



Minnesota's State  
Comprehensive  
Outdoor Recreation  
Plan  
2014 – 2018



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## Introduction

### Framework for the 2014 – 2018 State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan

The goals and strategies in the *Minnesota's State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan 2014 – 2018* were based on the extensive public process used in the development of the state's *Parks and Trails Legacy Plan*. The parks and trails legacy planning process was an effort required by the Minnesota Legislature to provide guidance for how funds generated by the newly created Parks and Trails Legacy fund should be used. The public input from this process was augmented with public input from additional planning processes related to outdoor recreation and expanded upon to address SCORP's broader purpose of nature-based outdoor recreation.

The goals and strategies in the *2014 – 2018 State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan* reinforce the vision and four strategic directions that comprise the *Parks and Trails Legacy Plan*.

#### The Legacy Amendment

On November 4, 2008, Minnesotans passed the Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment, which increased the state sales tax by  $\frac{3}{8}$  of 1 percent (from 6.5 percent to 6.875 percent) for 25 years, to provide new funding for habitat conservation, water quality, arts and culture and parks and trails.

The Parks and Trails Fund will receive 14.25 percent of the Legacy Funds, or about \$1.26 billion over 25 years, to support parks and trails of regional or statewide significance. Minnesotans have shown their commitment to the state's natural resources and its cultural heritage in a dramatic way: They chose to invest in them over the long-term, even in a difficult economic climate.

#### The Parks and Trails Legacy Plan

The 2009-2010 Minnesota Legislature mandated that the Commissioner of the Department of Natural Resources develop a plan for the use of the money in the Parks and Trails Fund and other traditional sources of funding. In response to this new opportunity and legislative direction, DNR developed a collaborative planning process that relied heavily on citizen involvement to develop and finalize the *Parks and Trails Legacy Plan*.

The planning process included four main components:

- Active citizen engagement across the state of Minnesota.
- A collaborative steering committee.
- Focused working groups that developed recommendations.
- Reliance on useful information from the University of Minnesota and other sources.

#### Extensive Public Outreach was the Foundation of the Plan

Citizen engagement is the foundation of the *Parks and Trails Legacy Plan*.



Citizen input helped shape this plan's vision and recommendations.

DNR also contracted with Conservation Corps Minnesota to design and conduct youth and young adult outreach to obtain input for the plan. Conservation Corps Minnesota is a non-profit organization that provides hands-on environmental stewardship and service learning opportunities to youth and young adults while accomplishing energy conservation, natural resource management, and emergency response work.



### ***A Steering Committee Oversaw the Process and Product Development***

A Steering Committee guided development of the *Parks and Trails Legacy Plan*. Members represented a variety of interests, including state and regional park and trail providers, user groups, tourism, and nonprofits. The Steering Committee ensured that the process was collaborative and included effective public participation. It also integrated citizen input into a meaningful vision and provided direction for the overall plan.

### ***Workgroups Developed Recommendations***

Seven topic-area workgroups made up of recreation and conservation professionals analyzed extensive information, including citizen input and new research. They produced the required legislative deliverables and developed draft recommendations.

### ***The University of Minnesota provided Inventory and Guidance Information***

The University of Minnesota developed an inventory, mapping, and framework that informed the plan.

### ***Additional Sources Integrated into the 2013 – 2017 SCORP***

Although the scope of this plan was focused primarily on parks and trails of state and regional significance, the issues and concerns raised relate to local parks and trails and other outdoor recreation facilities/lands in addition to parks and trails. In order to ensure that local parks and trails were covered by the goals and strategies of the *Legacy Plan*, other relevant information from research studies and other relevant plans was incorporated. These include:

- *Greater MN Regional Parks and Trails Strategic Plan*
- Grant Program Requests
- Research studies

## Vision

Minnesota's outdoor recreation opportunities connect everyone to the outdoors. They create experiences that inspire a legacy of stewardship for the natural world and they provide fun, outdoor recreational opportunities that strengthen friendships, families, health and spirit now and into the future. Minnesotans experience the full range of benefits that outdoor recreation provides, reinforcing our identity as an outdoor culture.



## **Overview of Minnesota's Outdoor Recreation System**

Minnesota's outdoor recreation system includes lands owned and/or managed by local, regional, state and federal governments, as well as some owned by nonprofit and for-profit entities. All play different roles in managing and maintaining Minnesota's outdoor recreation system. The system includes everything from a simple neighborhood tot lot to regional parks to state parks to national forests. About one-fourth of the land in Minnesota is in some form of public ownership, and the vast majority is administered by federal, state, or county governments. Almost all of this land provides conservation benefits as well as some level of outdoor recreation opportunities. Managing this land for public benefits is an important responsibility and requires significant resources.

### **Federal Government**

Federal lands providing outdoor recreation include two national forests, the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness, five units managed by the National Park Service (Voyageurs National Park, Mississippi National River and Recreation Area, St. Croix National Scenic Riverway, Pipestone National Monument, and Grand Portage National Monument), national wildlife refuges and waterfowl production areas.

The Chippewa National Forest, established in 1908 was the first national forest east of the Mississippi river. The Superior National Forest, established in 1909, contains the largest wilderness east of the Rocky Mountains and north of the Everglades. The Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness is the most heavily used of all federal wilderness areas.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service manages nine national wildlife refuges and nine wetland management districts totaling 481,000 acres. These units provide hunting, fishing, bird watching and photography opportunities.

For more than 45 years, the federal government has had a funding partnership with the state and local governments in Minnesota through the Land and Water Conservation Fund program. The impact of this program on the outdoor recreation system in Minnesota has been significant. Federal transportation funding has contributed significant funding through the years from federal funding programs that help the state acquire, restore, and manage fish and wildlife habitat.

### **State Government**

Itasca State Park, established in 1891, is one of the earliest state parks in the country. Many other state parks were established during the 1930s with help from the federal government through the Civilian Conservation Corps, Works Progress Administration, and other federal Depression-era programs. There are currently 76 state parks and recreation areas. The first state forest was created in 1900. Today there are 58 state forests totaling nearly 4 million acres, providing many opportunities for camping, hiking, fishing, hunting bird watching, canoeing boating and other natural resource-based outdoor recreation. Other outdoor recreation investment in state-owned land and managed areas include wildlife management areas, state trails, water access sites, water trails and scientific and natural areas.

In 1963 the Minnesota Outdoor Recreation Resources Commission was created to help determine state outdoor recreation needs and guide state investments to meet those needs. A cigarette tax was enacted to help fund outdoor recreation investments through the state Future Resources Fund. The commission later became the Legislative Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources. These

commissions have recommended projects and programs for funding to the legislature for the past four decades, resulting in hundreds of millions of dollars of investment in both state and local outdoor recreation lands and facilities. The outdoor recreation system in Minnesota owes much of its existence to this multi-decade effort. Other major state investments in outdoor recreation acquisition and facilities have come primarily through state bonding and the state Environmental and Natural Resources Trust Fund, which uses a portion of the state lottery proceeds.

Maintaining this historic commitment to outdoor recreation investment by the state is a challenge. The Future Resources Fund, for example, was abolished during a state budget crisis.

### **Twin Cities Metropolitan Council Regional Government**

The Twin Cities seven-county Metropolitan Council coordinates and plans for the major regional outdoor recreation system in the form of regional parks, trails, and park reserves. The Metropolitan Council provides state and regional funding for acquisition and development of the system through grants to ten county and city implementing agencies, which are responsible for operating and maintaining the facilities. The system, begun in 1974, now includes 51 parks and park reserves, seven special recreation areas, 38 regional trails totaling 308 miles, and more than 54,600 acres of land throughout the seven-county area.

### **Greater Minnesota Regional Park and Trail Commission (GMRPTC)**

Greater Minnesota is becoming an organized entity fostering the planning and development of a regional park and trail system in Greater Minnesota. Historically Greater Minnesota has not been formally organized like the metro regional and state park and trail organizations. GMRPTC is established to undertake system planning and provide recommendations to the legislature for grants to counties and cities outside of the seven-county metropolitan area for parks and trails of regional significance. The Commission was legislatively established in 2013 under Minnesota Statute 85.536.

