

St. Croix State Park

Citizen Advisory Committee – second meeting 8/18/16



Agenda

Welcome & Introductions: *(5 minutes)*

First meeting recap: *(5 minutes)*

- NHL nomination forms

Interpretive Services issues and directions: *(35 minutes)*

- Purpose/mission of interpretive services
- Interpretive themes for St. Croix State Park
- Existing programs & services
- Recommendations

Break

Recreational Use and Visitor Services – overnight facilities issues and directions: *(35 minutes)*

- Existing facilities
- “Destination” Park – making investments, diversifying opportunities
- Recommendations

Scheduling our next meeting: *(5 minutes)*

- Pick a date – week of September 12th (Thursday 8/15)?
- Topics – Recreational Use – trails, Park Boundaries, Park Operations

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Interpretive Services – purpose/mission

The DNR Division of Parks and Trails interpretive program forges emotional and intellectual connections to Minnesota's natural and cultural heritage by provoking curiosity, encouraging discovery, and inspiring stewardship across generations.

The division's interpretive services program connects people with the outdoors with self-guided and staff-led experiences. Professional interpreters present in a variety of ways: personal experiences such as naturalist-led talks, special events and outdoor skills building programs; at community and other outreach events and self-guided experiences such as interpretive trails, exhibits, brochures and electronic media.

Interpretive Themes

Geology:

Geological forces including the Midcontinent Rift and glaciers formed the groundwork for the natural, cultural and recreational diversity that exist at St. Croix State Park today.

Natural Resources:

River Systems: The St. Croix and Kettle Rivers, both Wild and Scenic Rivers, provide integral habitat for plants and animals that are resilient to the changing dynamics of their watersheds.

Changing Landscapes: Impacts of changing climate and human use have and continue to alter the park's landscape. St. Croix State Park adapts to these impacts by actively managing a mix of natural communities including Red and White Pine stands, Oak Savanna and Jack Pine Barrens.

Rare Species: Situated on the eastern edge of the Mille Lacs Uplands, St. Croix State Park's 32 native plant communities provide refuge for a multitude of Species of Greatest Conservation Need.

Cultural Resources:

Confluence of Cultures: Built upon the St. Croix and Kettle River confluence, the area of St. Croix State Park has acted as an intersection of exploration, trade routes, industries and cultures since 3000 BC.

Civilian Conservation Corps: Credited as a National Historic Landmark, the National Park Service together with New Deal work programs transformed a landscape too poor to farm into a wildlife refuge and destination park for generations to come.

Outdoor Recreation:

Opportunity for Connection: Over 100 miles of multi-use trails traverse 34,000 acres of wilderness at St. Croix State Park. Visitors are welcome to stay in a variety of lodging options while they explore the park's expansive opportunities for adventure and discovery.

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Interpretive Services –existing programs and services

Programs and Special Events

- Programs offered mainly on Thursdays through Mondays during the summer season.
- Program types: campfire interpretive talks, hikes, bike trips, canoe caravans, walks, craft-making activities and outdoor skill-building activities.
- Several theme weekends each summer, designed to help draw new visitors to the state park.
- Programs by request – from groups visiting the park.

Non-Personal Interpretive Opportunities

- Interpretive/Visitor center - interpretive exhibits, seasonally-staffed.
- Sundance self-guided interpretive trail.
- Various interpretive exhibits throughout the park.
- Other interpretive information and brochures -available in the interpretive center and park headquarters.

Outreach

- Coordinating and providing outreach services to foster community support.
- Includes providing interpretive programming at local festivals, libraries and schools.

Interpretive Facilities

- Park Headquarters—main point of contact for division staff with park visitors
- St. Croix Lodge and Interpretive Center —the historic lodge houses the interpretive center which includes a display area and public counter/desk. The space can accommodate 60 people, and is often used for day and evening interpretive programs.
- Amphitheater – The amphitheater is located adjacent to the St. Croix Lodge and the Riverview Campground, well placed to host interpretive programs. The amphitheater seats approximately 250 people.
- Trails – The Sundance Trail is a self-guided interpretive trail. There are some interpretive signs along other trails, including the bicycle trail at the Yellowbanks CCC Camp.
- Information Kiosks – Kiosks located in each campground, the St. Croix Lodge, all Seasons Trail Center, Lake Clayton Beach Picnic Area and each Group Center provide orientation, enforcement and emergency information as well as interpretive messages to park visitors.

