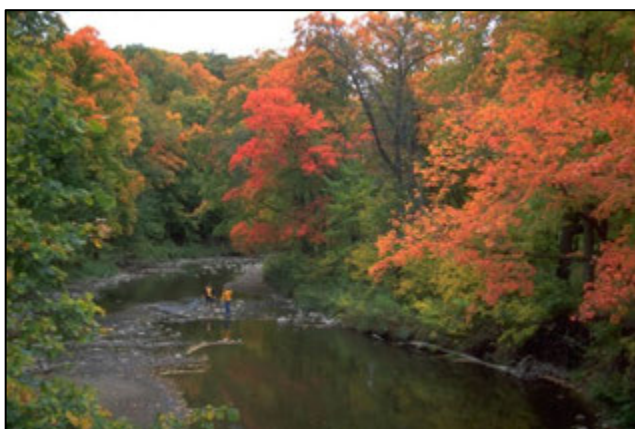


# Camden State Park Management Plan Amendment

## Trail Use, Resource Management, and Facility Development



**Minnesota Department of Natural Resources  
Division of Parks and Trails**

**December 2012**

# Minnesota Department of Natural Resources

500 Lafayette Road • St. Paul, MN • 55155-40\_\_



## Division of Parks and Trails Approval of Management Plan Amendment for Camden State Park

The Division of Parks and Trails develops plan amendments to update management plans to reflect the current development and operational proposals for a state park or state recreation area. The plan amendment process assists in formulating, evaluating and documenting these proposals.

This amendment to the 1978 Camden State Park management plan addresses issues that could result in changes to park trails, resource management, and facilities. The amendment supports the development of the Camden Regional Trail through the park, recognizes mountain biking as a park activity, and recommends rehabilitating or rerouting trails to create sustainable trail conditions. The amendment also clarifies the use of timber harvesting as a resource management tool, and proposes several facility developments to enhance park visitor experiences.

The amendment received input and comment both within the Department of Natural Resources and from the public. It went through a public review period, including an open house held in Marshall, Minnesota, and was approved by the Southern Regional Environmental Assessment Team.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Courtland Nelson". The signature is written over a horizontal line.

Courtland Nelson, Director  
Division of Parks and Trails

A handwritten date in black ink, "26 Dec 12", written over a horizontal line.

Date

# **Camden State Park Management Plan Amendment**



## **State of Minnesota Department of Natural Resources Division of Parks and Trails**

This management plan amendment has been prepared as required by 2010 Minnesota Laws Chapter 86A.09, Subdivision 1.

For more information on this management plan amendment, please contact any of the following project participants from the Division of Parks and Trails:

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With the exception of the Division Director and the Planning Supervisor, the previous individuals make up the "Plan Amendment Team" and were directly involved in the planning process. We would like to thank all who participated in this planning process, including local units of government, trail user groups and others.

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## PURPOSE

The purpose of this management plan amendment is to address issues that could result in changes to park trails, resource management, and facilities. Some of these proposed modifications could result in changes to public use, and could lead to changes in access, programming and operations. The amendment is intended to:

1. Plan for a connection to the proposed regional trail between Marshall and Camden State Park, and to address related changes in park trails;
2. Acknowledge the presence of an existing trail use – mountain biking – not identified in the 1978 management plan;
3. Recognize the need for trail rehabilitation and/or trail rerouting where erosion or other unsustainable conditions exist;
4. Consider the proposed development of new single-track mountain bike trail opportunities in the park;
5. Address the potential for timber harvest management and other forms of resource management, including the restoration of bison to western portions of the park; and
6. Consider proposed facility developments.

Management plans are required for state park units. *Minnesota Statutes*, section 86A.09, subd. 4 requires that the construction of facilities and other development conform to the management plan. This amendment will bring the management plan into accordance with current programming and development proposals for the park.

## BACKGROUND AND DIRECTION FROM PREVIOUS PLANS, STATE STATUTE

Camden State Park was established to preserve a unique portion of the Redwood River valley and surrounding lands that are rich in natural resources and cultural history. The state purchased the property in 1934 and it became a state park in 1935. Today the park totals 2,245 acres.

The park landscape is multi-dimensional, offering areas of relatively flat and rolling prairie, as well as a deep, wooded river valley that had been used by American Indians and European settlers alike for many generations.

Archaeological evidence suggests that the Dakota had permanent camps in the Redwood River valley where the surrounding hills provided protection and shelter, the river and surrounding lands provided food, and the trees provided fuel.

