



Parks and Trails Legacy Report

–The First 9 Months

This March 1st FY10 report focuses on key outcomes and expenditures to date from the Parks and Trails portion of Minnesota’s Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment appropriated to the Department of Natural Resources (as directed by Chapter 172, Art. 3, Sec. 2, 2009 Session Laws).

The Legislature and the people of Minnesota have charged DNR Parks and Trails with a number of key strategic objectives in the Outdoor and Cultural Heritage Law. These objectives include: connecting people to the outdoors, accelerating natural resource management and accelerating facility maintenance and rehabilitation. Many projects and initiatives were implemented immediately, while others required strategic prioritization, planning and design. As we head into spring, on-the-ground construction, maintenance, natural resource work, and activities for visitors will increase dramatically. The Division has established measurable outcomes and transparent reporting processes for all Parks and Trails Legacy efforts.

Supporting Local Communities -Parks & Trails of Regional Significance

- Provided \$3,383,250 in grants to local units of government for acquisition, development, restoration, and maintenance of park and trail facilities that are considered of regional significance. An additional \$4,192,500 in grants will be awarded in the summer of 2010.
- Awarded \$487,500 towards solar energy projects within parks or on trails of regional significance. An additional \$585,000 in grants will be awarded in the summer of 2010.

FY10 Budget \$3,970,000

FY 10 Grants Awarded: \$3,870,750



Connecting people to the outdoors

- Through direction of the completed “Parks and Trails Conservation Education Legacy Fund Plan,” 18 naturalist interns and 3 seasonal naturalists have provided 300 additional programs for enhanced outreach, education, and skill-building projects. An additional 12 naturalists will begin this summer to initiate a new “Minnesota Naturalist Corps” program.
- Field-based research and RFP’s for state trail interpretation are near completion for the Root River State Trail.
- Web site improvements have been accelerated to create a web presence that motivates people to get outdoors and kids to get involved; 5 virtual tours are complete.
- A major visitor center exhibit upgrade will occur each year, starting with Sibley State Park, focusing on educational delivery methods and new technologies.
- Parks and Trails staff have been trained to produce touch-screen programs, podcasts, and Mp3 audio services in order to reach new audiences.
- Fishing poles and tackle are being delivered to 30 state parks, to be used and enjoyed by all.

FY10 Budget: \$2,324,000

Funds Encumbered as of 2/28/2010: \$750,000

Funds Expended as of 2/28/2010: \$341,813



Accelerating natural resource management¹

- Restored native plant communities on 1,383 acres of state park land, a 71% increase over the yearly average.
- Conducted invasive species detection, prevention & response on 9,431 acres of state park lands and have re-established native vegetation, a 52% increase above the yearly average.
- Conducted prescribed burns on 7,241 acres of state park land, a 36% increase over average.
- Restored & managed 175 acres of native prairies and woodlands along state trails.

FY10 Budget: \$1,920,000

Funds Encumbered as of 2/28/2010: \$826,000

Funds Expended as of 2/28/2010: \$345,502



¹ Parks and Trails conducts projects of the same type as these key outcomes annually, this fund allowing and instructing us to substantially increase our capacity to do this work. Average increase across all items is 53%.

Accelerating facility maintenance and rehabilitation

- Construction of 30 miles of state trail resurfacing starts in summer 2010.
- Planning for 6 state park building and facility renewal projects are underway. Soudan Mine State Park facility is complete, soon to be followed by Jay Cooke and Lake Shetek in 2010.
- Energy conservation projects are in design phase for 6 sites. Construction begins this spring.
- Project selection is underway for 20 accessibility improvement projects.
- Inspections have been completed on 6 bridges and design has begun. Rehabilitation and replacement construction will begin in summer 2010.

FY10 Budget: \$8,247,000

Funds Encumbered as of 2/28/2010: \$1,143,000

Funds Expended as of 2/28/2010: \$683,462



Conservation Corps of Minnesota²

The State of Minnesota and the Conservation Corps of Minnesota completed a Master Joint Powers Agreement that runs from July 1, 2009 to June 30, 2011. The Conservation Corps is providing services for: natural resource management, restoration, and protection; facility development, maintenance and rehabilitation and outreach.

- Conservation corps completed 8,181 hours last year towards parks and trails Legacy projects.
- Conservation Corps of Minnesota has more than doubled in size, increasing capacity to reach increased demand for services, starting over 150 new corps members in February 2010.
- Parks and Trails Division and Conservation Corps of Minnesota expect to exceed legislative requirement of spending *at least* \$600,000 for services in the first year of work. Actual expenditures through 2/28/2010: \$163,483



Planning for a Parks and Trails Legacy

➤ Parks and Trails 10-Year Strategic Plan

- This plan focuses on our state trail, state park and state water recreation responsibilities of the DNR Division of Parks and Trails.
- Primary goals, process and an outline have been developed.
- Efforts are being coordinated with the Ten-Year Strategic Coordination Plan and Twenty Five-Year Long Range Plan project (10/25 Plan).

➤ Parks and Trails 10/25-Year, Long-Term Plan

- This long-range plan will include goals, measurable outcomes, and a vision for Minnesotans of what parks and trails of regional and statewide significance will look like in 25 years.
- A collaborative planning process for development of this plan is underway, guided by a 14 -member Steering Team. The Citizen's League has been hired to design and manage the public participation process.

➤ Parks and Trails Budget Analysis

The Department submitted a *Parks and Trails Budget Analysis*, examining the adequacy of funding sources and appropriations that the DNR receives to acquire, develop, operate and maintain Minnesota's state park and trails system (*ML 2009, Chap. 172, Art. 3, Sec. 6, Subd. 3*).

FY10 Budget: \$400,000

Funds Encumbered as of 2/28/2010: \$137,000

Funds Expended as of 2/28/2010: \$66,180



Totals: FY10 Budget
\$16,861,000

Funds Encumbered: \$2,856,000
Funds Expended/Grants Awarded: \$5,307,707
Total: \$8,163,707

² Conservation Corps of Minnesota expenditures are part of other expenditure amounts in this report, as they provide services for each of the Department's Legacy outcomes.