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STATE OF

MINNESOTA

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DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

DEVELOPMENT & ACQUISITION STATUS

Carley
State Park

January 8, 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 CARLEY STATE PARK

Carley State Park is located in southeastern Minnesota in Wabasha County, 4 miles south of the town of Plainview. The park was established in 1949 in honor of Senator James A. Carley and his family who donated land for the park. Today the statutory boundary encompasses 211 acres, all of which are state owned.

Carley State Park is located in what geologists refer to as the "driftless area". It covers 10,000 square miles in adjoining parts of Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa and Illinois. The area was untouched by the most recent glacial advances. However, in nearby areas, the constant grinding of glacial action caused the formation of huge amounts of powdered rock and fine mineral particles. These fine particles were blown by the wind after the retreat of glaciers to the west, and were deposited over much of southeastern Minnesota in a thick blanket of material known as loess.

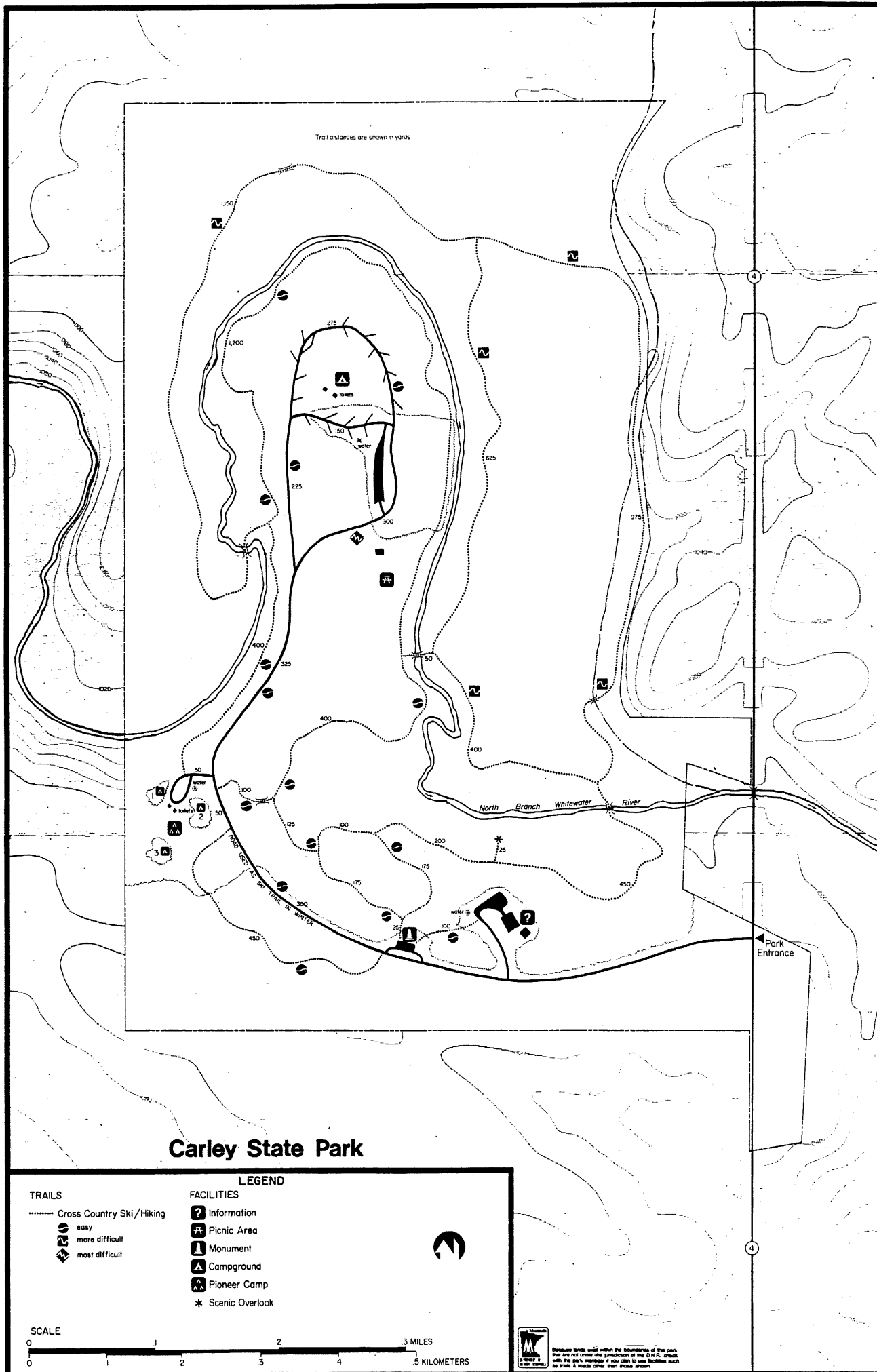
The North Branch of the Whitewater River has carried away these easily erodible wind-blown sediments, exposing the underlying limestone bedrock laid down by ancient inland seas 450-500 million years ago. The surrounding fertile farmland has benefited greatly from the wind-deposited soil, rich in minerals.

The park is situated in a transition zone between what was hardwood forest to the east and prairie to the west. Prior to European settlement this area contained a mixture of bottomland hardwoods, big woods, oak woods, brushland and dry prairie. Bottomland hardwoods were found in the flat, moist floodplains along streams and rivers and big woods occupied the steep valley walls. Oak woods and brushland occurred on the dry sites with south and west exposure and prairie grasses covered the gently rolling uplands.