The first Europeans to use the “Camden Woods,” as the area came to be called, were fur traders and early explorers. After the treaties of Traverse des Sioux and Mendota were signed, James W. Lynd opened a trading post in 1855, located not far west of the present-day swimming area.

The 1978 Camden State Park Management Plan<sup>1</sup> (1978 Plan) states that the original vegetation in the park was tall grass prairie and wooded river valleys. In 1971, a joint survey by the Minnesota Academy of Science and The Nature Conservancy found that the park was of particular scientific interest because it contained one of the westernmost natural occurrences of the sugar maple in North America<sup>2</sup>. Recent resource assessments have also identified rare hydrologic and natural features in the park.

Today, the park offers abundant recreational opportunities including hiking, horseback riding, biking, swimming, picnicking, fishing, camping, cross country skiing, snowshoeing, and snowmobiling. There are over 15 miles of hiking trails, 10 miles of horseback riding trails, and more than four miles of mountain bike trails. The spring-fed pool and nearby picnic area are popular in the summertime, as is the fishing pier and water access at Brawner Lake. In addition, there are 80 semi-modern campsites in two campgrounds, a seasonal horse camp, and a group camp adjacent to the Redwood River.

Existing and future development at Camden should complement the natural features and the values being preserved<sup>3</sup>. Significant natural and cultural resource areas will be protected. The east and west sides of the park are primarily prairie or savanna reconstructions, mesic prairie, dry hill prairie, or old field land cover types. In the center of the park, the Redwood River valley slopes are relatively steep and susceptible to erosion, requiring any facility or trail development to be carefully located, constructed, maintained, and monitored.

Previous plans for the park established policies relating to each of the issues addressed in this amendment: trails, resource management, facilities, and boundaries. Recent regional and county trail planning efforts are also included for consideration.

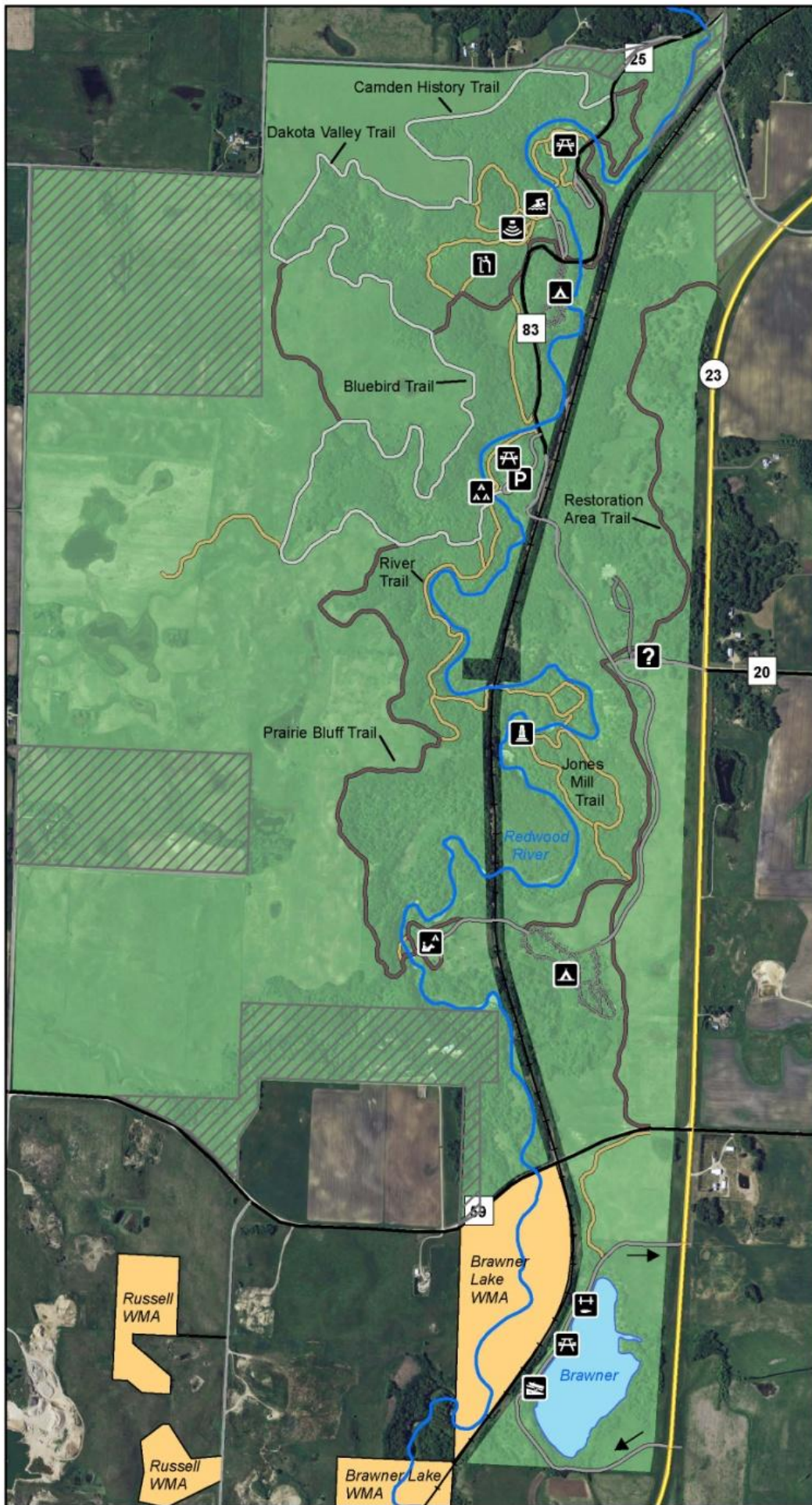
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<sup>1</sup> Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Division of Parks and Recreation. 1978. *A Management Plan for Camden State Park*. Central Office. St. Paul, Minnesota.