### **Local Government**

Minneapolis and St. Paul have extensive park systems dating back to the 1800s, as do many of the older and larger cities throughout the state. As suburbs arose in the Twin Cities area in the 1950s and beyond, they acquired and developed increasingly extensive park and trail systems. Several counties throughout the state also began to acquire and develop county parks in the last half of the twentieth century. These facilities primarily provide close-to-home outdoor recreation opportunities and often focus more attention on youth-related outdoor recreation, such as playgrounds, athletic fields, community centers, swimming pools and beaches. While most of these facilities have been acquired and developed with locally generated funds, a significant number have been assisted by state and federal grants through the years.

### **Private Sector**

The private resort industry has been particularly important for water-related recreation such as fishing, canoeing, boating and swimming. Larger resorts also have added golf courses, tennis courts, and other facilities as amenities. A few offer downhill and cross-country skiing. The private sector – apart from the resort industry – is a major provider of golfing and downhill skiing opportunities. There are a few privately operated hunting reserves, horse riding stables, etc. These private businesses are an important part of the larger tourism industry, one of the most important economic engines of the state.



Non-profit organizations also support outdoor recreation in the state. The Parks and Trails Council of Minnesota, a non-profit organization dedicated to supporting the state park and state trail systems dates back to 1954. It has helped the state acquire about \$10 million of state park and trail land. Organizations such as the Trust for Public Land, Pheasants Forever, Ducks Unlimited, and the Nature Conservancy have played key roles in supporting funding for state, regional and local outdoor recreation land; protection and restoration of natural areas; wetland protection; water quality and other natural resource and outdoor recreation related purposes.



# Challenges for Outdoor Recreation

## Changing Demographics

### Population growth, 1950 - 2010

Minnesota added nearly 400,000 residents since 2000, reaching a population of 5.3 million in 2010 (Figure 1 — Reference 1). Although a sizable addition, the population growth rate since 2000 (7.8%) is substantially below that of the previous decade of the 1990s (Figure 2). It is close to that experienced between 1970 and 1990, after the post-war baby boom subsided.

The decade of the 1990s was associated with a booming American economy, and national population growth rates took a similar roller coaster ride as those in Minnesota. National growth rates, by comparison, have consistently exceeded Minnesota rates both over the last 10 years (9.7% versus 7.8%) and in prior decades, which is the reason for the on-going concern over the loss of one of the state's eight congressional seats. Minnesota had 10 congressional representatives a hundred years ago.

The drop in population growth—when extrapolated—leads to a smaller future, compared with the persistence of the growth coming out of the 1990s. It translates into lower outlooks for population-driven outcomes, including land for urban expansion, near-home parks and trails, and potential participants in nature based outdoor recreation activities. Updated population projections are expected later this year.

Figure 1

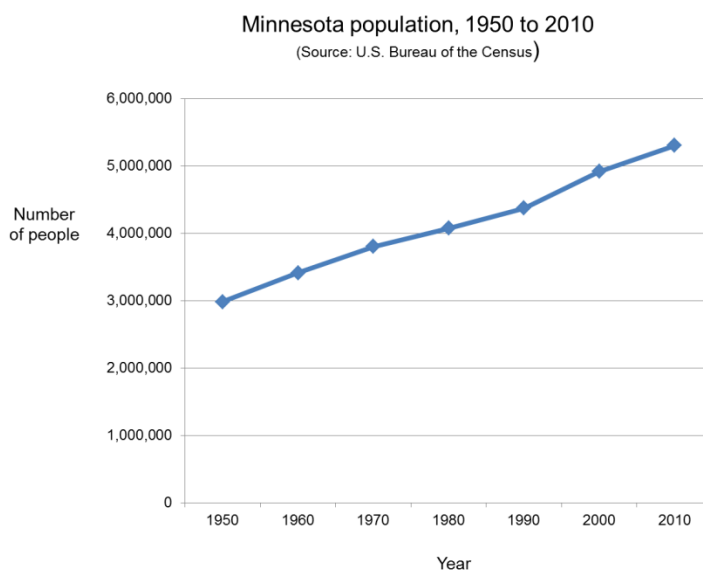
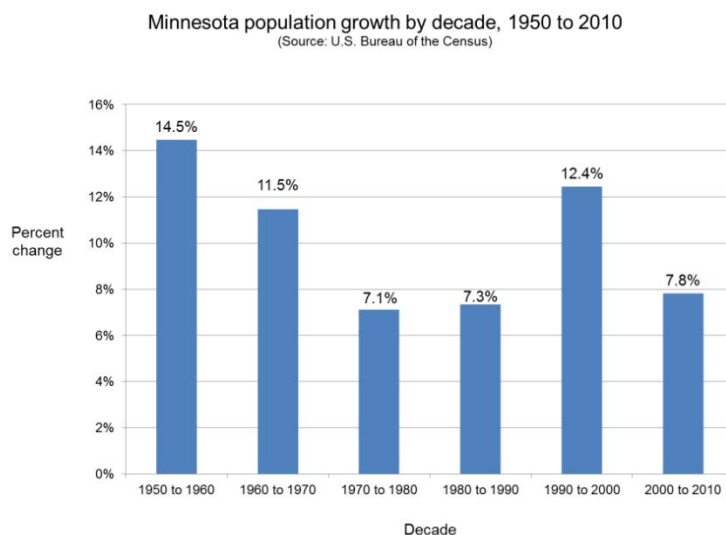


Figure 2



### **Geographic pattern of population change, 2000 to 2010**

Although population growth slowed, the geographic pattern of growth remained largely the same (the correlation coefficient between density growth in the 1990s and 2000s is 0.92, with the exclusion of Ramsey County, which went from high growth to loss between the 1990s and 2000s). The high growth areas continued to focus on the greater Twin Cities Metropolitan Area, and more generally on the area from Rochester to St. Cloud (Figure 3). This new growth will fuel demands for near-home recreation opportunities in these areas. Most of the new growth occurred in the more densely settled parts of the state. Nearly two-thirds of the growth (65%) was concentrated in the two highest population density classes on Figure 4, and 84 percent occurred in the top three density classes, which together cover nine percent of the state's land area. The less densely settled regions of the state received little growth by comparison.

Figure 3

### County population density change, 2000 to 2010

(Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Census 2000 and 2010)

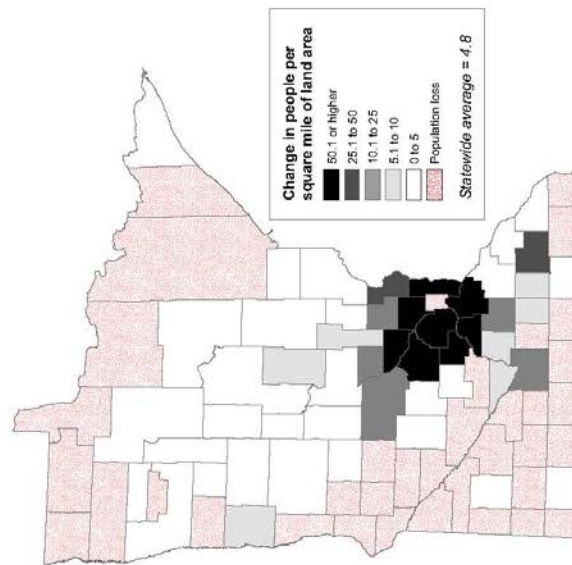
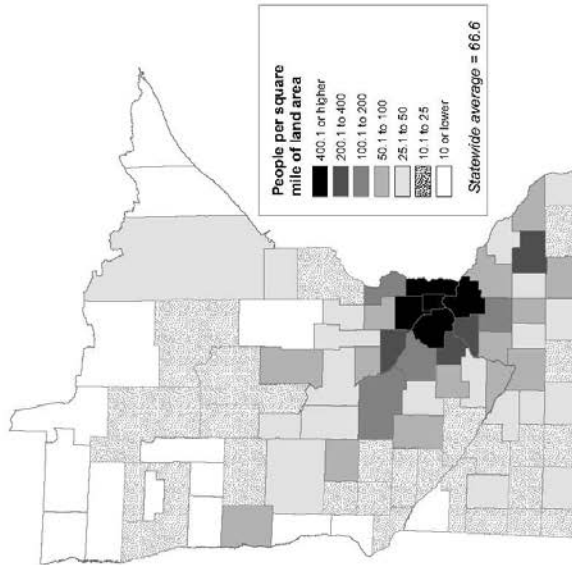


