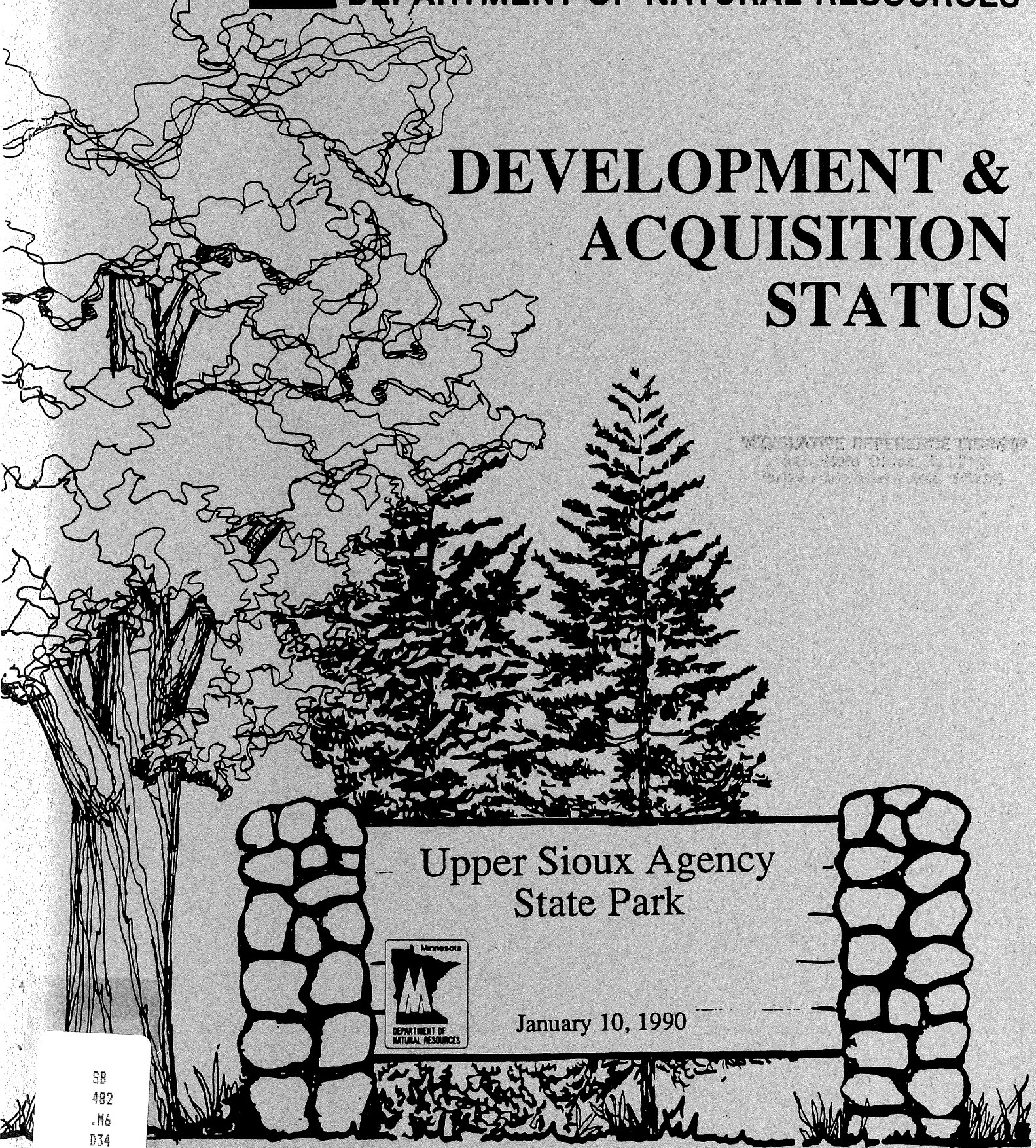
STATE OF  
**MINNESOTA**

900251

DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

# DEVELOPMENT & ACQUISITION STATUS

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Upper Sioux Agency  
State Park



January 10, 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 Minnesotan's will be proud of their state park system for another hundred years.

## AN OVERVIEW OF UPPER SIOUX AGENCY STATE PARK

Upper Sioux Agency State Park is located in southwestern Minnesota, eight miles southeast of Granite Falls, in Yellow Medicine County. Access to the park can be gained from Minnesota State Highway 67, which bisects the park. The statutory boundary of Upper Sioux Agency State Park encompasses 1,280 acres.

