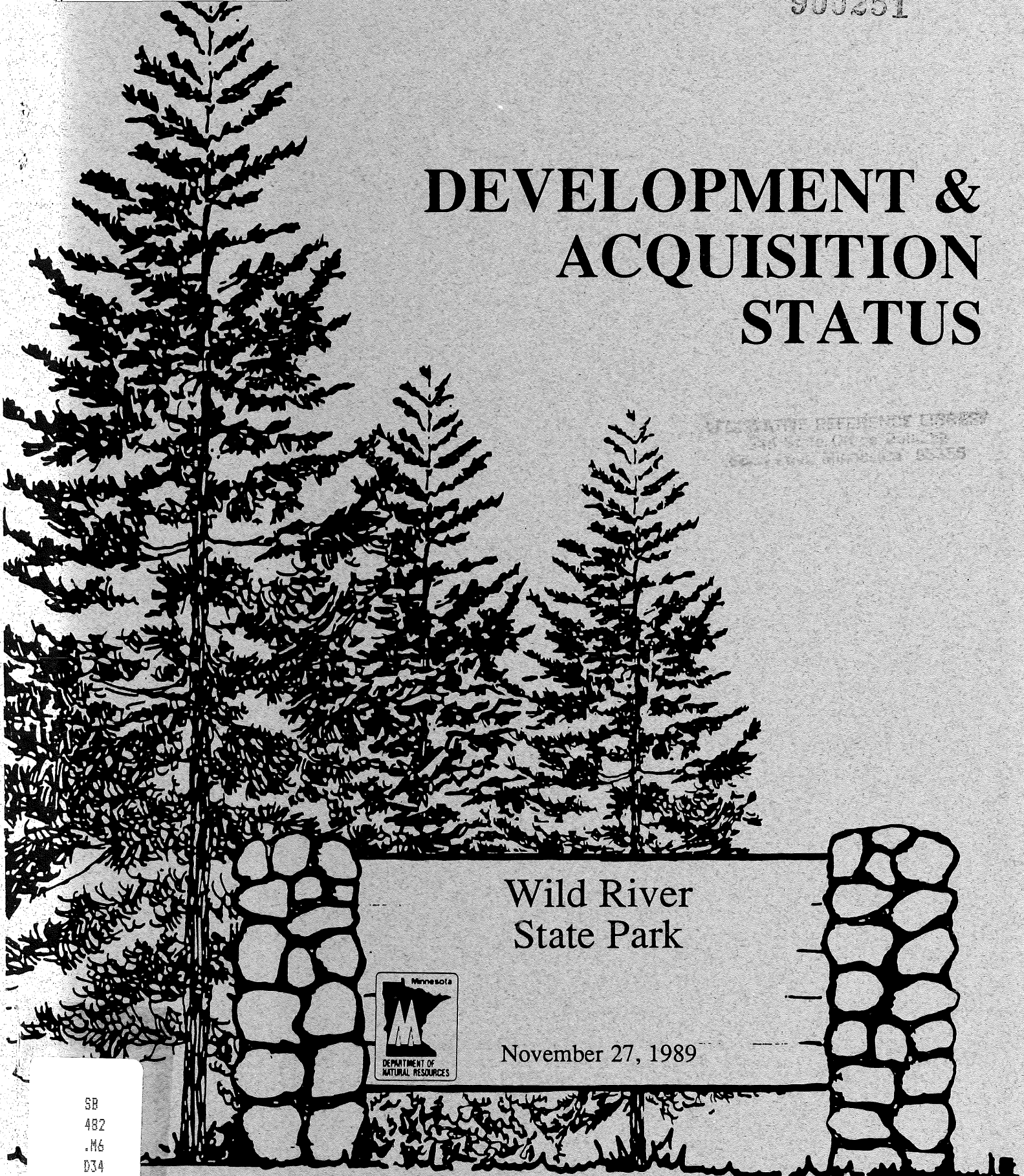




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# DEVELOPMENT & ACQUISITION STATUS



Wild River  
State Park



November 27, 1989

SB  
482  
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v.57



## 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 WILD RIVER STATE PARK**

Wild River State Park is located in extreme eastern Chisago County along the St. Croix River. The main entrance to the park is located 13 miles east of the City of North Branch or 13 miles north from the City of Taylors Falls. Chief access is by State Highway #95 and County Road #12. The statutory boundary encompasses 6751.55 acres. Nearly 5000 of these acres were donated by Northern States Power Company. 332.26 acres are still retained in private ownership.