Figure 4

### County population density, 2010

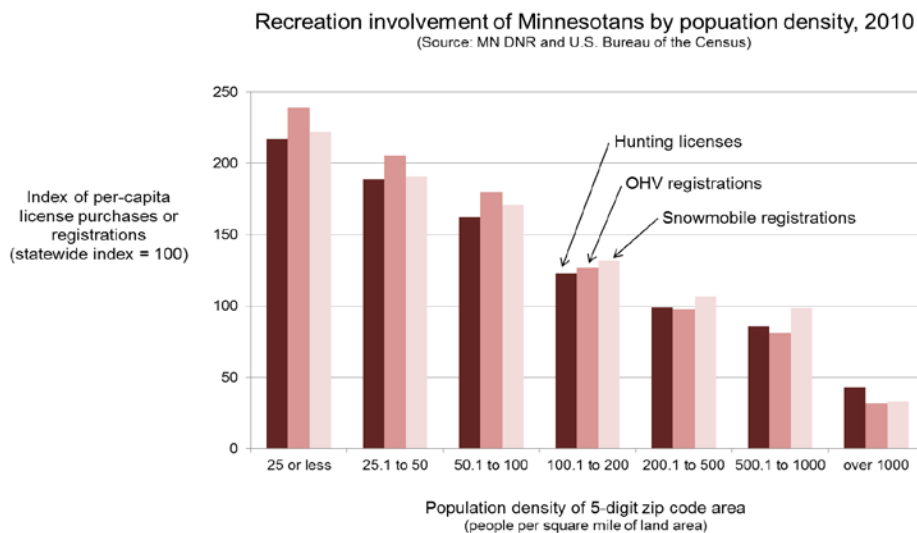
(Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Census 2010)



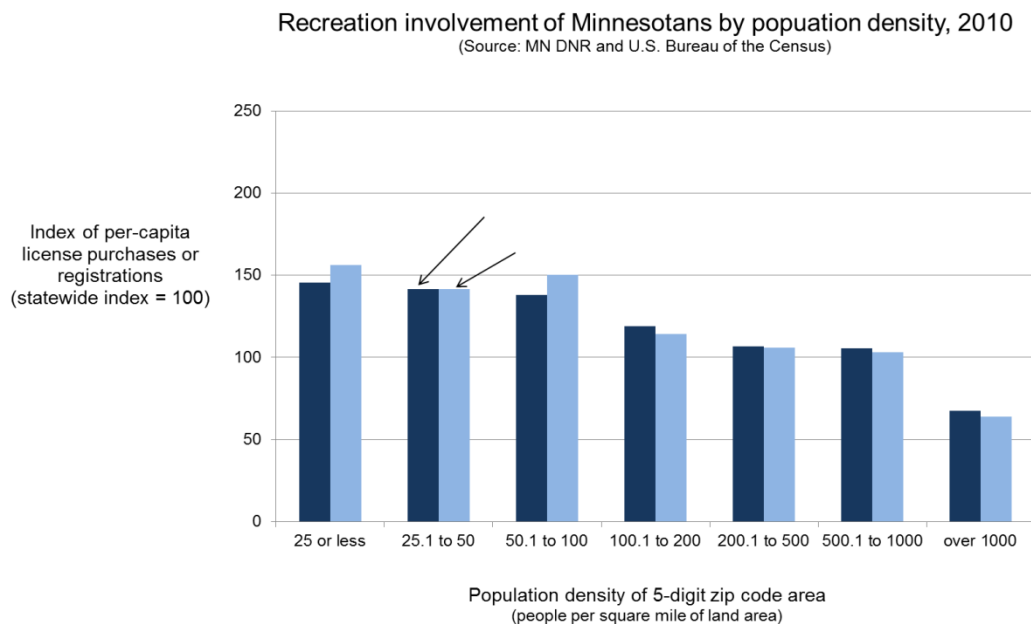


Looking forward, those nature-based recreation activities that draw a higher portion of participants from the less densely settled parts of the state (i.e., rural and small town areas) will have fewer potential new participants than those activities that draw more evenly across the urban-rural spectrum. Examples of the former include hunting, off-highway vehicles (mostly all-terrain vehicles), and snowmobiles (Figure 5 — Reference 2). Fishing and boating are good examples of the latter (Figure 6).

**Figure 5**



**Figure 6**



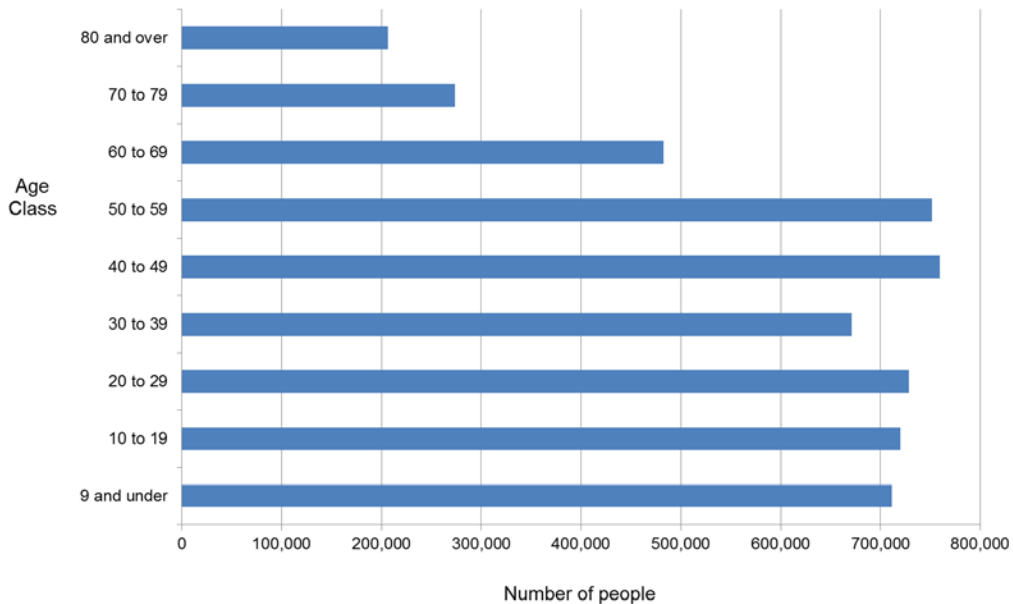
### Age-class pattern of population change, 2000 to 2010

The Minnesota population continues to grow older, led by the aging of the baby boomers, most of whom are now in their 50s and 60s (Figure 7). The median age of the population increased two years from 35.4 to 37.4 between 2000 and 2010. The younger age classes (under 50) exhibited some noticeable increases and decreases by age class over the last decade, but these largely cancelled each other out. Between 2000 and 2010, the 49 and younger age classes decreased by a mere 1 percent overall, while the 50+ age classes grew by 32 percent. All together these changes produced a 2010 population distribution with roughly equal numbers in age classes between 0 and 59 years, and progressively smaller numbers at higher ages (Figure 8).



One the major trends for nature-based recreation over the last 10 to 20 years has been the decreasing involvement of young adults and their children, while the older adults have maintained more stable involvement (Reference 3). This trend is broad based and national in scope. Evidence for this trend comes from Minnesota state parks, national parks, state non-motorized trails, hunting, fishing, and wildlife watching.