<sup>2</sup> Meyer, Roy Willard. 1991. *Everyone's Country Estate: A History of Minnesota's State Parks*. Minnesota Historical Society Press. St. Paul, Minnesota.

<sup>3</sup> Minnesota State Statute. Chapter 86A.05, Subdivision 2 . State park; purpose; resource and site qualifications; administration. <https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/?id=86a.05>





# Camden State Park

Figure 1: Park Facilities

## Legend

- State Park
- Wildlife Mgmt Area
- Private Property
- River
- Lake

## Trail Uses

- Hike/Horse/Mtn Bike
- Hike/Horse
- Hike

## Roads and Railroads

- MN Trunk Highway
- County Highway
- Municipal Road
- Township or Other Road
- DOT Railroads

- ▲ Campground
- ▲▲ Primitive Group Camp
- ▲ Equestrian Camping
- ⛶ Picnic Area
- ? Information/Office
- 🏰 Historic Site
- P Parking
- 🏞️ Overlook
- 🎪 Amphitheater
- 🏊 Swimming
- 🎣 Fishing Pier
- 🚤 Boat Ramp



0 0.25 0.5 Miles



Minnesota DNR  
Division of Parks and Trails

### *Camden State Park Management Plan*

The Camden State Park Management Plan was approved in 1978. The primary goal for the park expressed in the plan was “to provide opportunities for people of the state to enjoy and learn about natural resources through a variety of recreational activities including camping, picnicking, hiking, ski-touring, and snowmobiling, while protecting and perpetuating the parks natural, historic, and prehistoric resources.”

Among other objectives, the management plan called for:

- Separating incompatible recreation activities;
- Using previously disturbed areas for proposed development;
- Decentralizing recreational development; and
- Providing a multi-use trail system which accesses scenic views and interesting study areas, connects to use areas, and minimizes park user conflicts.

The park was zoned for various levels of activity based on the sensitivity of existing natural and cultural resources, and the suitability of certain areas for specific uses. Some key features of the plan include:

**Trails:** An extensive network of trails was planned for the park, consisting of hiking, horseback riding, cross country skiing, and snowmobiling trails. Rehabilitation of existing hiking trails and closure of trails “which are not to be retained” were the primary actions listed, followed by the development of a trail connecting the semi-modern (Lower) campground with the White Lodge (South) picnic area. The plan also called for the development of a trail to the prairie tract west of the river.

The 1978 Plan acknowledged that “horseback riding use has been low in the past,” but called for expanding the equestrian trail network into the prairie area as lands are purchased. “By following this general alignment scheme, potential erosion problems and user conflicts will be minimized.”

Planned cross country ski trails were to be separate from the snowmobile trail system, and the winter trail map designated a “ski touring zone”. The primary action associated with the park’s snowmobile trails was realignment; to “minimize the number of trails that go up and down the valley walls.”