The park's landscape was heavily influenced by three major geologic processes; volcanic activity, glaciation, and erosion. Volcanic activity began about 1.1 billion years ago. Masses of molten rock were forced through cracks and fissures in the earth's crust. This formed extensive areas of basalt flows which comprise the bedrock underlying much of the park. Detailed studies show that at last ten separate flows occurred on top of each other over a period of hundreds of millions of years.

About one million years ago glaciers advanced south across Minnesota, crushing and scouring the land in the process. In some places these glaciers were over a mile deep. About 10,000 years ago the last glacier melted and formed Glacial Lakes Duluth and Grantsburg. The outlets to these vast lakes released enormous volumes of meltwater that carved the St. Croix River Valley we see today. The river first cut through overlying layers of glacial deposits, and then layers of sedimentary deposits, and finally into the underlying layers of basalt.

Wild River was once the scene of a booming fur trade that began during the mid 1600's between Dakota Indians and French traders. By the late 1600's Chippewa (Ojibway) Indians had driven the Dakota from the region and established their own fur trade with both the French and British. By 1763 the British dominated the St. Croix Valley fur trade.

The St. Croix Valley was included in the Louisiana Purchase of 1803. The United States Government sent exploration parties to evaluate the newly acquired territory. Prominent explorers included Zebulon Pike, O.B. Douglas, and Henry Schoolcraft who explored the Mississippi, the St. Croix and Lake Superior in 1832.

The treaty of 1837 opened the St. Croix Valley to American settlement. This cleared the way for a logging industry that would dominate commerce in the valley until the turn of the century and provide a strong economic base for expansion of other trades. One trade which benefitted from the logging industry was flour milling. For years, these two industries gave Minnesota a worldwide reputation as a leading economic center on the edge of the wilderness.

Settlement continued to flourish after Minnesota became a Territory in 1849 and a state in 1858. The economy gradually shifted to agriculture with the decline of the lumber trade around the turn of the century. In 1901 a hydroelectric dam was put in at St. Croix Falls/Taylors Falls. In the 1920's Northern States Power Company began purchasing lands for the site of another potential hydroelectric dam along the upper St. Croix River.

In 1968 the St. Croix River was designated as one of the original eight National Rivers in the United States that were included in the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. The Upper St. Croix and the Namakagan were designated as Scenic Rivers. In 1969 an effort was made to establish Sunrise State Park. In 1973 legislation was approved to authorize the establishment of St. Croix Wild River State Park. The park officially opened on September 25, 1978.

Today the park provides a refuge for rare and threatened flora and fauna, and species of special concern. Because the park is located in a transition zone (Grantsburg Landscape Region) it contains diverse plant communities including maple-basswood forest, oak and aspen, oak savanna and prairie remnants, bottomland hardwoods, and white and red pine stands. This diversity provides habitat for a wide range of birds, mammals, reptiles, amphibians, and insects. Bald eagles, blanding turtles, eastern hognose snakes, coyotes, river otters, and black bear all inhabit the park. Some of the species found in Wild River State Park typically inhabit wilderness areas. Wild River contains these within a one hour drive of the Twin Cities area.

FACILITIES

- Information
- Trail Center
- Interpretive Center
- Parking Lot
- Amphitheater
- Picnic Area
- Trail Shelter
- Boat Landing
- Campground
- Primitive Group Camp
- Walk-in Camping
- Canoe Camping
- Trailer Sanitation Station
- Horse Camp