Figure 8  
Minnesota population by age class, 2010  
(Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census)

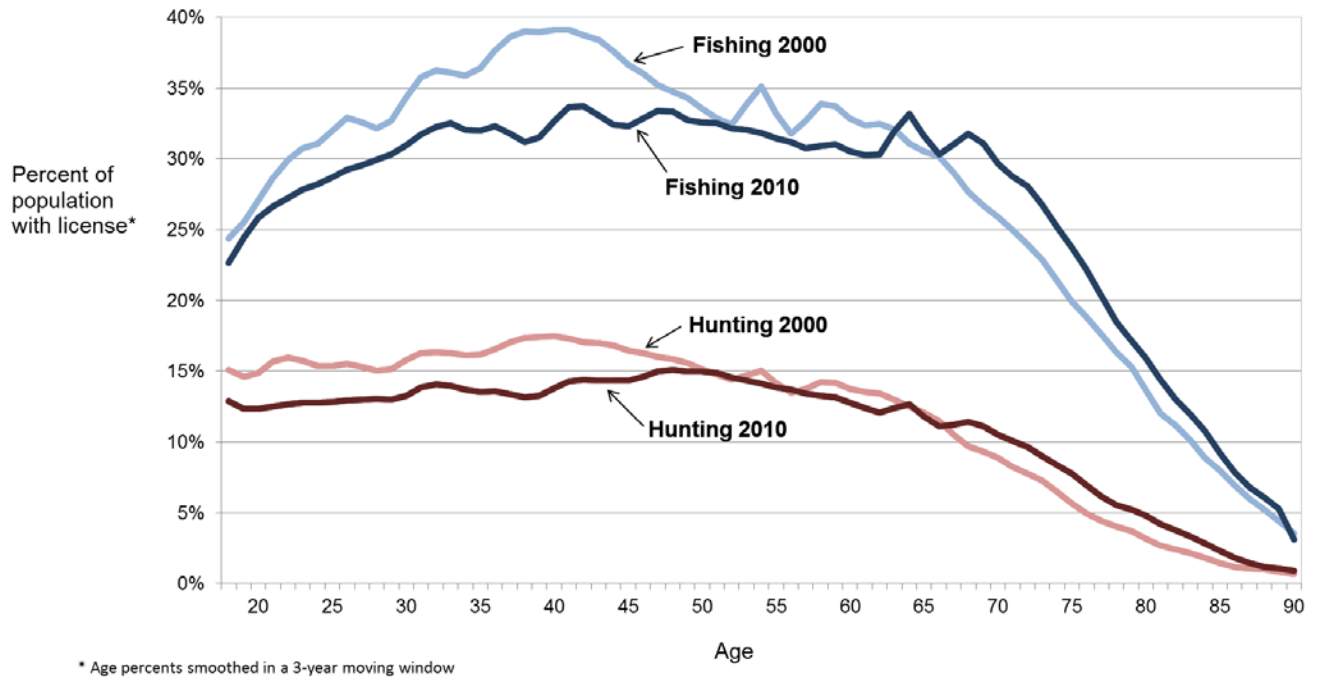


Good examples of this trend are Minnesota hunting and fishing. Up to age 45-50, licensing rates decreased from 2000 to 2010 (Figure 9). Above age 50, licensing rates became more stable and even increased for those over 65. It is noteworthy that the age classes up to 45-50—which have decreasing licensing rates—have experienced little overall population change since 2000, while the older age classes—which have more stable licensing rates—have grown rapidly. This covariation of population change and licensing-rate change has kept license numbers up. For sure, licensing rates decrease after age 65, but the change between 2000 and 2010 is a two to three year delay in commencement of the decrease. The delay is probably due to the rise in the health and vigor of older adults, coupled with their on-going desire to participate. Continued recreation involvement into later years by older adults may warrant further attention by facility and program providers. This age cohort is expected to grow substantially in the coming years.

**Figure 9**

**Percent of Minnesota population with resident licenses in 2000 and 2010**

(Source: MN DNR and U.S. Bureau of the Census)



**Racial and ethnic pattern of population change, 2000 to 2010**

Minnesota and the nation as a whole have grown more racially and ethnically diverse for many years, and the trend to greater diversity is expected to continue. In 2010, Minnesota was 83 percent white/non-Hispanic, and 17 percent nonwhite and/or Hispanic (percent figures derived from population data in Table 1). For the nation, the figures are 64 and 36 percent, respectively.





Table 1  
Changing racial and ethnical composition in Minnesota and U.S. 2000 to 2010  
(Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census)

Race and ethnicity	Population 2000	Population 2010	Percent Change	Numerical change	Percent of numerical change
<b>Minnesota</b>					
White, Non-Hispanic	4,337,143	4,405,142	1.6%	67,999	17.7%
Non-white and/or Hispanic	582,336	898,783	54.3%	316,447	82.3%,
<b>TOTAL</b>	4,919,479	5,303,925	7.8%	384,446	100%
<b>U.S.</b>					
White, Non-Hispanic	194,552,774	196,817,552	1.2%	2,264,778	8.3%
Non-white and/or Hispanic	86,869,132	111,927,986	28.8%	25,058,854	91.7%
<b>TOTAL</b>	281,421,906	308,745,538	9.7%	27,323,632	100%

The white/non-Hispanic population grew very little in Minnesota and the nation between 2000 and 2010 (1.6% growth in Minnesota; 1.2% growth in nation), while the non-white and/or Hispanic population grew at far higher rates (54.3% growth in Minnesota; 28.8% growth in nation) (see Table 1). As a result, the numerical additions to population over the decade are mostly in the non-white and/or Hispanic population in Minnesota (82.3% of population increase) and the nation (91.7% of population increase).

Nature-based outdoor recreation involvement is much greater for the white/non- Hispanic population in Minnesota and the nation (Table 2 — Reference 4). The involvement of non-whites and/or Hispanics is a fraction of whites/non-Hispanics, and these fractions vary from 0.14 to 0.35 in Table 2 (fractions in far right column). Whether the differences in the size of this fraction by activity and system are real is uncertain, given the range of data sources. What seems certain is the general pattern: consistently low involvement of the non-white and/or Hispanic populations, averaging around one-quarter of white/non-Hispanic involvement.

The relative involvement of the different populations in nature-based recreation, coupled with their respective population growth rates, create significant obstacles to expanding nature-based recreation both in Minnesota and around the nation. And they are likely important contributing factors to involvement declines in these types of recreation.

For example, Minnesota fishing and hunting participation declined some 8 and 11 percent, respectively, between 2000 and 2010 (“participation” is the percent of the population age 16+ licensed for the activity). Fishing participation fell from 31.2 to 28.9 percent, while hunting fell from 14.2 to 12.6 percent (Reference 5). It is roughly estimated that about one-third of these declines can be attributed to the changing racial and ethnic composition of the population.

All of the preceding information in this section divides the population into two categories. Some of the information can be further subdivided by race and ethnicity, but other information cannot, so the

section is standardized into the two categories. Sample sizes are insufficient in some of the studies to warrant further population breakdowns.

One final note. The wildlife-watching information in Table 2 is—as noted—for “away from home” participants, who are on a wildlife-watching trip over 1 mile from home. Additional information is available for “around the home” participants, which includes an indeterminate number of “indoor” participants viewing outdoor wildlife. This report focuses on the “outdoor” recreation of participants, which corresponds better with the “away from home” category.

Table 2  
Comparison of outdoor recreation involvement of racial and ethnic populations in MN and Us

Activity or system	Place	Year	Measure of involvement	Involvement of population			Ratio of involvement
				Total Population	White, non-Hispanic population	Non-white and/or Hispanic population	Non-white and/or Hispanic to white, non-Hispanic
Hunting	US	2006	Annual participation (age 16+)	5%	7%	1%	0.17
	MN	2006	Annual participation (age 16+)	13%	15%	4%	0.25
Fishing	US	2006	Annual participation (age 16+)	13%	16%	5%	0.33
	MN	2006	Annual participation (age 16+)	28%	31%	11%	0.36
Away from home wildlife watching	US	2006	Annual participation (age 16+)	10%	13%	4%	0.29
	MN	2006	Annual participation (age 16+)	14%	16%	5%	0.33
MN State Parks	MN	2007	Park use per capita	100	113	20	0.18
MN Paved Bicycle Trails	MN	2007-09	Trail use per capita	100	114	16	0.14
Metro MN regional park and trail use	7-county Metro area in MN	2008	Park & trail use per capita	100	119	42	0.35

## Outdoor Recreation Participation

Minnesota is not escaping a broad trend—evident since the 1990s—of declining per-capita participation in nature-based outdoor recreation in the United States. This is a national trend that impacts national parks, national trails, state parks, state trails and other outdoor recreational facilities. It includes activities such as hunting, fishing, boating, wildlife watching, and wilderness use (Kelly, 2008). Although the decline in these activities in Minnesota is not as large as the national decline, it is still present. The primary driving factor behind this trend is a decline in involvement among young adults (ages 20–45) and their children. Today’s young adults and youth are not as engaged in traditional nature-based activities as older generations.

