

LEGISLATIVE REFERENCE LIBRARY
3 0307 00019 5993

STATE OF
MINNESOTA

900251

DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

DEVELOPMENT & ACQUISITION STATUS

Camden
State Park

January 10, 1990



SB
482
.M6
D3A
v.7

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 CAMDEN STATE PARK

Camden State Park is located eight miles south of Marshall on State Highway #23, in southwestern Minnesota. The park's statutory boundaries encompass 1712 acres, 185.79 of which are privately owned.

The Redwood River valley winding through Camden, was called an oasis by pioneers. It provided an interlude for weary travelers and supplied Native Americans and pioneers with food, water and shelter from the prairie sun and the winter gales.

Camden lies near the summit of the Couteau des Prairie ("highland of the prairie"), a ridge of geographic significance which separates the Minnesota River and Missouri River watersheds. The Couteau des Prairie was completely glaciated during the Pleistocene era. When glaciers retreated 11,000 years ago, the area was covered with a deep layer of glacial drift. Swift rivers of meltwater formed the existing valley in Camden. Prairies formed regionally, while draws and valleys were occupied by woodlands and marshes.

The earliest known residents may have settled in the area nearly 8,000 years ago. Since then, the Dakota people had permanent camps in the Redwood River Valley. They roamed on adjacent prairies in Minnesota and the Dakotas to hunt bison and other big game, but always returned to Camden woods. The high valley walls were ample protection from severe winter weather. The forests and marshes provided small game, deer, and succulent plants.

From 1868 to 1888, the town of Camden was established. When the railroad came to southwestern Minnesota, a depot was placed in Marshall, and not Camden. The town survived for a short time, because the only grist mill in a fifty mile radius was located one mile to the south. By the 1930's the town of Camden was a memory, and the area was known as Camden Woods.

The drought in the early 1930's coupled with the depression, precipitated the park's authorization. In July of 1934, the state applied for the establishment of a drought camp at Camden. This camp was authorized under the Emergency Conservation Work Program. A company of WWI veterans developed park facilities under the direction of the National Park Service. In 1935, the Minnesota legislature formally established Camden State Park.

Today, the valley is occupied by a maple-basswood forest, featuring over 120 species of woodland wildflowers including nodding trillium, touch-me-not, and marsh marigold. Old fields and prairie remnants dominate the upland sites. Numerous species of songbirds, raptors, mammals and reptiles thrive in these habitats.

A multitude of recreational opportunities are provided by Camden State Park. Some of visitor's favorite activities include trout fishing, hiking, swimming, camping, and visiting the clear, cool artesian well. In addition, visitors take advantage of summer interpretive programs, snowmobile trails, cross-country ski trails, and horse riding trails.

LEGEND

TRAILS

- Hiking
- - - - - Interpretive
- - - - - Horseback/Hiking

FACILITIES

- Information
- Picnic Area
- Swimming Pool
- Trail Parking
- Public Access
- Campground
- Primitive Group Camp
- Historic Sites
 - 1 Site of Trading Post operated by the American Fur Company
 - 2 Sioux Lookout
 - 3 Jones Mill Site and Mill Race

