



990251

# DEVELOPMENT & ACQUISITION STATUS

Blue Mounds  
State Park

November 27, 1989



SB  
482  
.M6  
D34  
v.6



on recycled paper.

This document is made available electronically by the Minnesota Legislative Reference Library as part of an ongoing digital archiving project. <http://www.leg.state.mn.us/lrl/lrl.asp>  
(Funding for document digitization was provided, in part, by a grant from the Minnesota Historical & Cultural Heritage Program.)





## 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 BLUE MOUNDS STATE PARK**

Blue Mounds State Park is located in extreme southwestern Minnesota, in Rock County six miles north of Luverne, and sixteen miles south of Pipestone. The statutory boundary encompasses 2030.6 acres. Of this 261.11 acres are privately owned. Major transportation routes serving the area are Interstate #90 and U.S. Highway #75.

The park is named after a large outcrop of Sioux Quartzite, a hard red rock, which is covered with a blue lichen, giving it a hazy blue appearance from a distance. The Sioux Quartzite originated from sediments deposited on the bottom of an ancient sea which covered the area 1.5 billion years ago. Vast quantities of sand were deposited on this ancient sea floor. Eventually sandstones were formed from the accumulation and weight of the sand and water. Over time, the increasing pressure from weight, heat, and a chemical reaction transformed the sandstone into a very hard Quartzite. The outcrop forms a cliff line which is about 1.5 miles long, and at some points 90 feet high. The highest point of this outcrop has an elevation of 1700 feet above sea level.

When the first Europeans arrived in southwestern Minnesota, the Blue Mounds area was part of a vast tall grass prairie that covered much of central North America. Current agricultural practices have reduced the once extensive prairie to small islands. The shallow soils and abundant rock outcrops prevented much of the land within the park from being cultivated. However, grazing by domestic livestock destroyed many of the native grasses and wildflowers. This allowed weedy plants to invade the grazed areas and change the character of the prairie vegetation. Management plans are currently underway to restore native grasses and wildflowers. In addition the park maintains a small herd of 45-55 bison to help visitors imagine what the prairie once was.

The park contains two lakes that were formed by two dams on Mound Creek. Existing facilities include a 73 site campground, primitive group camp, picnic ground with shelter, interpretive center, swimming beach and 16 miles of trails.

# LEGEND

## FACILITIES

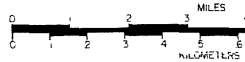
- Information
- Beach
- Interpretive Center
- Trailer Sanitation Station
- Campground
- Primitive Group Camp
- Picnic Area
- Amphitheater