A number of secondary factors also contribute to the decline in participation rates for traditional nature-based outdoor recreation activities. As the population ages, participation in recreation activities generally declines. Similarly, as our state has become increasingly urban as well as increasingly racially/ethnically diverse, participation in traditional outdoor recreation activities has declined. Whether or not this decline is partially offset by a shift to other non-traditional outdoor activities is unclear, but it is plausible that the state’s demographic changes are also producing new users who enjoy outdoor recreation in different ways than traditional users.

Declines in participation reduce the number of Minnesotans who receive the personal and community benefits of outdoor recreation. These include physical activity, social and family bonding, sense of place, community pride and overall quality of life benefits that being active outdoors produces. Declines in participation also reduce positive environmental impacts gained from recreating outdoors. Further, engaging with nature helps to produce a citizenry with an appreciation of the natural world that raises social and political support for resource conservation activities, support that may decrease as participation decreases.

## Declining Funding Support for Public Outdoor Recreation

In general, providers of outdoor recreation in the state have faced significant budget reductions over the last five years. Competition for other needed public services such as education, human services and public safety have affected resources going to the provision of outdoor recreation. The recent national economic crisis has strained both personal and agency budgets.

## Rise of Obesity

Decreasing participation in outdoor recreation may contribute to poor health and associated high medical costs. In Minnesota 62.8% of adults are either overweight or obese (CDC, 2008a) and less than half meet recommended levels of physical activity (CDC, 2008b). Prevalence of obesity among children and adolescents in the United States quadrupled among 6 to 11 year olds and more than tripled among 12 to 19 year olds between 1971-1974 and 1999-2000 (CDC, 2008a). In 2000, medical costs in Minnesota associated with obesity were \$1.3 billion (Finkelstein, Fiebelkorn & Wang, 2004) and medical costs associated with physical inactivity were \$495 million (Minnesota



# The Land and Water Conservation Fund

## Land and Water Conservation Fund Program

The Land and Water Conservation Fund, created by Congress in 1964, has an important place in the history of the United States' outdoor recreation and conservation funding efforts. The program has assisted with the acquisition of over 7 million acres of parkland as well as more than 40,000 state and local recreation and natural area projects nationwide since it began. Revenue for the Land and Water Conservation Fund comes primarily from offshore oil and gas lease receipts received by the federal government. Since offshore drilling for oil and gas depletes a valuable natural resource, Congress determined that it was appropriate to invest the proceeds from offshore leases to protect America's natural resources and provide land and facilities for outdoor recreation experiences.

The Land and Water Conservation Fund program has had a profound—although largely unappreciated—impact on the outdoor recreation infrastructure of Minnesota, with investments of more than \$73 million in the state's outdoor recreation system, most of it during the late 1960s to mid-1980s. State and local funds more than matched this amount. Adjusted for inflation, the total investment is in the hundreds of millions of dollars, funding projects in 68 state parks, recreation areas and waysides, 35 state forest campgrounds and recreation sites, 20 state scientific and natural areas, 16 public access sites, 12 wildlife management areas, seven state wild and scenic rivers, five state trails, four Minnesota Historical Society recreation sites, three University of Minnesota recreation sites and hundreds of local government park projects throughout the state.

The Land and Water Conservation Fund in Minnesota supports a state program and a local program, each getting 50 percent of the federal appropriation. The state program supports the acquisition and development of the State Outdoor Recreation System as defined in Minnesota Statutes, Chapter 86A. The local program, funded through the Outdoor Recreation Grant Program, provides matching grants to local units of government and recognized Indian tribal governments for acquisition and development of outdoor recreation and natural areas.





## Minnesota's unmet financial needs

Minnesota's unmet financial needs for the acquisition, development and redevelopment of outdoor recreation facilities as identified in the 2012 Land and Water Conservation Annual Report are grouped by the three different providers in our state:

1. Local Governments (City, county, township and regional parks outside of the Seven County Metro Area parks)
2. State Agencies (state parks, trails, water access, natural areas).
3. Twin Cities Metropolitan Council (regional parks in the Seven County Twin Cities Metro Area)

Local Governments <sup>1</sup>	24,000,000
State Agencies <sup>2</sup>	87,500,000
Twin Cities Regional Parks <sup>3</sup>	17,000,000
Total	128,500,000

<sup>1</sup> Applications submitted to the Natural & Scenic, Outdoor Recreation, Regional Park and Parks & Trails Legacy grant programs, 2012.

<sup>2</sup> DNR's 2010 capital budget request to the state legislature

<sup>3</sup> Twin Cities Metropolitan Council, [2030 Regional Parks Policy Plan](#)

Demand for the limited available funding is significant. Additional funding is needed so that outdoor recreation facilities can fulfill their vital role in connecting people to the outdoors and creating the next generation of natural resource stewards. The close-to-home experiences are essential if the vision is to be achieved.

### **Feedback during the planning process for the *Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Strategic Plan*.**

Another indicator of the need for local grant funding is the feedback that was heard during the development of the *Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Strategic Plan*. The following excerpt from the plan underscores the need for funding local outdoor recreation needs.

As defined during the regional workshops associated with plan review, **meeting local-level park and trail planning and funding needs remains an area of high concern throughout Greater MN.** Irrespective of region, the level of under-investment in both regional and local-level parks and trails has been and remains profound. With traditional funding programs becoming less robust or even discontinued, local communities are simply at a loss as to how to address current, much less future needs.

To be sure, GMRPTC's primary focus under this plan centers on regional parks and trails. Nonetheless, planning and development of regional facilities cannot fully succeed if undertaken in a vacuum. As was clearly stated during regional workshops held during 2012, regional and local-level park and trail system planning is intrinsically linked and therefore requires close coordination between planning entities.

# Strategic Directions

## Connect People to the Outdoors

### Welcoming Environment

Everyone should feel welcome, safe and comfortable on outdoor recreation lands and at outdoor recreation facilities, even if they have not had much experience in the outdoors.

#### Strategies

**1. *Mentor, recruit, and hire employees and volunteers who reflect the population of the users they serve.***

- Promote staff diversity. Hire staff knowledgeable and experienced with various racial and ethnic cultures in Minnesota. Hire staff members who are multi-lingual, focusing on second languages spoken by racial and ethnic minorities living in Minnesota.
- Expand volunteer, internship, and employment opportunities for youth.
- Expand internship, on-the-job training, and entry-level job opportunities that can transition into careers for young adults.
- Create and support mentor and volunteer programs that engage older adults and community leaders to serve as mentors and volunteers.
- Create and support ambassadorship programs for minority groups, in which providers connect with communities by working within their culture.
- Include youth and young adults in planning processes for facility and program development.
- Expand service-learning opportunities to help young people develop knowledge and skills through hands-on work.



**2. *Provide ongoing diversity training to employees.***

- Assess existing organizational values and attitudes as they relate to diversity.
- Provide training to employees on customs and expectations of visitors.

**3. *Help visitors, through education efforts, understand expectations and rules.***

- Create programs, interpretive media, and educational materials that celebrate past and present cultures in Minnesota and their unique heritage and values related to outdoor recreation.
- Recognize new and emerging cultures to Minnesota (e.g., Somali and Hispanic), as well as more established cultures in Minnesota (e.g., Native American and Scandinavian).
- Develop publications, signs, and other materials in multiple languages.
- Host cultural/ethnic celebration events, especially targeting first-time visitors.

## Access

Minnesotans should have outdoor recreation lands and facilities they can get to easily, with amenities they can use and afford.

