

Minnesota's outdoor recreation opportunities meet the needs of new and existing participants so all benefit from nature.

The Challenge



Outdoor recreation is a key ingredient of natural resource conservation and healthy living, but participation is declining. Declines are linked to changing demographics, increasing urbanization, competing priorities for leisure time and deteriorating infrastructure.

Why is this important?

Spending time outdoors is a Minnesota tradition. Our state consistently ranks among one of the top states to live, and a key factor for this is a healthy natural environment with abundant parks, natural lands and high-quality recreation opportunities. We must build on this rich tradition and plan for the future.



Outdoor Recreation Heritage:

The percent of residents licensed to fish and hunt in 2012 (28 percent and 12 percent, respectively) was double the national averages. But, participation rates are declining in the U.S. and Minnesota.

Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure:

Minnesota's park and trails are celebrated across the country. Itasca State Park was named one of America's 10 best state parks in 2014. In 2010, Bear Head Lake State Park was voted "America's Favorite Park" and Minnesota was voted the second-most bike-friendly state.

However, we're challenged to maintain basic operations at many state recreation facilities while also meeting expectations for new and enriched outdoor experiences. New, targeted strategies are needed to provide experiences that help reconnect families with nature and get them outdoors and active.



Four Key Trends next page

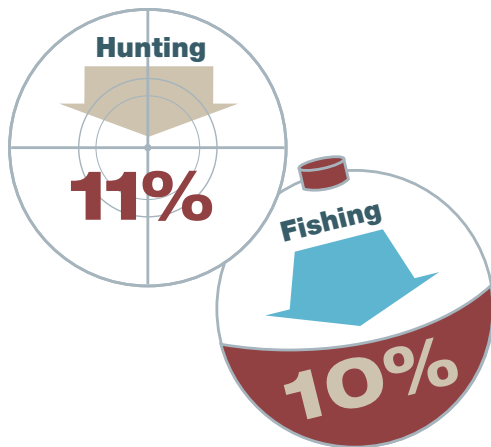
Trends

Four key trends illustrate this challenge:

Participation in traditional outdoor recreation is changing

- The percentage of young adults and families who participate in outdoor recreation is declining.
- Minnesota pheasant hunter numbers declined 40 percent from 2006 to 2013.
- Some outdoor activities, such as walking, jogging, stand-up paddleboarding and geocaching, are on the rise.

Percentage of Minnesotans licensed to hunt and fish declined from 2000 to 2012

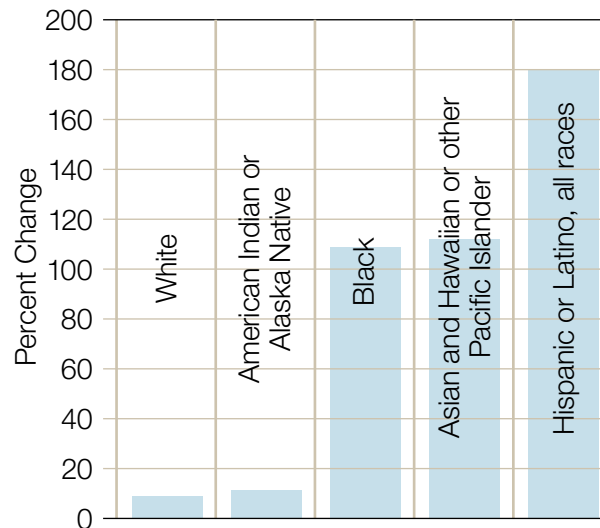


As Minnesota's population grows, a smaller percentage of people are purchasing hunting and fishing licenses. However, overall license numbers are steady.

Minnesota's population is urbanizing, diversifying and aging

- The population in Minnesota's metropolitan areas grew nearly 10 percent from 2000 to 2010, while nonmetro areas grew about 2.5 percent over this same period.
- The 65-and-older age group will be the fastest growing between 2010 and 2035.
- In 2035, Minnesota will have about 1.37 million older adults.
- From 2005 to 2035, Minnesota's Hispanic or Latino population will increase by 181 percent.