As a result of thousands of years of glacial advance and decline, Upper Sioux Agency rests on a plateau of glacial drift. This plateau rises above the Minnesota River, which borders the park on the north, and the Yellow Medicine River, which bisects the south end of the park. The south-most reaches of the park feature alluvial deposits and finer soils than the plateau. The Minnesota and Yellow Medicine River valleys were formed by the glacial River Warren during the decline of Lake Agassiz. The entire park is underlaid by bedrock consisting of granite and gneiss.

The area in which Upper Sioux Agency is located has an extremely colorful history. Evidence suggests that the area has been occupied by humans for nearly 4,000 years. The Minnesota River was a major travel route and hunting ground for prehistoric cultures. In more recent years, the area had been settled by Dakota (Sioux) people. In the early 1600's the first people of European ancestry entered the area. These were the independent French fur traders, known as the "coureurs de bois". Since the Dakota people relied mainly on bison and muskrats for subsistence, the presence of the traders lead to inevitable and irreversible changes for them. The area was off limits to traders, but exploration was lucrative, and parties returned with fantastic tales of the Dakota people, and the area's natural wealth. By the mid 1800's, people in the east were pressuring the government to allow settlement. In 1851, the area was opened by the Traverse des Sioux Treaty. The Dakota were pushed west.

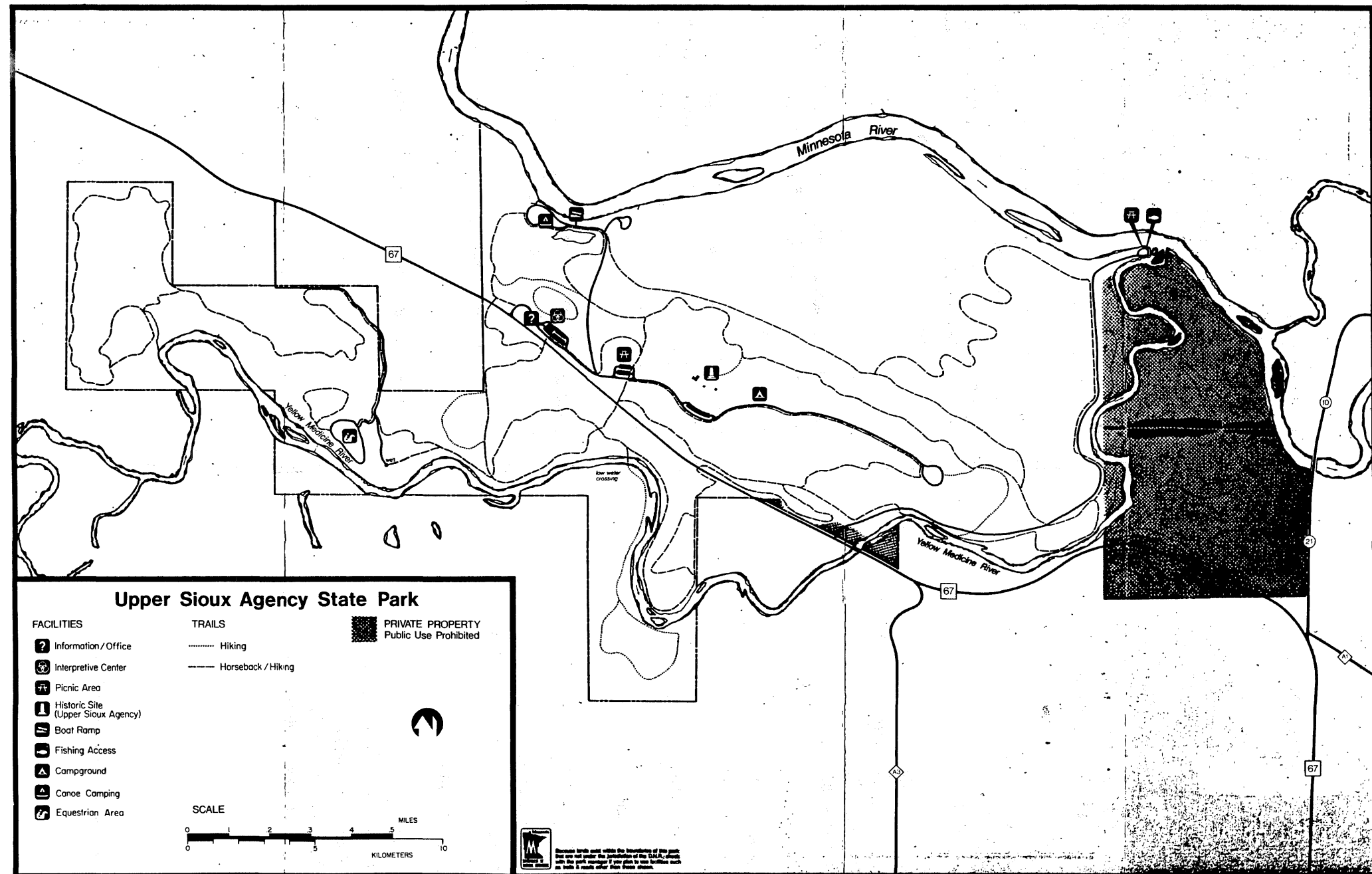
In 1854, the Upper Sioux Agency was constructed (where the park is located) and charged with the administration of the adjacent reservation. It was operated for several years, and was destroyed when the Dakota tried to reclaim their homeland in 1862. In 1865, homesteaders settled and farmed until 1964 when 330 acres were purchased for the start of the state park. Additional lands have since been acquired.