### Strategies

**1. Design and redevelop outdoor recreation facilities so that they can accommodate varying forms of transportation to sites (e.g., driving, walking, biking, ATV riding).**

- When feasible, outdoor recreation opportunities should be within reasonable distance to homes or public transportation so that people can access them without cars.

**2. Provide transportation to programs and special events tailored as first experience (trial) opportunities.**

- Prioritize increased transportation options in areas with low transit opportunities.
- Partner with organizations that will transport people to outdoor recreation opportunities (e.g., community centers, schools, senior centers).

**3. Design, develop, rehabilitate, and manage outdoor recreation facilities to encourage use by people with all abilities.**

- Provide information that allows users and potential users to decide if a facility meets their interests and abilities.
- Meet the Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines.
- Conduct assessments to help users determine which outdoor recreation opportunities meet their interests and abilities and provide facility managers with information about investments that would improve accessibility.

**4. Continue to keep costs affordable.**

- Keep user fees affordable.
- Strategically offer programming and equipment rentals at little to no charge where it will encourage first experience trials.
- Address the perception of affordability in marketing communications.



## **Marketing**

Connection strategies create links with Minnesota residents and tourists that inform, persuade and remind the target audience about outdoor recreation opportunities. These strategies engage and motivate the target audiences to become involved in outdoor recreation.

### **Strategies**

#### ***1. Promote the experiences, programs, and activities that visitors may have at outdoor recreation lands and facilities, so that potential and current users are aware of and motivated to use them.***

- Market Minnesota's various outdoor recreation opportunities as a collective network.
- Develop marketing strategies that cross-promote outdoor recreation opportunities throughout the state.
- Develop measures to evaluate available capacity and the success of marketing campaigns.
- Work to incorporate the promotion of outdoor recreation opportunities into existing destination promotion (e.g. Chamber of Commerce, convention & visitor bureaus).

#### ***2. Maintain ongoing marketing research to better understand our target markets' preferred ways of receiving information, motivations, attitudes, and beliefs.***

- Conduct use and satisfaction research.
- Conduct a statewide outdoor recreation participation survey about once every five years.

#### ***3. Utilize technology to deliver timely and relevant messages regarding Minnesota outdoor recreation opportunities.***

- Strive to adopt "latest and greatest" information technology to attract early adopters and to ensure preparedness for mainstream technology expectations.
- Develop online learning technologies that can be utilized by schools.
- Research the technology demands and expectations of our target markets and provide service accordingly.
- Continue to develop virtual tours that can be accessed on websites, through mobile applications, and other emerging technologies.

#### ***4. Base marketing plans on the "marketing mix" to ensure marketing efforts are comprehensive, addressing all elements of the marketing mix: product, price, promotion, and place.***

#### ***5. Update and expand loyalty marketing programs to retain current users and to encourage more frequent use.***



## Quality

Visitors who have a good experience will return—and bring others with them. Outdoor recreation opportunities must provide quality experiences, and that means making wise use of resources.

### Strategies

***1. Provide high-quality experiences to visitors through thoughtful design, programming, and interpretation. Visitors will feel well cared for and as if the outdoor recreation opportunity was designed just for them.***

- Establish baseline standards and best practices for facility design that consider the needs and wishes of visitors and potential visitors within the target markets.
- Design and provide superior programming, led by exceptional staff, that engages audiences and fosters excitement and enthusiasm for natural resources and nature-based recreation.
- Design and update interpretive media to enhance the visitor experience.



***2. Timely repair and maintenance of high-demand facilities.***

- Establish maintenance schedules and standards to ensure facilities are well maintained and expectations are met across systems.
- Prioritize the cleanliness and availability of restrooms. Provide access to drinking fountains.

***3. Invest in professional development practices that lead to exceptional staff.***

- Develop standards and best practices for customer service. Require customer service training for staff interacting with visitors.
- Encourage and make available training for interpretive and experiential programming, environmental education, and relevant topics that can enhance staff ability to improve user experiences.
- Establish a culture of exceeding visitor expectations and going above and beyond to ensure an outstanding experience. Establish a means to recognize and reward exceptional staff when they do so.

***4. Ensure that a quality product, as defined by our target markets, is delivered.***

- Conduct research to better understand how our target markets define quality.
- Implement standards and best practices based on how our target markets define quality.

## **Programming and special events**

Programs and special events help those who are new to outdoor recreation understand and enjoy their experience, whatever their background. At the same time, they should also serve those who are familiar with outdoor recreation. Programs and special events engage program participants to foster lifelong participation.

### Strategies

#### ***1. Expand introductory experience programs to attract new users and provide intermediate and advanced experience programs to retain existing users.***

- Expand introductory experience, skill-building programs, especially family oriented courses (e.g., Introductory “I Can Camp!” overnight workshops).
- Expand intermediate experience, skill-building programs that are designed to increase visitorship among current users and encourage a repeat visit by introductory course participants (e.g., intermediate “I Can Camp!” overnight workshops).
- Expand programs featuring new and emerging outdoor recreation (e.g., geocaching, kayaking, zip lines).
- Create an “Outreach to New Users” pilot project within the seven-county metropolitan area with an array of partners including the Minnesota DNR, metro regional outdoor recreation providers, the National Park Service, and other organizations.
- Expand opportunities to connect people with similar outdoor recreation interests through programs and special events.



#### ***2. Recruit and welcome organizations and businesses that wish to conduct programs at Minnesota outdoor recreation lands and facilities.***

- Partner with outside organizations to offer a greater variety of programming (e.g., a canoe club may offer an introductory canoe class or a studio may offer a landscape painting course).
- Build partnerships with organizations that have established relationships with potential visitors to provide targeted programs and services (e.g., Boys and Girls Clubs of Minnesota, Children and Nature Network, communities of faith).

#### ***3. Be responsive hosts who welcome private events. Make a positive and lasting impression on visitors to these events.***

- Promote Minnesota outdoor recreation lands and facilities as venues for wedding ceremonies and receptions, work events, race events, or other gatherings.
- Ensure a personal interaction with these potential repeat visitors. This requires a commitment by staff and volunteers to ensure a memorable first experience.

**4. Ensure that programming and special events cater to our visitors' interests and needs.**

- Conduct target studies that help us better understand the types of programs and experiences wanted by current and potential users.
- Evaluate current programming to ensure that it is reaching and appeals to current and potential users.

**5. Use programs and special events as a method of attracting users during non-peak times.**

- Utilize programs as a means to attract users, particularly school-age children and retirees, during weekdays and the off-season.

**Partnerships**

Through partnerships, we can reach more people, provide more services, and maintain higher quality facilities than we could do on our own.

**Strategies**

**1. Build relationships with organizations and community leaders that help us better reach our target markets.**

- Develop long-lasting, trusting relationships with new immigrant and racial and ethnic minority group organizations and community leaders. Devote ongoing staff resources to these interactions.
- Invest in relationship-building with schools, recreation centers, and youth groups in order to reach youth and young adults. Promote opportunities for field trips, site visits, and summer camps.
- Reach out to faith-based organizations as a means to reach our target markets.
- Reach out to senior centers and group tour operators in order to maintain visitorship by older adults.
- Support interconnections for wildlife watching opportunities (e.g. Minnesota's birding trails).

**2. Develop partnerships with "friends of" groups that will help maintain, promote, and support Minnesota outdoor recreation opportunities.**

- "Friends of" groups can help increase the quality of a facility—and so increase visitorship—by maintaining or helping to maintain the buildings and grounds.
- "Friends of" groups' commitment to a specific site can be one of the best forms of promotion as they generate word-of-mouth advertising.
- "Friends of" groups may be able to hold fundraisers or otherwise support particular activities or events that will increase participation (e.g., scholarships for programs or equipment).

**3. Develop partnerships with private industry; partner with companies that share goals and/or target markets and enhance the image of the provider. Partner with the lodging industry.**

**Infrastructure and amenities**

Minnesota outdoor recreation facilities are designed, developed and redeveloped to support numerous experiences and activities and can readily adapt to new and emerging nature-based recreation activities.