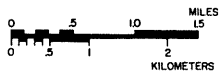
LEGEND

TRAILS

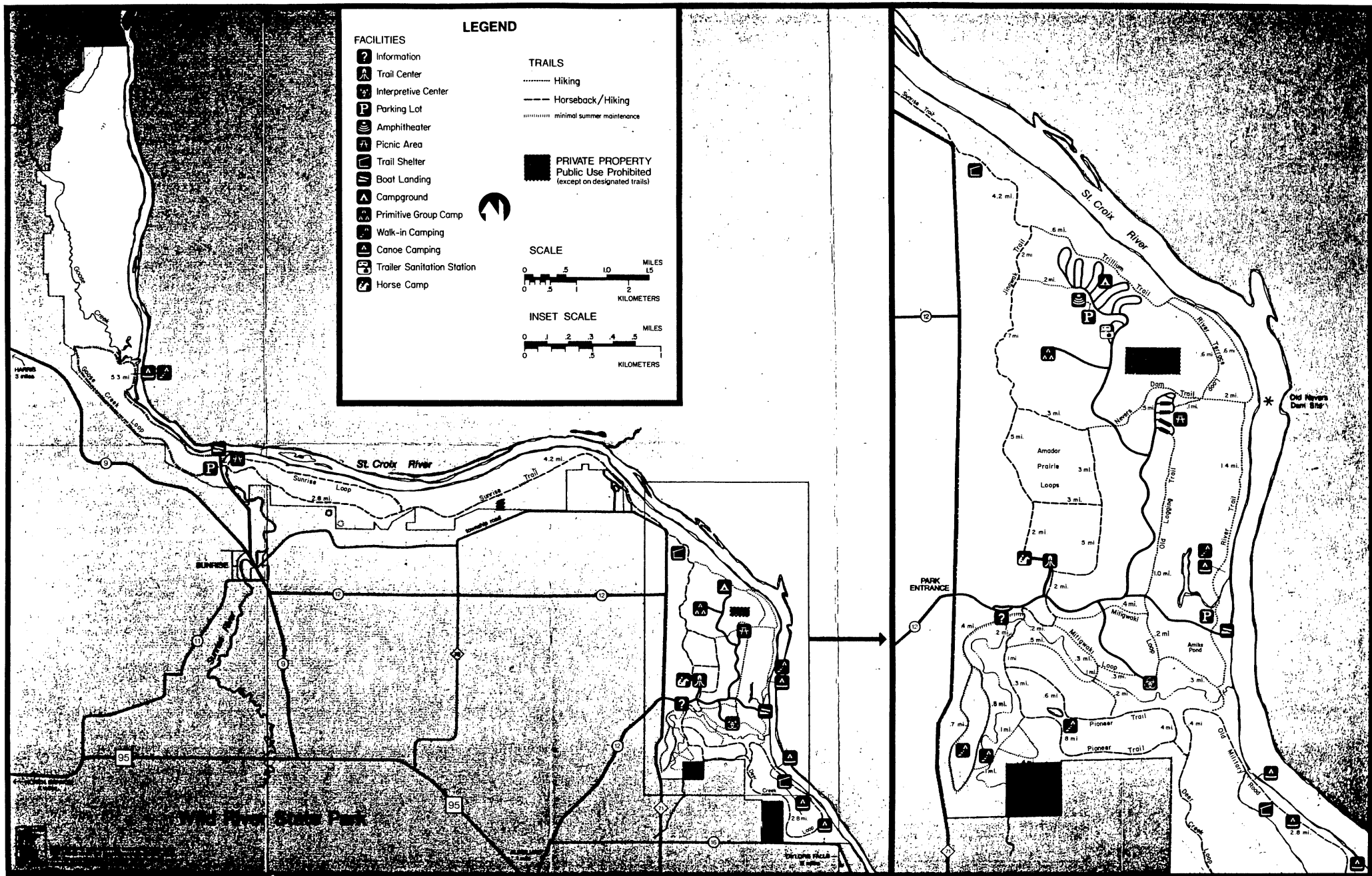
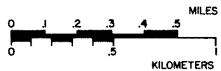
- Hiking
- Horseback/Hiking
- minimal summer maintenance

PRIVATE PROPERTY  
Public Use Prohibited  
(except on designated trails)

SCALE



INSET SCALE



## EXISTING FACILITIES

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

Acres in Statutory Boundary - 6,761.55	Miles of Road
Acres of state land - 6,429.29	Asphalt - 5
Acres of private land - 332.26	Gravel - 4
<b>Campsites</b>	<b>Enclosed Picnic Shelters</b>
Drive in - 96	Trail Center 4/15 - 11/15
Walk in - 1	Number of Picnic Tables - 150
Back Pack - 6	<b>Trailer Dump Station</b>
Canoe in - 10	<b>Water Accesses - 2</b>
Primitive Group Camp - 200	<b>Number of Buildings</b>
Horse	Over 100 sq.ft. - 13
Showers	Under 100 sq.ft. - 14
Modern toilets	<b>Miles of Posted Boundary - 40</b>
Campsites with electricity - 17	<b>Year Round Visitor Center</b>
<b>Miles of Trails</b>	<b>Park Utilities</b>
Self-guided Interpretive - 1	Number of Septic Tanks - 9
Hiking - 35	Number of Wells - 11
Horse - 20	Number of Individual
Bicycle - 35	Water Distribution Systems - 11
Cross County - 35	
<b>Canoe Rental</b>	
<b>Cross County Ski Rental</b>	

## **PROBLEMS FACING WILD RIVER STATE PARK**

There are many public recreational facilities in Wild River State Park to maintain.