During the time the agency was established, vegetation in the area primarily consisted of prairies with wooded valleys. Agricultural practices have altered the vegetation to a mosaic of farm fields, woodlands, and pockets of native prairie. The park is now dominated by these old fields, some have been left fallow and some planted with grass.

A few remnant prairies can be found. Rehabilitation and restoration of this habitat is a primary goal of Upper Sioux Agency. Wet prairies, marshes, mixed hardwoods and floodplain forests can also be seen in the park.

The diversity of habitats within and adjacent to the park support a variety of birds and animals. The dry prairie remnants are home to the loggerhead shrike, a threatened species in Minnesota. Bluebirds, shore birds, hawks, owls, and waterfowl are abundant. Several animals of special concern inhabiting the park, include the prairie vole, northern flying squirrel, northern grasshopper mouse, plains pocket mouse, spotted skunk, little brown bat, and the five-lined skink. In addition, more common species like the white-tailed deer, red and grey fox, coyotes and raccoons inhabit the park.

The diverse mixture of cultural and natural history, with the park's scenic beauty has provided tremendous recreational opportunities since becoming a state park in 1963. Interpretation of cultural and historical resources, and protection of critical habitat, are the major objectives of Upper Sioux Agency State Park.



## EXISTING FACILITIES

The following is an inventory of the existing physical plant of Upper Sioux Agency State Park.

Acres in Statutory Boundary - 1,280  
Acres of state land - 1,103

### Campsites

Drive in - 45  
Walk in - 1  
Horse - 30

### Miles of Trails

Self-guided Interpretive - 1  
Hiking - 22  
Horse - 20  
Snowmobile - 20

### Miles of Road

Gravel - 5.8

Number of Picnic Tables - 66

### Water Access

### Number of Buildings

Over 100 sq.ft. - 7  
Under 100 sq.ft. - 13

Miles of Posted Boundary - 9.5

### Seasonal Visitor Centers

### Park Utilities

Number of Septic Tanks - 3  
Number of Wells - 3  
Number of Individual  
Water Distribution Systems - 2

## PROBLEMS FACING UPPER SIOUX AGENCY STATE PARK

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

There is an increased demand for overnight camping. The existing facilities are inadequate with a shortage of sites and complete lack of modern sanitation and shower services.

Limited improvements have been completed at Upper Sioux Agency State Park in recent years. The goals identified in the ten year old management plan have not been achieved.

## RECENT DEVELOPMENT IN UPPER SIOUX AGENCY STATE PARK

Major development projects over the past few years have included:

1. Horse camp access road improvements.

## UPPER SIOUX AGENCY STATE PARK CAPITAL NEEDS

### RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

#### **Erosion Control - \$30,000**

Erosion control on existing campground entrance road.

**Subtotal \$30,000**

### MAJOR REHABILITATION

#### **Road and Parking Lot Rehabilitation - \$50,000**

Add gravel base, improve drainage and pave certain portions of park road system.

**Subtotal \$50,000**

### NEW DEVELOPMENT

#### **Semi-Modern Campground - \$250,000**

Project to include new campsites with associated roads, sanitation facilities and site amenities.

#### **Office and Service Area Complex - \$280,000**

Construct a new shop, storage building, service court and complete associated site work.

**Subtotal \$530,000**

### TOTAL DEVELOPMENT NEEDS - \$610,000

## 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 UPPER SIOUX AGENCY STATE PARK**

Parcel #	Acres
1	155
2	2
3	20

**Total 177 acres**

## PARK POTENTIAL

What efforts will the completion of resource management, rehabilitation and new development projects have on Upper Sioux Agency 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. These will ensure that future visitors will be able to experience the diverse nature of Minnesota's prairie and forest 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 Upper Sioux Agency 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 Upper Sioux Agency 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.

Acquisition costs in Upper Sioux Agency State Park will be determined by appraisals.

Upper Sioux Agency State Park  
development needs **\$610,000**

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