See detailed strategies in the Acquire Land, Create Opportunities Strategic Direction, development/redevelopment section.



## Acquire Land, Create Opportunities

### Strategic acquisition

Priority for acquisition should be in parts of the state that have the fewest opportunities per person now and projected into the future, particularly densely settled and growing areas; regional centers; private in-holdings in existing parks; trail connections; and lands and facilities that serve tourists and local residents.

### Strategies

***1. Place a priority on near-home acquisition of natural resource-based lands in densely settled and rapidly growing areas.***

- The corridor reaching from Rochester to St. Cloud, including the greater Twin Cities metropolitan area, contains about 70 percent of the state's population and is expected to account for 80 percent of the state's projected population growth over the next 25 years.

***2. Place a priority on natural resource-based lands near regional centers that lack near-home opportunities.***

- A regional center is defined as a city with a population of 8,000 or more; 95 percent of Minnesota residents live within 30 miles of a regional center.
- Currently 15 regional centers lack a park and/or trail within 10 miles.



***3. Accelerate the acquisition of private in-holdings and add lands to existing parks to enhance resource protection and recreational opportunities.***

- As an example, 9 percent of planned acreage of State Parks is in private ownership.

***4. Focus acquisition of new state parks on high-quality natural resource areas, particularly where ecological subsections are not represented by the state park system or substitute.***

***5. Focus on acquiring priority trail segments according to established criteria:***

- Connects to communities (schools, work opportunities, central business districts).
- Connects with existing state trails and/or regional trails.
- Connects with high-quality natural resources or recreation areas.
- Connects to multiple destinations.
- Fills a critical gap in an area with a recreation opportunity shortage.
- Secures a critical piece of a trail system.
- Secures a unique opportunity or experience.
- Has a financial commitment from the agency or organization proposing the investment.
- Fills a critical gap for commuting.



**6. Place a priority on new trail opportunities that are closer to the concentration of users—including snowmobilers, off-highway vehicle riders, horseback riders, and canoeists/kayakers. The highest concentration of which is in and around the Twin Cities metropolitan area.**

**7. Acquire permanent trail easements within critical grant-in-aid trail corridors so they are not lost to development or other land use changes.**

**8. Acquire exceptional one-time opportunities of unique, high-quality natural resources that meet critical needs outside of regional centers.**

**9. Acquire the land needed for support facilities for trail systems (e.g., accesses, portages, rest areas, trail heads). Facilities that serve multiple interests are priorities.**

**10. Place a priority on protecting important water resources including lakes, rivers, wetlands, shorelands, and critical watersheds.** Consistent with Section 303 of the Emergency Wetlands Resources Act of 1986, Minnesota has instituted the [Minnesota Wetlands Conservation Plan](#), Version 1.02, 1997, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, St. Paul, Minnesota.





## Development and redevelopment

As with acquisition, development and redevelopment should focus on densely populated areas, underrepresented areas, and areas that serve tourists as well as local residents.

### Strategies

***1. Place a priority on development in the densely settled and rapidly growing parts of the state that have the least opportunities per person at present and projected into the future.***

***2. Place a priority on regional centers that lack a near-home outdoor recreation opportunity.***

***3. Design, develop, and redevelop facilities that meet the differing outdoor recreation needs for people of all abilities.***

- Recognize the importance of a natural setting to visitors for a high-quality experience.
- Use a context-sensitive approach to design that takes into consideration flexibility along with universal design, community involvement, visual quality, and stewardship.
- Redevelop camping facilities so that there are more campsites for larger groups, more separation and privacy between sites, and higher quality natural surroundings to meet expectations of current and future users. Separate tent camping and RV camping.
- Develop and renovate swimming beaches, where suitable, that are clean, well kept, family-friendly, and accessible to people of all abilities.
- Design paved trails with high quality corridors and connections and maintain high-quality surfaces.

***4. Create an environment that is open and flexible to accommodate new and emerging nature-based recreation uses.***

- Design facilities that support numerous activities and proactively adapt to new and emerging nature-based recreation activities (e.g. geocaching, skijoring, pet-friendly parks and trails, archery, and shooting sports)
- Develop and maintain large open play areas that can be used for impromptu activities (e.g. picnicking, catch, kite flying).

***5. Develop infrastructure and amenities that meet the lifestyles of our target markets.***

- Develop visitor center areas with a comfortable “coffee house” feel (e.g. couches, fireplace) where visitors can relax and enjoy nature. Consider large



picture windows for nature observation and wildlife watching.

- Develop group-based opportunities such as group campsites, group picnic areas, and gathering spaces.
- Offer amenities that meet the lifestyles of our target markets (e.g. wireless internet, playgrounds, family bathrooms).

***6. Establish sustainable trail systems to provide high-quality opportunities for specialized trail interests, e.g., Cuyuna Country State Recreation Area Mountain Bike system, Zumbro Bottoms State Forest horse trail system, Iron Range Off-highway Vehicle State Recreation Area, Clifton E. French Regional Park cross-country ski trails.***

***7. Design and construct sustainable and resilient infrastructure. Use energy-efficient, easy-to-maintain and recycled/recyclable materials. Conserve the use of water at facilities. Design facilities to contain water on-site.***



## **Take Care of What We Have**

Minnesota has invested, and continues to invest, in the development of outdoor recreation lands and facilities. Regular reinvestment is needed to ensure safe, high-quality experiences for current and future users. Today, a lack of funding, aging infrastructure, and intensive use have led to a backlog of preservation, rehabilitation and renewal work. For example: More than 100 of the 296 bridges in the state trail system are more than 100 years old and will need to be rehabilitated or replaced.

## **Protect the public's investment in built infrastructure and natural resources**

### Strategies

#### ***1. Accelerate investment in capital asset management projects that reinvest in existing infrastructure to ensure high-quality and safe experiences.***

- Restore worn out, degraded facilities (e.g., roof replacement, structural replacement, trail resurfacing).
- Bring facilities up to modern codes and standards. When improvements to facilities are made, ensure that they meet accessibility standards (e.g., entrances, walking surfaces, building lighting, and restrooms).
- Adapt use to today's needs and lifestyles, such as providing for the increasing need for access to electricity.

#### ***2. Share and refine capital asset management schedules to ensure protection and full utilization of facilities for the entirety of their useful life.***

- Share good examples of maintenance/capital asset management schedules with Minnesota's outdoor recreation providers.
- Set aside specific funding to cover capital asset management costs.
- A schedule of capital asset preservation, rehabilitation, and renewal needs should be projected into the future with specific funding to support them.

#### ***3. When proposing new acquisitions and facilities to decision makers, communicate operational, maintenance, and capital management costs based on lifecycles of assets.***

- Help decision makers understand that if the goal is providing high-quality opportunities, protecting natural resources, and ensuring the best value for the public's investment, then these costs are inseparable.

## **Maintain the quality of natural resources**

Natural resources are the foundation for outdoor recreation. Natural settings are very important to users. High-quality natural areas and water resources must be preserved and, in areas where they already have been degraded, they should be restored.

### Strategies

#### ***1. Preserve existing high-quality natural areas and water resources. It is far more cost-effective to preserve existing communities than it is to restore or reconstruct them.***

- Preserving intact natural communities requires active monitoring and management to insure that they are not degraded over time by impacts such as: fragmentation, introduction of invasive species, changes in hydrology, or lack of natural disturbance.
- Coordinating planning efforts with adjacent landowners and prescribed burning are two examples of actions that can be used to preserve existing native plant communities.
- Prevent the introduction and spread of invasive species. Design and manage to help visitors prevent the unintended spread of invasive species.



#### ***2. Restore natural communities that have been degraded.***

- Natural communities are most often degraded through the introduction and spread of invasive species. Invasive species are currently considered the second most significant threat to biodiversity in the United States, affecting about half of all rare species.
- Another significant factor is lack of natural disturbance in fire-dependent communities such as prairies and savannas. Control of invasive plant species, re-introduction of fire, and inter-planting to restore diversity are regularly used strategies to improve the quality of degraded natural areas.