Since the park is fairly new most of the facilities are in good condition. however, the unique architecture and design of these buildings has resulted in high maintenance costs. Rehabilitation and replacement of worn or damaged facilities has proved costly because of the cedar/mahogany/redwood woodwork, exposed aggregate floors, cedar shake roofs, massive chimneys, and stainless steel shower building hardware.

The park has received a steady, heavily increasing use over the last few years. This has increased the wear and tear on the buildings and campsites as well as on the trails and fragile riverbank resources. Exotic vegetation is providing increased competition with native vegetation to the detriment of the areas ecology. Active management is needed to counter alien species, and protect and maintain these fragile ecosystems. About 400 acres of old farmfields need restoration efforts to control noxious and introduced weeds and grasses. Remnants of native prairie need to be surveyed and managed. Assistance is also needed to control oak wilt, white pine blister rust, and red pine bark beetle infestations. Active management is needed on the whitetail deer herd to prevent destruction of adjacent croplands, gardens, and orchards and on park vegetation. Research also needs to be conducted on deer ticks and the spread of Lyme disease as part of the deer management program.

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

## **RECENT DEVELOPMENT IN WILD RIVER STATE PARK**

All the facilities of the park were completed in the late 1970's.



# WILD RIVER STATE PARK CAPITAL NEEDS

## RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

### **Prairie Restoration \$20,000**

Project includes restoration of old farm fields to native prairie vegetation and surveys and management of prairie remnants.

### **Whitetail Deer Management \$4,000**

Provides for aerial deer population survey (annual) and exclosures to protect vegetation from deer deprivation.

### **Tree insect and Disease Control \$8,000**

Control of oak wilt through aerial survey, installation of vibratory plow line, removal of dead oaks and replanting in use areas as well as control of other tree disease problems.

**Subtotal \$32,000**

## MAJOR REHABILITATION

### **Asphalt Road Overlay \$144,000**

This would include an asphalt overlay of all existing park roads. These roads have had little or no maintenance over the past 12 years.

**Subtotal \$144,000**

## NEW DEVELOPMENT

### **Trail Center Addition \$50,000**

Expand trail center, providing additional space for large groups as well as showers for those using the horse camp.

### **Office Expansion \$45,000**

This project would increase office space, provide a nature Store sales area, public restrooms, and a public information area.

### **Campground Improvements \$20,000**

Provide electrical hookups in E-loop.

### **Deer Creek Well Backpack/Canoe \$5,000**

Provide potable water supply for trail users, backpackers, and canoeists.

### **Goose Creek Trail Development \$50,000**

Provide trail hookup to Chengwatana State Forest as per Munger Trail plan.

### **Group Camp Development - Class II and III \$80,000**

Modernize facilities to meet new visitor group camping needs.

### **Kiosk Development/Interpretive Display \$20,000**

Improve visitor orientation services and environmental education.

### **Handicap Walkways \$4,000**

Provide handicap access to the trail center and visitor center.

### **Building Restoration \$20,000**

Restoration of buildings to original color condition and protection of wood exteriors for longer life expectancy.

### **Re-insulate Campground Shower Building \$8,000**

Needed for energy conservation in our winterized campground shower building.

### **Shingle Replacement \$5,000**

Replace approximately 1000 damaged wood shake shingles on public use and service buildings.

### **Picnic Tables \$5,000**

Replace damaged or rotted picnic tables in the campground and picnic areas.

### **Interpretive Center Rehabilitation \$12,000**

Improve the energy efficiency of this heavily used public building.

## 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.

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.

### **Bike Trail \$100,000**

Protect vegetation and soil on existing trails and provide for a recreational opportunity that is in high demand.

### **Playground Area \$15,000**

Develop a safe rustic wood play area that is in high demand by our camping clientele.

### **Swimming Area Study \$30,000**

Conduct an environmental and user impact study on whether a swimming facility is needed and could be put in without undue artificiality or negative impacts on natural features in the park.

**Subtotal \$469,000**

**TOTAL DEVELOPMENT NEEDS - \$645,000**

### **PRIVATE LANDS TO BE ACQUIRED IN WILD RIVER STATE PARK**

Parcel #	Acres
19	20.00
30	40.00
32	80.00
34	.50
36	.89
38	.46
43a	14.76
44a	44.55
44c	44.55
45	44.55
46	30.00
47	12.00

Total of 332.26 acres

## PARK POTENTIAL

What efforts will the completion of resource management, rehabilitation and new development projects have on Wild River 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 diverse nature of Minnesota's 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 detract from the natural beauty of Wild River 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 Wild River 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.

Wild River State Park acquisition costs will be determined by appraisals.

Wild River State Park development costs - \$645,000

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