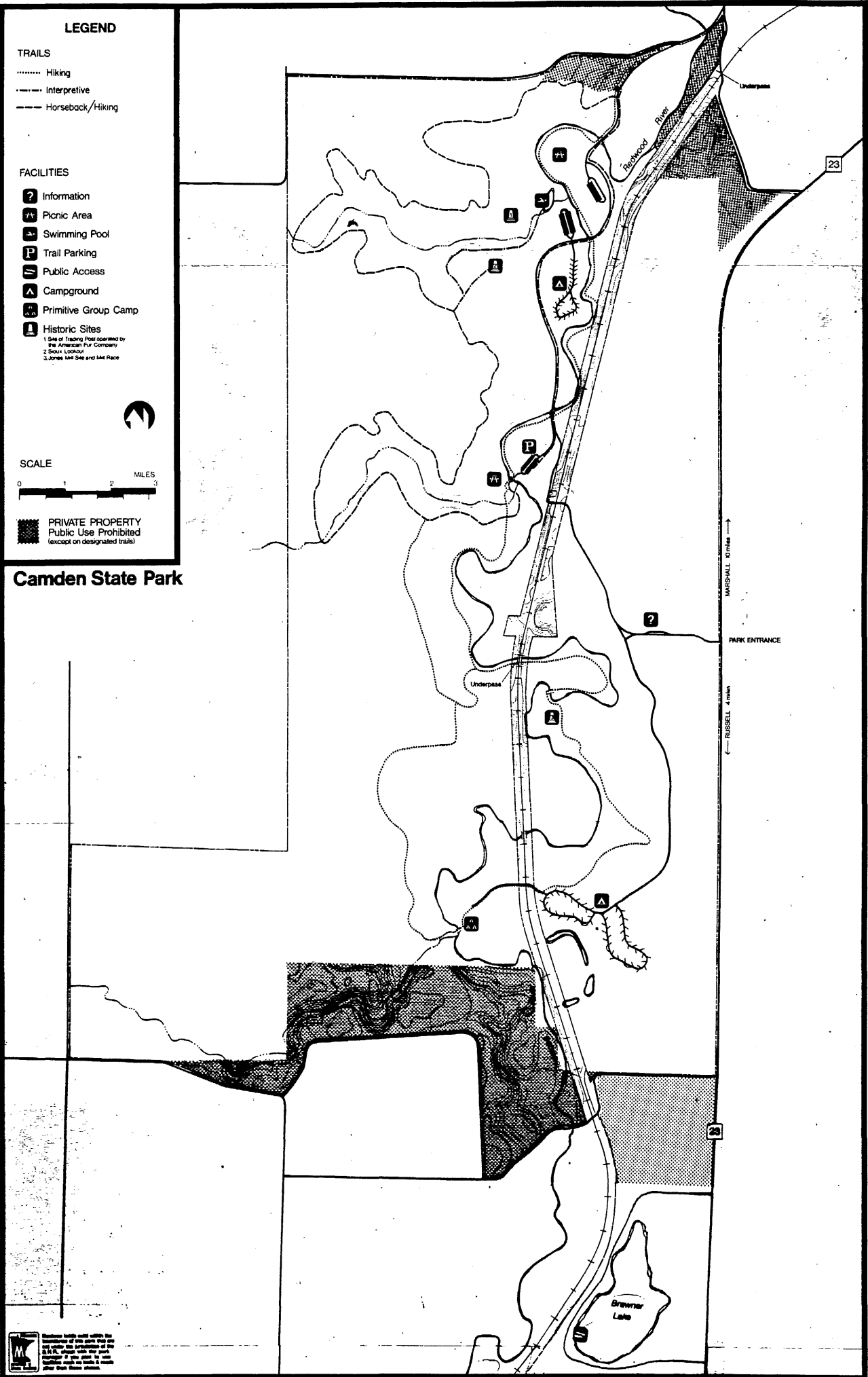


SCALE



PRIVATE PROPERTY
Public Use Prohibited
(except on designated trails)

Camden State Park



EXISTING FACILITIES

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

Acres in Statutory Boundary - 1,712
Acres of state land - 1,526.21
Acres of private land - 185.79

Campsites

Drive in - 93
Horse -
Showers
Modern toilets
Campsites with electricity - 29

Miles of Trails

Self-guided Interpretive - 1
Hiking - 11
Horse - 7
Cross Country Ski - 5
Snowmobile - 9

Miles of Road

Asphalt - 3
Gravel - 3

Picnic Shelters - Open and Enclosed

Number of Picnic Tables - 115

Trailer Dump Station - 1

Water Accesses - 1

Visitor Center

Swimming Beach

Number of Buildings

Over 100 sq.ft. - 19
Under 100 sq.ft. - 14

Miles of Posted Boundary - 14

Park Utilities

Number of Septic Tanks - 8
Number of Wells - 6
Number of Individual
Water Distribution Systems - 6
Miles of State Owned Power Line - 3

PROBLEMS FACING CAMDEN STATE PARK

There are many public recreational facilities in Camden to maintain. Many are in need of replacement or major rehabilitation. Some were constructed in the 1930'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 Camden's resources.

Years of overuse has lead to a decline in the conditions of the campgrounds, picnic areas, and trails. Settlement and farming have destroyed the majority of the native prairie communities, with only a few fragments remaining. Recent acquisitions require immediate management attention to reduce safety hazards, improve access, and eliminate resource degradation.

Gravel mining, feed lots, and other land uses surrounding the park threaten water quality in the Redwood River, and endanger the aesthetic quality of the park. Vegetation, wildlife and cultural resources need to be identified, surveyed and documented to conduct proactive resource management, and insure interpretation of these resources.

Some important improvements have been completed at Camden State Park in recent years, but many of the goals identified in the ten year management plan have yet to be completed.

RECENT DEVELOPMENT IN CAMDEN STATE PARK

Major development projects over the past few years have included.

1. Development of a new campground including necessary sanitation facilities.
2. Remodel of the beach area sanitation building and the addition of a vending area.
3. Replacement of existing low water crossing with a bridge across the Redwood River.
4. Major road repairs.
5. Acquisition of the Brawner Lake area.

CAMDEN STATE PARK CAPITAL NEEDS

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Prairie Restoration - \$250,000

Eventual conversion of 600 acres of old fields to native prairie vegetation, including site preparation and seeding of indigenous grasses and forbs.

Shade Tree Improvements - \$20,000

Planting of shade trees in both campgrounds, due to the recent loss of many drought stressed trees.

Natural Resource Assessment - \$15,000

An inventory and evaluation of the park's plant and animal communities, site conditions, and land use history, including the establishment of permanent plot studies. This baseline information is essential for resource management.

Cultural Resource Assessment - \$17,250

Determine cultural significances of the park, to aid in protection, management and interpretation of these resources.

Subtotal \$302,250

MAJOR REHABILITATION

Park Building Rehabilitation - \$40,000

Rehabilitation of the CCC/WPA buildings, including tuck pointing, stone work, roof replacement and utility rehabilitation.

Subtotal \$40,000

NEW DEVELOPMENT

New Trail/Interpretive Center - \$250,000

Construction of a new combination trail/interpretive center serving the needs of local schools for outdoor interpretation, day users, campers with evening programs and the many winter trail users now visiting the park.

Brawner Lake Improvements - \$115,800

Improvements to the road, erosion control, establishment of a picnic area, and construction of two vault toilets.

Subtotal \$365,800

TOTAL DEVELOPMENT NEEDS \$708,050

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 CAMDEN STATE PARK

Parcel	#Acres
2	19.30
4	18.20
4a	7.19
12	46.30
18	0.60
19	1.00
20	5.00
22	10.00
28	5.90
32	32.30
46	40.00

Total 185.79 Acres

PARK POTENTIAL

What efforts will the completion of resource management, rehabilitation and new development projects have on Camden 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 Minnesota's 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 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 Camden 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 Camden 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.

Camden State Park acquisition costs will be determined by appraisals.

Camden State Park development needs - **\$708,050**

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