The mowed Restoration Area Trail north of the contact station (see Figure 1, Park Facilities) was added later and an additional trail use – mountain biking – was piloted. 3.9 miles of combined mountain bike, horseback riding and hiking trails, and 0.3 mile of combined hiking and mountain biking trails now exist in the northern part of the park, west of the river.

The “new” activity of mountain biking, the proposed development of single-track mountain bike trails, and the proposed regional trail between Marshall and Camden State Park are the primary drivers for completing a management plan amendment. None of these proposed developments is addressed in the 1978 Plan and each has the potential to significantly change the level of public use.



**Resource Management:** The 1978 Plan provides information and management objectives related to water resources, fisheries, soils, vegetation, and wildlife. According to the plan, the Redwood River formed and shaped the valley's unique character, where adjoining bluffs rise to 200 feet above the river. During the spring thaw, the river often overflows its banks but park structures other than bridges are seldom affected. However, recent significant rainfall events (2010) caused substantial flooding and washed out portions of the River Trail.

The original vegetation in the state park was "tall grass prairie except for the wooded river valleys." As of the 1978 Plan's writing, the existing ecological communities included agricultural land, bottomland hardwoods, upland brush, northern hardwoods, old fields, open woods, dry prairies, marsh, and big woods. The plan recommended maintaining areas of upland prairie, converting some old fields to upland prairie and prairie edge, and converting some bottomland hardwoods to northern hardwoods.

Some of the objectives for wildlife management include maintaining a diverse native population; reintroducing, where practicable, species that were present in the area of the park before European settlement; and providing opportunities for visitors to see wildlife and learn more about them.

Beyond what's contained in the 1978 Plan, the goals for the resource management program are derived from the state statutes that guide the development and operations of Minnesota's State Parks:

*State parks shall be administered by the commissioner of natural resources in a manner, which is consistent with the purposes of this subdivision to preserve, perpetuate, and interpret natural features that existed in the area of the park prior to settlement and other significant natural, scenic, scientific, or historic features that are present. Management shall seek to maintain a balance among the plant and animal life of the park and to reestablish desirable plants and animals that were formerly indigenous to the park area but are now missing. Programs to interpret the natural features of the park shall be provided. Outdoor recreation activities to utilize the natural features of the park that can be accommodated without material disturbance of the natural features of the park or the introduction of undue artificiality into the natural scene may be permitted. Park use shall be primarily for aesthetic, cultural, and educational purposes, and shall not be designed to accommodate all forms or unlimited volumes of recreational use. Physical development shall be limited to those facilities necessary to complement the natural features and the values being preserved.*

**Facilities:** The 1978 Plan states that development at Camden is "limited by the terrain and vegetation." Since the valley walls are steep in many locations, susceptibility to erosion rules out most uses except carefully located and constructed trails. The valley floor provides a cool, shaded environment preferred by most park users in the summer months, but

because of the Burlington Northern Railway track, it is not possible to locate development within the valley away from the negative impacts of trains.

When the 1978 Plan was adopted, a number of facilities existed at Camden including a 36-site semi-modern campground, a primitive group camp, two picnic grounds, a swimming pool, 23 miles of trails, access to Brawner Lake, and a manager's residence. The 1978 plan proposed several new facilities including a contact station/park office, walk-in campsites, a manager's residence, an interpretive/trail center, and a horseback riding trail center.

The 1978 Plan laid out the following objectives for proposed development at Camden:

- To separate incompatible recreation activities.
- To limit facility developments to those which are necessary for management, appropriate park use, and enjoyment.
- To preserve the historic and prehistoric resources of the park.
- To utilize where feasible, previously disturbed areas for proposed development.
- To decentralize the recreational development.
- To provide a multi-use trail system which accesses scenic views and interesting study areas, connects use-areas, and minimizes park user conflicts.

Some of the planned facilities were developed, others were not. The state park now has a contact station/park office, a manager's residence and a horseback riding trail center (equestrian camp) though the equestrian camp was sited in a different location than the 1978 Plan specified.

The equestrian camp was placed where the primitive group camp was originally located instead of east of the White Lodge (North ) picnic ground. The location specified in the plan is part of a 24-acre Historic District on the National Register of Historic Places. The 1978 Plan called for converting the primitive group camp to a second semi-modern campground in the park. However, the park's Upper Campground was developed at the proposed location of the interpretive/trail center instead.

Neither walk-in campsites nor an interpretive/trail center were developed, though the manager's residence was used for interpretive programming and exhibits for some time.