## TRAILS

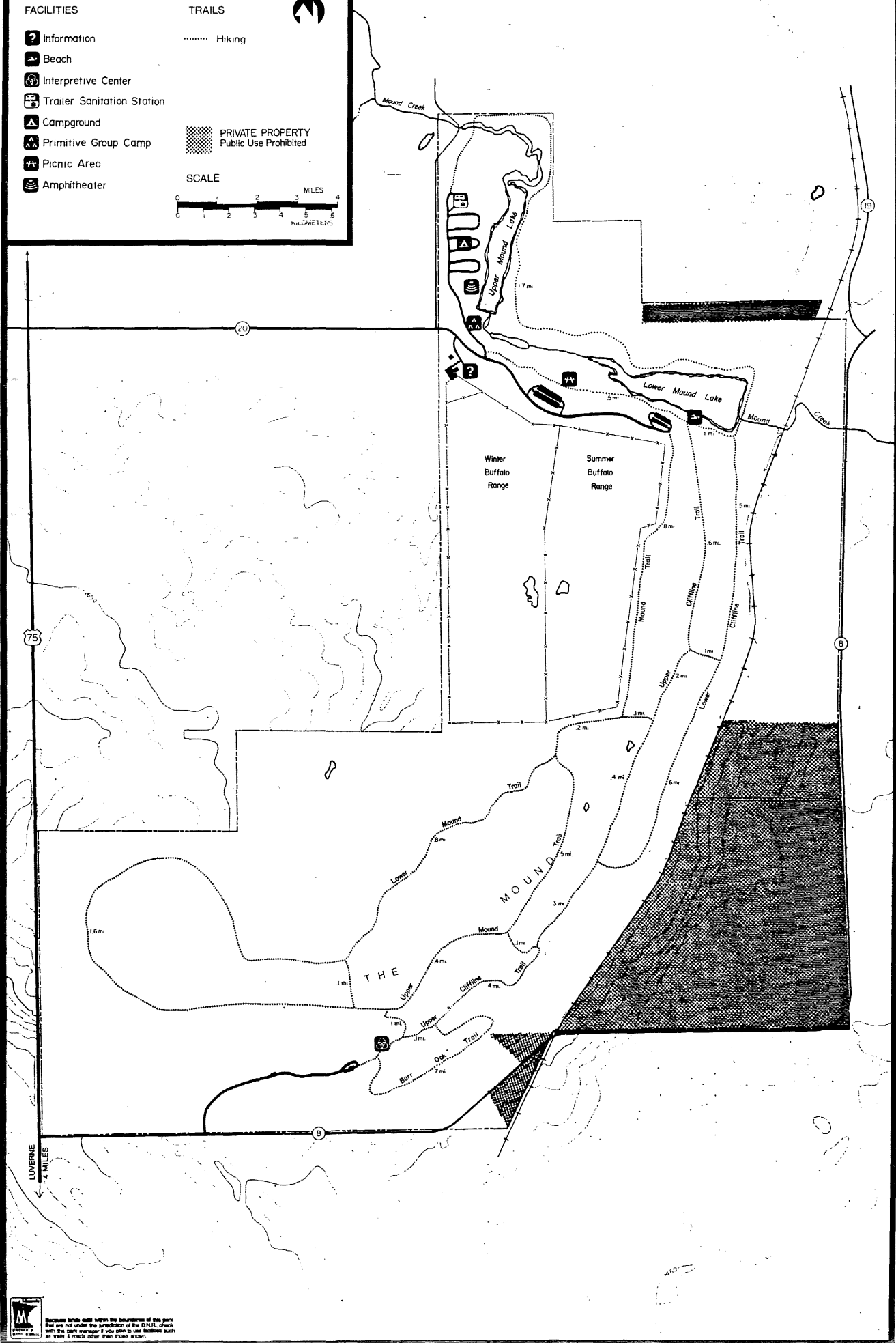
- Hiking

PRIVATE PROPERTY  
Public Use Prohibited

## SCALE



# Blue Mounds State Park



Because lands within the boundaries of this park are not under the jurisdiction of the DNR, check with the park manager if you plan to use facilities such as trails or roads other than those shown.

## EXISTING FACILITIES

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

Acres in Statutory Boundary - 2,030.6

Acres of state land - 1,769.49

Acres of Private land - 261.11

### Campsites

Drive in - 73

Showers

Modern toilets

Campsites with electricity - 40

### Miles of Trails

Hiking - 13

Cross Country Ski - 3

### Playgrounds - 1

### Beaches - 1

### Canoe Rental

### Miles of Road

Asphalt - 1

Gravel - 4

### Open Picnic Shelter

Number of Picnic Tables - 55

Trailer Dump Station - Yes

### Number of Buildings

Over 100 sq.ft. - 13

Under 100 sq.ft. - 11

### Miles of Posted Boundary - 13

### Seasonal Visitor Centers

### Park Utilities

Sewage Lagoon - 1

Number of Septic Tanks - 8

Number of Wells - 3

Number of Individual

Water Distribution Systems - 3

Miles of State Owned Power Line - 1

## PROBLEMS FACING BLUE MOUNDS STATE PARK

There are many public recreational facilities in Blue Mounds 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 Blue Mounds' resources. In the past, facilities were developed in areas of ancient encampments. These encampments deserve to be protected and interpreted.

Foremost of these resources is the native prairie that was over-grazed for many years. Management is needed to enhance and restore the prairie.

Most recently rock climbing on the exposed face of the mound has become quite popular. There is immediate need to monitor the impact of this activity on the rock itself, as well as the plant community, which includes unusual species. If this activity is to be permitted, then there is a need to provide parking near the site to eliminate hazardous and illegal parking on the existing public roadway adjacent to the park.

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

## **RECENT DEVELOPMENT IN BLUE MOUNDS STATE PARK**

Major development projects over the past few years have included:

1. Paving of campground roads.
2. Campground toilet building improvements.
3. Improvements to the access road serving the interpretive center.
4. Creating improved access to the interpretive center toilets to better accomodate handicapped visitors.
5. Planting of 190 acres of old fields to prairie grasses.
6. Expansion of the bison pasture to double its size, and expansion of the corral system..

## **BLUE MOUNDS STATE PARK CAPITAL NEEDS**

### **RESOURCE MANAGEMENT**

#### **Old Pasture Restoration to Prairie - \$14,000**

Seed harvesting, planting, and noxious weed control on former pasture lands.

#### **Mound Vegetation Management - \$14,000**

Removal of tree growth along the east edge of the mound. This project would open the edge of the mound for viewing and would present it as it was in early times.

**Subtotal \$28,000**

### **MAJOR REHABILITATION**

#### **Picnic Area Toilet Rehabilitation - \$30,000**

Convert old CCC building from dump pan type to drain field. Replace old fixtures and repair floor and wall finished.

#### **Replace Contact Station \$100,000**

Replace the existing contact station which is in poor condition with a larger building which will provide room for orientation displays, gift sales and much needed office space.

#### **Picnic Table Replacement - \$15,000**

Replace old, wood tables with new core-ten steel leg tables.

#### **Bison Pasture Exclosures - \$3,000**

Exclosures would allow the monitoring of the affects of bison on the natural prairie, by maintaining an un-grazed area.

**Subtotal \$148,000**

## **NEW DEVELOPMENT**

### **Park Drive to Quarry Area - \$250,000**

This road would provide access to the quarry and be used as a scenic drive by park visitors. Project to include road construction, parking and accessible vault toilets. In addition, several acres of prairie sod will need to be salvaged.

### **Development of Prairie Plant Nursery Facility - \$550,000**

Full scale native prairie restoration assumes a source of plant materials that is currently unavailable, and will develop only with a nursery facility. This nursery could supply native prairie plants for much of Region IV.

**Subtotal \$800,0000**

## **TOTAL DEVELOPMENT NEEDS - \$976,000**

## **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 BLUE MOUNDS STATE PARK**

**Parcel #   Acres**

|           |               |
|-----------|---------------|
| <b>1</b>  | <b>14.0</b>   |
| <b>14</b> | <b>228.83</b> |
| <b>16</b> | <b>6.74</b>   |
| <b>17</b> | <b>4.29</b>   |
| <b>20</b> | <b>2.00</b>   |
| <b>21</b> | <b>5.25</b>   |

**Total 261.11 acres.**



## PARK POTENTIAL

What efforts will the completion of resource management, rehabilitation and new development projects have on Blue Mounds 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 ever-changing prairies and 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 distract from the natural beauty of Blue Mounds 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 Blue Mounds 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.

Blue Mounds State Park acquisition costs will be determined by appraisals.

Blue Mounds State Park development needs **-\$976,000**

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