Interpretive Staffing

- 80% year-round Area Interpretive Naturalist - responsible for staff-guided and non-personal interpretation at St. Croix and Banning State Parks, the Willard Munger and Matthew Lourey State Trails, the St. Croix and Kettle River State Water Trails, and outreach efforts for the area. Forty percent of this position's time (concentrated in the winter season) is dedicated to work on non-personal interpretive projects for the northeast region and statewide efforts.

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Interpretive Services –recommendations

Non-personal Interpretive Opportunities

- Create interpretive materials about the blowdown event and division’s restoration efforts. Materials may include signage, an interpretive path, and videos that describe division efforts including timber removal, tree plantings, prescribed fire, and other resource management and infrastructure repair projects.
- Create interpretive materials about the buildings and other structures that are part of the National Historic Landmark. Topics for the materials include the history of the Civilian Conservation Corps and its role in developing St. Croix State Park, the Recreation Demonstration Area as a National Historic Landmark (NHL), the 164 historic elements associated with the NHL within the park, and how those building, structures, roads and trails are still used today.
- Develop an advanced geocaching course. The advanced course would provide a new and more challenging opportunity for park visitors. The course may replace the existing self-guided trail or be incorporated with the blowdown restoration interpretive path.
- Add interpretive signage at the fire tower area. Renovation of the fire tower and addition of hiking trails will draw more visitors to the area. Interpretive themes and content for the displays will be determined as part of the project development.
- Add interpretive signage along the bike trail between the campground and swimming beach. Possible interpretive content includes resource management (barrens and prairie restoration) and Civilian Conservation Corps history in the state park. Additional interpretive signage should be considered with the extension of the trail around Lake Clayton.

Staff-guided Interpretive Opportunities

- Develop additional river-related interpretive programs and opportunities. The intent is to provide visitors with more opportunities to experience the St Croix and Kettle Rivers while at the state park. Possible programs may include staff-guided canoeing programs for group center users.
- Evaluate the need for additional interpretive programming and staffing during the winter season. Currently the state park has very limited interpretive staffing available to offer programs in the winter. The direction set out in the management plan is to promote more winter use at St. Croix State Park. Both in response to more visitation and as part of the efforts to increase winter use at the park, the division will need to consider additional interpretive staffing for the state park during the winter season.
- Pursue relationships with volunteers to offer additional interpretive opportunities to state park visitors. Park staff will work with members of the public to develop and host interpretive programs in line with the state park’s interpretive themes and the division’s outreach goals.

Interpretive Services Facility Developments and Improvements

- Renovate the Interpretive Center. The renovation would include updating the interpretive displays and a redesign of the layout to be less staff-dependent. The renovation may also include interpretive signage about the St. Croix Lodge – the building that houses the interpretive center is a contributing element to the NHL.
- Renovate the Amphitheater. Changes to the facility will include accessibility improvements and utilities improvements (upgraded electrical systems, projection system, etc.)
- Integrate interpretive features into the development of the Archery Range. The design of the archery range should include features to support use of the facility for interpretive programming such as benches, storage for equipment, shade, and separation and screening from nearby activity areas.

Partnerships and Outreach

- Pursue outreach and educational efforts with school districts and community groups. Strong ties with school districts and community groups will help build awareness and participation in interpretive programs at the state park.
- Investigate partnerships for creating and providing interpretive programming. The division will seek partnerships with institutions and groups with an outdoor education interest – such as National Park Service, Minnesota Historical Society, Burnett County Historical Society, and Audubon Center of the North Woods – to collaborate on designing, supporting and providing interpretive opportunities to state park visitors and visitors throughout the area.
- Work with other divisions within DNR to develop additional education and outreach efforts that can be offered at the state park. Possible topics include forest management, river fisheries, and nearby scientific and natural area lands.
- Work with DNR Division of Fish and Wildlife to develop and offer archery skills programming. Development of an archery range (see Recreational Use & Visitor Services) will provide a location to offer more programming than possible at other state parks. The divisions will work together to support programs that utilize the range to promote archery for recreation as well as for hunter recruitment and retention. Increased interpretive staffing would be necessary.