#### ***3. Reconstruct natural communities that have been lost due to impacts of past agricultural or development activities.***

- Today, less than 1 percent of Minnesota's native prairie remains and only 2 percent of the Big Woods natural community still exists. Reconstructing these natural communities on public lands where they can be appropriately protected and managed provides habitat for rare species that depend on these communities.

## Coordinate Among Partners

### **Enhanced, integrated and accessible information for outdoor recreation users.**

People interested in visiting outdoor recreation lands and facilities should be able to go to one coordinated website for information to plan their trips and activities. Marketing efforts, everything from printed materials to signage to social media, will be more effective if done jointly.

#### Strategies

- 1. Develop and maintain a comprehensive, integrated, standardized, and accessible database.***
- 2. Develop and maintain a comprehensive and integrated website that includes essential information. Provide users the ability to do trip planning, create customized maps, use print-on-demand services, and interface with their smartphones.***
- 3. Incentivize joint marketing and promotion efforts, including common signage, printed materials, and use of social media.***

### **Enhanced coordination at the regional level and site levels.**

Encourage effective coordination where it makes sense to cross jurisdictional boundaries.

#### Strategies

- 1. Provide matching grant funding for multi-jurisdictional regional planning to achieve a seamless system.***
  - Help groups see the rewards for effective coordination, while acknowledging that not all plans and projects have to cross jurisdiction boundaries.
- 2. Develop Best Practices for enhancing coordination, e.g., technical information about how to set up joint powers agreements that support coordination efforts.***
  - Share examples of successful coordination.
- 4. Incentivize coordination and cooperation among providers.***
- 5. Provide technical assistance for developing grant proposals.***
- 6. Provide funding for research and monitoring to measure progress according to benchmarks.***

### **Enhanced coordination among the four Legacy Funds**

Share goals and coordinate timelines for application and allocation of all Legacy Funds to make sure they are used effectively.

#### Strategies

- 1. Share the goals and strategies of the four Legacy Funds with outdoor recreation providers and others, so they can find overlapping opportunities.***
- 2. Coordinate the timelines for application and allocation with the other Legacy Funds. Work toward a common application process.***
- 3. Encourage individual Legacy Funds to work together at the landscape and project levels.***

### **Enhanced coordination with other agencies, organizations and nonprofits**

A number of government agencies, as well as private and nonprofit organizations, have a stake in outdoor recreation. Everything from the Minnesota Department of Transportation to health providers to parks and trails “friends” groups to local communities.

#### Strategies

- 1. Continue partnering with transportation interests (e.g., Minnesota Department of Transportation, including the Bicycle Modal Plan), regional and local transportation authorities, to support access to outdoor recreation as well as expand opportunities to develop new trails, enhance trail use, and increase access to transit.***
- 2. Continue partnering with health agencies, health maintenance organizations, and providers (e.g., Minnesota Department of Health, community health boards, interested health providers).***
  - Support the promotion of healthy lifestyles through developing joint programs that incentivize recreating outdoors.
  - Support efforts like the Active Living Advisory Committee, a coalition of state level and private interests that support and promote healthy lifestyles.
- 3. Build stronger relationships with schools and increase the level of service provided to schools. Outdoor recreation providers are an important resource for schools for teaching lifelong recreation skills, and environmental stewardship.***
- 4. Continue partnering with tourism, chambers of commerce, and other local tourism providers (e.g., Explore Minnesota Tourism). They play a key role in providing information about outdoor recreation opportunities and can enhance the capacity of recreation providers to promote opportunities.***
- 5. Continue partnering with grant-in-aid groups and local communities that are actively promoting outdoor recreation opportunities.***



***6. Continue partnering with the natural resource conservation community including Trust for Public Land, Nature Conservancy, Parks & Trails Council of Minnesota, sporting groups, Ducks Unlimited, Pheasants Forever, Deer Hunters Association, and others.***



## Open Project Selection Process

The Open Project Selection process is a systematic approach for administering the Land and Water Conservation Fund financial assistance programs. It ensures equal opportunity for all eligible projects by establishing public notification of the availability of funding, application assistance, and an objective review system based on the priorities established in the SCORP.

The criteria and standards for prioritizing and selecting projects are based on the first three strategic directions. The fourth strategic direction is not directly related to grant projects.

For the state-level program, projects are solicited from managers of the State Outdoor Recreation System on a periodic basis. The State Outdoor Recreation System is established in the state statutes and includes an array of outdoor recreation areas and facilities owned and managed by the State of Minnesota and the Minnesota Historical Society.

For grants to local units of government, project applications are solicited annually from cities, counties, townships and recognized Indian tribal governments. The Department of Natural Resources manages the program and applications, which are due by March 31<sup>st</sup> of each year.

## **Steps in Minnesota's Open Project Selection Process**

### **1. Public Notification**

For the state-level program, potential grantees are contacted and made aware of the availability of funding (Minnesota departments of Natural Resources and Transportation and the Minnesota Historical Society).

For grants to local units of government, the Department of Natural Resources local grants staff informs all potential project sponsors each November about the availability of funding. This is done through direct mailings, news releases and notice on the Department of Natural Resources website. Potential applicants can request application materials that include Minnesota's overall objectives for use of the funds, the types of areas and facilities eligible for funding and an explanation of how the open project selection process works. Potential applicants may obtain application materials by direct mailing, by visiting the DNR website at [www.mndnr.gov](http://www.mndnr.gov), or by calling the DNR public information number, (651—296-6157 or (888)646-6367.

### **2. Program Assistance**

For grants to local units of government, DNR local grants staff assists potential applicants with the preparation of applications, including prerequisite requirements such as the need to hold a public hearing before submitting the proposal and the preparation of a proposed site plans.

### **3. The Priority Ranking and Project Selection System**

Minnesota has an objective, two-part process to evaluate, rank and select state and local projects for Land and Water Conservation Fund dollars.

The first part of the process is an evaluation based on SCORP strategies and the associated priority actions. A number of specific criteria derived from these priorities are included in the evaluation sheet used in reviewing each application. Only those projects closely meeting the SCORP priorities will move forward to the next evaluation step.

In the second part of the evaluation, applications are evaluated on site-level design criteria including accessibility, quality of design and safety. Other criteria include: quality of the application, level of local government commitments, environmental impact, etc. This evaluation ensures that projects selected for funding are viable, well designed and in conformance with current laws and standards.

There are separate selection processes for the state and local programs:

On the state level, DNR local grants staff evaluates state outdoor recreation proposals and recommends top proposals to the Commissioner for final approval.

For grants to local units of government, the DNR local grants staff evaluates and ranks project applications according to criteria outlined above and selects the top proposals for funding.

## State and Local Land and Water Conservation Fund Selection Guidelines

The state and local Land and Water Conservation Fund programs use the following selection guidelines to evaluate project applications. These guidelines are based on three of the four strategic directions and associated priority goals and strategies in this document. The fourth strategic direction dealing with coordination among partners does not include recommended actions related to Land and Water Conservation Fund grant projects.

### SCORP Priorities

The answers to the following questions, based on the priority actions for each strategy will be used to evaluate project applications.

Does the project connect people to the outdoors?

- Does the proposed project contribute towards creating a welcoming environment?
- Does the proposed project create or improve access to outdoor recreation lands and facilities by providing alternative transportation and improving access for people of all abilities?
- Does the proposed project result in quality experiences and facilities?

Does the project acquire land and/or create opportunities?

- Is the proposed project located in a densely settled area or area of rapid population growth?
- Does the proposed project acquire critical lands in jeopardy of being lost to development, land use changes or an exceptional one time opportunity of high quality natural resources?
- Does the proposed project acquire land that protects shoreland, rivers, lakes, wetlands and critical watersheds?
- Does the project meet the differing outdoor recreation needs of people of all abilities?
- Does the project create an environment that is open and flexible to accommodate new and emerging nature based trends or develop group based recreational opportunities?
- Does the project establish a sustainable and resilient infrastructure to provide high quality recreational opportunities?

Does the project take care of what we have?

- Does the project result in redevelopment, renovation or rehabilitation of current infrastructure?
- Does the project result in maintaining the quality of natural resources through preservation, restoration or reconstruction?

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