Minnesota population projections by race and ethnicity 2005 to 2035

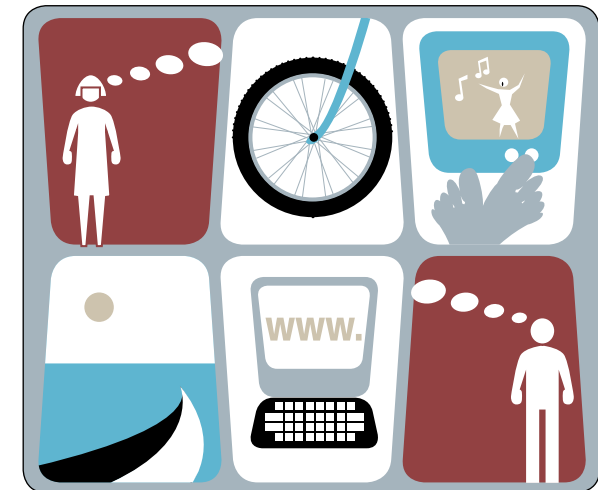


As Minnesota diversifies, the DNR will need to adapt its outdoor recreation programs to ensure people of all backgrounds and life stages are engaged and benefit.
 Source: United States Census Bureau

Competition for leisure time is intensifying

- Limited time and information, challenging schedules, and travel distance make it difficult for people to participate in outdoor recreation.
- From 1985 to 2010, the average vacation length in the United States shrank from 5.4 to 3.8 days.
- In 2013, Americans ages 15 and older spent more than half of their leisure time watching television.

Competing priorities for leisure time



Decreasing leisure time demands prioritization of recreational activities. In recent years, watching TV or using the computer for leisure has been a higher priority than outdoor recreation for many.

● **Outdoor recreation infrastructure is outdated and deteriorating**

- The DNR is challenged to meet modern standards and preferences for facilities and trails, including requirements of the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA).
- Adequate maintenance and rehabilitation to the DNR's parks and trails infrastructure will cost more than \$320 million over the next 10 years.
- One-third of Minnesota state parks buildings are on the National Register of Historic Places and need specialized rehabilitation.
- More than 2,300 miles of state forest roads require regular maintenance for hunting, motorized recreation and other uses.



Worn by daily use and weather, state trails such as the Willard Munger above, require consistent maintenance to provide high-quality recreational experiences.

Strategies

The following core strategies provide the fundamental steps needed to respond to these pressing recreation trends and guide targeted management actions.

Learn

Learn how families with young children and others want to interact with Minnesota's natural resources. Evaluate the effectiveness of DNR outreach, and adapt programs and facilities accordingly.

Develop

Develop and promote outdoor programs and activities for people of all backgrounds, especially families with children, diverse cultures, urban dwellers, women, youth and young adults.

Leverage

Leverage outreach by engaging our partners in outdoor recreation recruitment and retention.

Implement

Implement retention and marketing initiatives to minimize loss of current outdoor recreationists.

Maintain

Maintain and enhance our high-priority outdoor recreation system to provide high-quality, easy-to-access and safe recreational opportunities while repurposing lower priority facilities.

Actions next page

Actions

The following actions are examples of how we will carry out these strategies:

Expand and promote "I Can!" Programs



The DNR developed "I Can!" programs based on research that identified barriers and motivations to getting the next generation of Minnesotans outdoors.

ROLF HAGBERG

- Expand participation in "I Can Camp!," "Archery in the Parks," "I Can Fish!," "I Can Paddle!," "I Can Climb!," and "I Can Mountain Bike!" programs to accommodate a wide variety of interests.
- Provide families with affordable introductory experiences, equipment and trained instructors in a safe and friendly environment.
- Expand opportunities for urban residents.

Example performance measure

Number of participants in state park and trail interpretive and skill-building programs

Expand hunter recruitment and retention

- Promote innovative hunter recruitment approaches, such as "Learn to Hunt Whitetail Deer," a program aimed at urban adults with little or no hunting experience and an interest in local, sustainable food.
- Promote the DNR's firearms safety and hunter education outreach to Minnesota's Hispanic community.
- Invest in shooting range development and rehabilitation to increase access to and participation in shooting sports, especially among youth.

Example performance measures

Number of participants in special youth hunts;
number of youth license sales



Firearms safety hunter education programs promote resource stewardship and outdoor ethics. Adults-only and women-only courses ensure a supportive and comfortable learning environment.

● Increase user-friendly access to information

- Market “Fish Minnesota,” a Web-based tool that answers common questions about fishing regulations and locations.



- Market “ParkFinder,” a Web-based trip planner that matches visitors to Minnesota state parks based on their interests.



- Improve the DNR's website and create new tools to promote other outdoor recreation opportunities such as hunting and trail use.

Example performance measure

Number of website page views

● Implement a new parks and trails system plan

- Provide high-quality visitor experiences by investing in innovative facility designs, new technologies and improvements to existing buildings and trails.
- Keep Minnesota a national leader in outdoor recreation by enhancing and maintaining parks, trails, state lands and water access sites.

Example performance measures

Number of state trail miles maintained; number of visitors and overnight guests at state parks and recreation areas



Partnerships help the DNR's Parks and Trails Division offer needed services and amenities. The DNR worked with the Minnesota Department of Transportation to construct the new visitor center and rest area at Tettegouche State Park.