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Recreational Use and Visitor Services – Overnight Facilities

Existing overnight facilities:

- Group centers
 - 3 group centers - dining hall, sanitation buildings, bunkhouses, other structures
 - Norway Point – 215 people
 - Head of the Rapids - accommodates 125 people
 - St. John’s Landing – currently used by Conservation Corps-Minnesota
- Guesthouses
 - 2 buildings – accommodate 15 and 12 people, includes kitchens & bathrooms
- Campgrounds
 - Riverview, Paint Rock Springs & Old Logging Trail campgrounds – 211 drive-in sites, 4 walk-in sites, 6 cabins
- Group campsites
 - 8 sites near the All Season Trail Center – accommodate 25 people each
- Remote campsites
 - 2 backpack sites along trail network – each site has 2 Adirondack shelters
 - 10 canoe/boat-in sites – on Kettle and St. Croix Rivers, accessible from water only
- Horse Campground
 - 40 sites near All Season Trail Center – includes corral, overhead ties, drinking water

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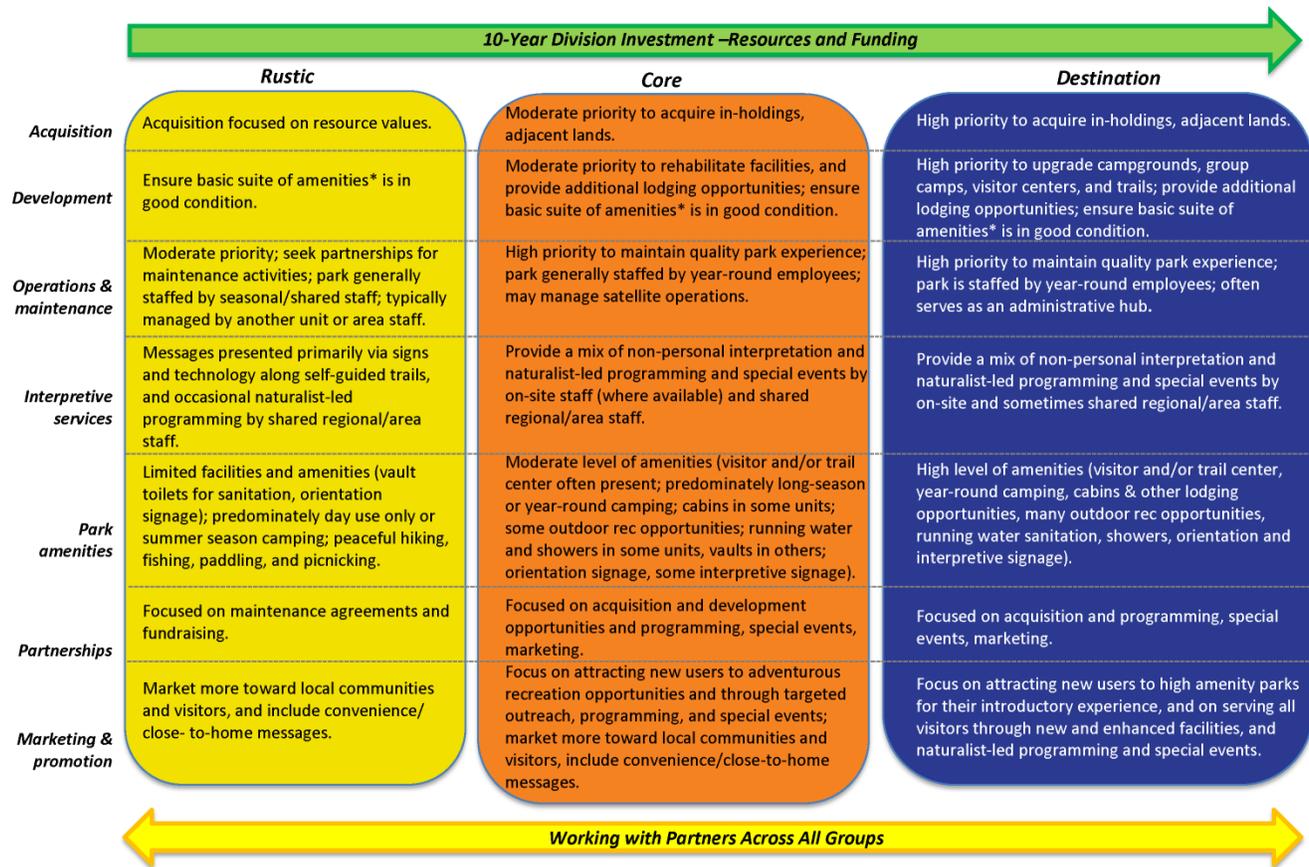
St. Croix State Park as a “Destination” park