As the area in the vicinity of the park was settled much of the land was put into agricultural production; the dominant land use today. The varied vegetation which currently exists has resulted from natural succession on lands formerly used for agriculture. Current vegetation types include old field, oak hardwoods, and bur oak on the dry upland sites. Northern and central hardwoods occur on the valley slopes and consist of red and white oaks, basswood, elm, and sugar maple. The remaining lowland areas are occupied by lowland hardwoods consisting mainly of elm, cottonwood, box elder, walnut, basswood and willow. Spring wildflowers are abundant and varied, with a notable population of Virginia Blue Bell flowers.

The variety of plant communities present in the park and in the adjacent farmlands provide valuable habitat for a variety of wildlife. Over 150 bird species use the park area as residents or seasonal migrants. These include wild turkey, bald eagle, osprey, northern harrier, spotted sandpiper, eastern phoebe, screech owl, yellow warbler and belted kingfisher. Many mammals also inhabit the park including the white-tailed deer, badger, red and grey fox, mink, raccoon, and beaver. A variety of reptiles and amphibians can also be found and the area is prime habitat for the timber rattlesnake.

Carley State park offers visitors a variety of recreational experiences in an ecologically diverse setting. Miles of trails provide opportunities for hiking and cross country skiing and birdwatching. The North Branch of Whitewater River is a designated trout stream providing fishing for brown and rainbow trout. Other popular activities include picnicking and camping.



EXISTING FACILITIES

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

Acres in Statutory Boundary - 211

Acres of state land - 211

Campsites

Drive in - 20

Miles of Trails

Hiking - 5

Cross Country Ski - 6

Playgrounds - 1

Miles of Road

Gravel - 1

Number of Picnic Tables - 25

Number of Buildings

Over 100 sq.ft. - 1

Under 100 sq.ft. - 7

Miles of Posted Boundary - 3

Park Utilities

Number of Septic Tanks - 1

Number of Wells - 2

PROBLEMS FACING CARLEY STATE PARK

There are several public recreational opportunities in Carley State Park to maintain. The park's natural and cultural resources are in need of protection, management, and interpretation. In order to adequately carry out the management and interpretive plan, an inventory of natural and cultural resources in the park is imperative. To date, information regarding biological and historical data within the park is minimal.

A primary problem at the park is the current location of the entrance road. This road is located at the base of a hill, which allows only a short distance of visibility for accessing or exiting the park. The highway is very busy, and the existing layout is hazardous for visitors as well as passing traffic, necessitating relocation of the park entrance. An additional concern is the apparent lack of funding for the engineering personnel required to survey state park boundaries. These surveys will help establish actual boundaries and benefit the park as well as adjacent landowners.

Improvements in Carley State Park have been minimal in recent years, due to the lack of capital funding. The goals identified in the ten year old management plan have not been achieved.

RECENT DEVELOPMENT IN CARLEY STATE PARK

The following development has occurred at Carley State Park in recent years.

1. Three low water crossings have been developed in the trail system.
2. A trail overlook has been constructed.

CARLEY STATE PARK CAPITAL NEEDS

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Stream Erosion and Bank Stabilization in Picnic Area - \$35,000

Rehabilitate the stream bank and implement stabilization to prevent future damage.

Resource Assessment - \$8,000

Inventory and evaluate the natural and cultural resources of the park.

Vegetation Management - \$15,000

Remove exotic species, woodlands management, and preservation of other resources as dictated by resource assessment project.

Subtotal \$58,000

MAJOR REHABILITATION

Park Building and Structure

Rehabilitation - \$20,000

Project includes replacement of fixtures, general building rehabilitation and utility system improvements.

Erosion Control On Trail System - 9,000

Ensure safety and control erosion on existing trails.

Campground Rehabilitation - \$25,000

Major campground rehabilitation including site leveling, seeding, tree planting, blacktopping the campground loop, and barrier planting.

Subtotal \$54,000

NEW DEVELOPMENT

Entrance Road Relocation - \$35,000

Relocation of entrance road will eliminate a major problem with sight distance on the main highway serving the park.

Picnic Shelter - \$25,000

Construct new picnic shelter to serve group picnics during inclement weather.

Play Area - \$5,000

Construct children's play area near campground. This will be a natural wood structure.

Self-Guided Interpretive Trail - \$5,000

New self guided, signed interpretive trail to serve campers and day use visitors.

Vault Toilets - \$11,000

Install vault toilets in group camp and at office/memorial lot.

Entrance Sign - \$500

Create/install a new park entrance sign.

Storage Building - \$10,000

Construct a 24'x36' unheated storage building.

Parking Lot Expansion - \$4,000

Needed to serve summer visitors as well as winter use clientele.

Subtotal \$95,000

TOTAL DEVELOPMENT NEEDS \$207,500

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 CARLEY STATE PARK

Parcel #	Acres
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1	3.00
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Total 3.00 acres	
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PARK POTENTIAL

What efforts will the completion of resource management, rehabilitation and new development projects have on Carley State Park? These projects 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 the diversity of 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.

A stable funding source is essential for effective long term resource management and capital budget planning for the Minnesota State Park system and Carley 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.

Carley State Park acquisition costs will be determined by appraisals.

Carley State Park development needs **\$207,500**.

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

