



## Minnesota State Parks – At a Glance

### Units managed:

- 66 state parks
- 6 state recreation areas
- 8 state waysides
- 46 forest recreation areas

### Resources:

267,300 acres – less than ½ of 1% of land in Minnesota.

Resource management projects are conducted on 8,000 acres each year.

### Visitors:

Over 8 million visitors each year.

Over 900,000 visitors camp or stay in lodging each year.

Approximately 30% of all Minnesotans visit a state park each year.

Visitor spending while on trips to state parks contributed over \$196 million to the economy statewide last year.

### Organization:

175 full-time employees  
700 part-time employees

Eight-five percent of all staff resources are at field locations.

The Division operating budget was \$28.6 million in 2005.



## The Five Core Areas

The strategic plan is divided into five core areas. The core areas represent the three elements of the Division's mission as set out in state statute as well as two areas that are important to its ability to deliver that mission – its human resources and administrative structure. Each core area has a number of goals:

### Interpretation

1. To carry out the statutory mandate of providing interpretive programs for park visitors to the best of the Division's ability.
2. Provide the type and content of interpretive services that the public desires and attract new visitors to state parks through interpretive services while maintaining a focus on resource stewardship.
3. Assist in fulfilling the Division's recreation and resource management missions.
4. Integrate interpretive services with marketing and merchandising efforts.
5. Further the Department's Strategic Conservation Agenda.

### Natural and Cultural Resources Management

1. To maintain or restore presettlement conditions as required by MS s86A, subd. 2c, the Division needs to know what was present during this time period compared to what exists today. A reasonably good database of presettlement conditions exists as part of the Public Land Survey (PLS). The missing piece is a complete picture of today's conditions. The Division will determine the inventory needs of the state park system; develop a process for prioritizing and conducting those inventories while still maintaining important restoration and management efforts.
2. Develop a system to estimate full funding for the resource program in order to fulfill the statutory mandate.
3. Develop criteria and processes to establish project priorities within the resource management program.
4. Coordinate with other divisions within the Department for mutually beneficial outcomes.
5. Develop tools to measure the effectiveness of resource management activities in order to determine what works and what does not, as well as continue to develop new tools and techniques.
6. Fully integrate the resource program at all levels of park management.
7. Communicate more effectively about the resource program to the public.
8. Develop a clear definition of cultural resource program goals and a means of achieving them.

### Recreation

1. Increase overnight and day use in order to more effectively utilize the existing infrastructure capacity.

2. Maintain high visitor satisfaction during a time when traditional services are being reduced or service delivery methods are being changed.
3. Keep visitors safe, reduce conflicts among visitors and keep the natural and cultural resources intact for future generations.
4. Evaluate the type and amount of recreation offerings in state parks and recreation areas.
5. Minimize impacts of specific user groups on natural and cultural resources in order to meet the Division's mandate.
6. Evaluate potential new additions to the state park system, including expansion of existing units or proposals for new units. Evaluations will follow statutory direction to "preserve an accurate representation of Minnesota's natural and historical heritage . . . provide an adequate supply of scenic, accessible, and usable lands and waters to accommodate the outdoor recreation needs of Minnesota's citizens" and the DNR Strategic Conservation Agenda goal for a sustainable network of natural lands.
7. Provide infrastructure improvements or new infrastructure development in order to meet changes in recreation needs, generate revenue, augment visitor's education and understanding of the park or to protect natural and cultural resources and scenic beauty. Develop a means of assessing the cost-benefit ratio of the infrastructure improvements.
8. Determine how much capital is needed annually to protect the investment of the state park system infrastructure.

### Human Resources

1. Retain the institutional knowledge that will be lost through retirements and attrition as well as attract new employees.
2. Provide for employee safety, health and wellness.
3. Recruit, train, retain and promote a professional workforce that has appropriate competencies and is representative of the state's population.
4. Be proactive in responding to the Division's changing management structure including the team management of parks and seasonal park operations.

### Administration

1. Adjust service delivery to best spend the available funding and respond to the mandate of reforming government while maintaining high customer satisfaction.
2. Review Division programs as appropriate for efficiency and effectiveness.
3. Ensure that the budget distribution is a reflection of the Division's mission in times of contraction as well as times of budget expansion.
4. Mitigate the impacts of general fund reductions.

## Trends that Impact the Department and Division

*Climate change is affecting resources and recreational opportunities.*

*Minnesota's population is aging.*

*Minnesota is becoming more racially and ethnically diverse.*

*People are participating less in nature-based outdoor recreation.*

*Minnesota is becoming more urban, suburban.*

*State park per-capita visitation is declining.*

*Health is a concern for many Minnesotans.*

*Development continues to spread in suburban and exurban areas.*

*Technology is becoming more prevalent and important.*

*General fund support for the state park system is declining.*