From the Division of Parks and Trails System Plan . . . what is a Destination Park?

Destination Parks

“These state parks and state recreation areas offer a destination-quality experience, with an array of outdoor recreation and lodging opportunities, park facilities, and naturalist-led interpretive offerings. They may have year-round camping (or other lodging) and staffing. Parks in this group have high use and attract visitors from across the state.”

“The Division will invest in Destination state parks and state recreation areas at a high level over the next 10 years to enhance campgrounds and group camps, visitor centers, lodging opportunities, and other amenities.”



Rustic – Likely to have low levels of overnight visitation and revenue; offer limited recreation opportunities and facilities; and possess comparatively less significant natural and/or cultural resources.
Core – Likely to have moderate levels of overnight visitation and revenue; offer a moderate diversity of recreation opportunities and facilities; and possess significant natural and/or cultural resources.
Destination – Likely to have high levels of overnight visitation and revenue; offer a broad diversity of recreation opportunities and facilities; and possess highly significant natural and/or cultural resources.

* Note: Basic suite of amenities includes picnic tables, fire rings, orientation signage, and waste removal.

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Recreational Use and Visitor Services Recommendations

Camping & Lodging

- Renovate the Paint Rock Springs Campground provide more diverse types of camping experience. The campground will be redesigned with a new sanitation building and larger use areas and spurs that can accommodate larger camping units, including some pull-through sites. More space between campsites will provide greater privacy than in existing campsites. A cluster of camper cabins and/or wall tents will be integrated into the layout to be available to rent individually or as a group. The overall design will likely include fewer campsites than the current layout.
- Redesign layout of the existing group campsites at the All Season Trail Center. The new layout will provide additional spacing and screening between sites, while still accommodating groups who wish to reserve and use all the sites together.
- Consider development of a rustic group camp. The group camp will be designed to accommodate smaller groups (25-50 people) than the state park's existing group facilities and sited away from other use areas for privacy. Facilities would include a tent camping area, picnic shelter and vault toilets.
- Develop additional hike-in campsites. The existing hike-in sites are well-used, and the large size of the park offers opportunities to create an additional 2-4 remote sites along the existing trail network.
- Open St. John's Landing Group Center to more public use. The division will coordinate with Conservation Corps-Minnesota to maintain CCM's presence in the park and at St. John's Landing, while opening the group center for public use during portions of the summer season and in the fall following CCM's seasonal departure. Some CCM crew and staff lodging, as well as equipment storage, will need to be relocated and accommodated elsewhere in the park. Additional building renovation and repairs may be necessary to open the group center to public use – including repair of 2 bunkhouses damaged during the 2011 blowdown.
- Develop a group camp facility for Conservation Corps-Minnesota use. The division will work with CCM to design and develop a group camp facility that can support CCM's presence in the state park. Development of the facility will allow opening St. John's Landing group center to public use.
- Horse camp improvements/changes?