**Boundary:** The 1978 Plan stated that "the statutory boundary encompasses 1,995 acres..." and lays out two objectives for boundary adjustments and acquisition "in every park":

- To include sufficient acreage to protect and perpetuate the natural resources and still provide areas for the necessary recreational facilities and activities. Only acreage that is necessary and would be reasonable to purchase should be included.
- To control all land within the statutory boundary by fee title (direct ownership).

Acknowledging that it would not be possible to achieve these goals over a short timeframe, the 1978 Plan also included a framework related to boundary adjustment and acquisition priorities:

1. Land needed for protection and perpetuation of park resources or values.
2. Land needed for development of facilities.
3. Unimproved buffer land needed to prevent threatened development or use which would be compatible with existing or potential park purposes.

The 1978 Plan called for deleting two portions of the park and adding another. One of the deletions occurred (e.g. northeast corner), one partially occurred (e.g. south of County Road 59) and acreage was added in the area specified by the plan (e.g. along the western boundary).

The expansion on the west side of the park would “allow the state to reestablish and perpetuate a significant tract of prairie so that future generations can get a glimpse of the character of the vast prairies that once seemed to stretch on endlessly across this portion of the state.” The proposed uses for this area were primarily for environmental study and trails. “A system of hiking, horseback riding, and biking trails would be provided that will allow users to follow the bluff edge or pass through the upland prairie, scattered lowland prairies, and marshes.”

#### *Interpretive Services Plan, 1996<sup>4</sup>*

This plan identifies interpretive themes for Camden based on the state park’s natural, cultural and recreational resources, and recommends ways to interpret those themes. Natural resource-based themes focus on the area’s geology, botany, wildlife, and hydrology. Specific themes include the Prairie des Coteau landscape region, the park’s woodlands, and the Redwood River. Cultural resource-based themes focus on the area’s American Indian and European history, and specifically include the Dakota culture and the brief European and American settlement of Camden.

Beyond the inventory and analysis of Camden State Park’s primary resources, the interpretive plan:

- discusses park visitation and interpretive clientele;
- provides a regional analysis of interpretive services;
- summarizes existing interpretive services at the park; and
- outlines research and study needs and priorities.

Some of the priorities listed include a comprehensive inventory and mapping of the park’s natural and cultural resources, and a comprehensive visitor survey. The plan suggests using a focus group of visitors to gather information and ideas for the development of the interpretive program.

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<sup>4</sup> Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Division of Parks and Recreation. 1996. *Camden State Park Interpretive Services Plan*. Southern Region. New Ulm, Minnesota.

### *Southwest Minnesota Regional Trails Plan*<sup>5</sup>

This 2000 regional trail planning effort – and its 2010 update – was led by the Southwest Development Commission in response to the lack of trails in the southwest region and the interest in developing a regional trail system by economic development officials and local governments. The plan did not address specific alignments; it identified general routes that connected communities and points of interest.

According to the regional trail plan, the vision is to establish a network of trails in Southwest Minnesota for multiple users. The plan will examine alternative non-motorized transportation modes – primarily walking and bicycling – and recommend actions to improve access and mobility of bicyclists and pedestrians.

One of the proposed corridors identified in the plan is between the city of Marshall and Camden State Park, ten miles to the southwest of Marshall. Each of those locations is also identified as a proposed trailhead in the plan (See Figure 2: Proposed Lyon County Trails). The city of Marshall has approximately 10.5 miles of bicycle trails – primarily on off-road, paved trails – and has an up-to-date pedestrian and bikeway plan.<sup>6</sup>

The regional plan includes the “Detailed list of eligible trail projects for the 2010 Regional Trail Prioritization”. Of the 34 possible trails included on the list, “Marshall to Camden State Park off of Hwy. 23, ROW to Co Road 25 to Camden State Park” is listed fourth, behind two segments of the Casey Jones State Trail and a segment of the Des Moines River Valley Trail.

The Southwest Minnesota Regional Trails Plan suggests land acquisition and design of the county trail between Marshall and Camden State Park would take place 2011-2015, with planning, development and construction to take place 2016-2020.

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<sup>5</sup> Southwest Regional Development Commission. 2010. *Southwest Minnesota Regional Trails Plan*. Slayton, Minnesota.

<http://swrdc.org/content/files/transportation/2010%20Trail%20Plan.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> The Center for Changing Landscapes, University of Minnesota. 2008. *A Pedestrian and Bikeway Plan: A Safe and Healthy Marshall*. Minneapolis, Minnesota.

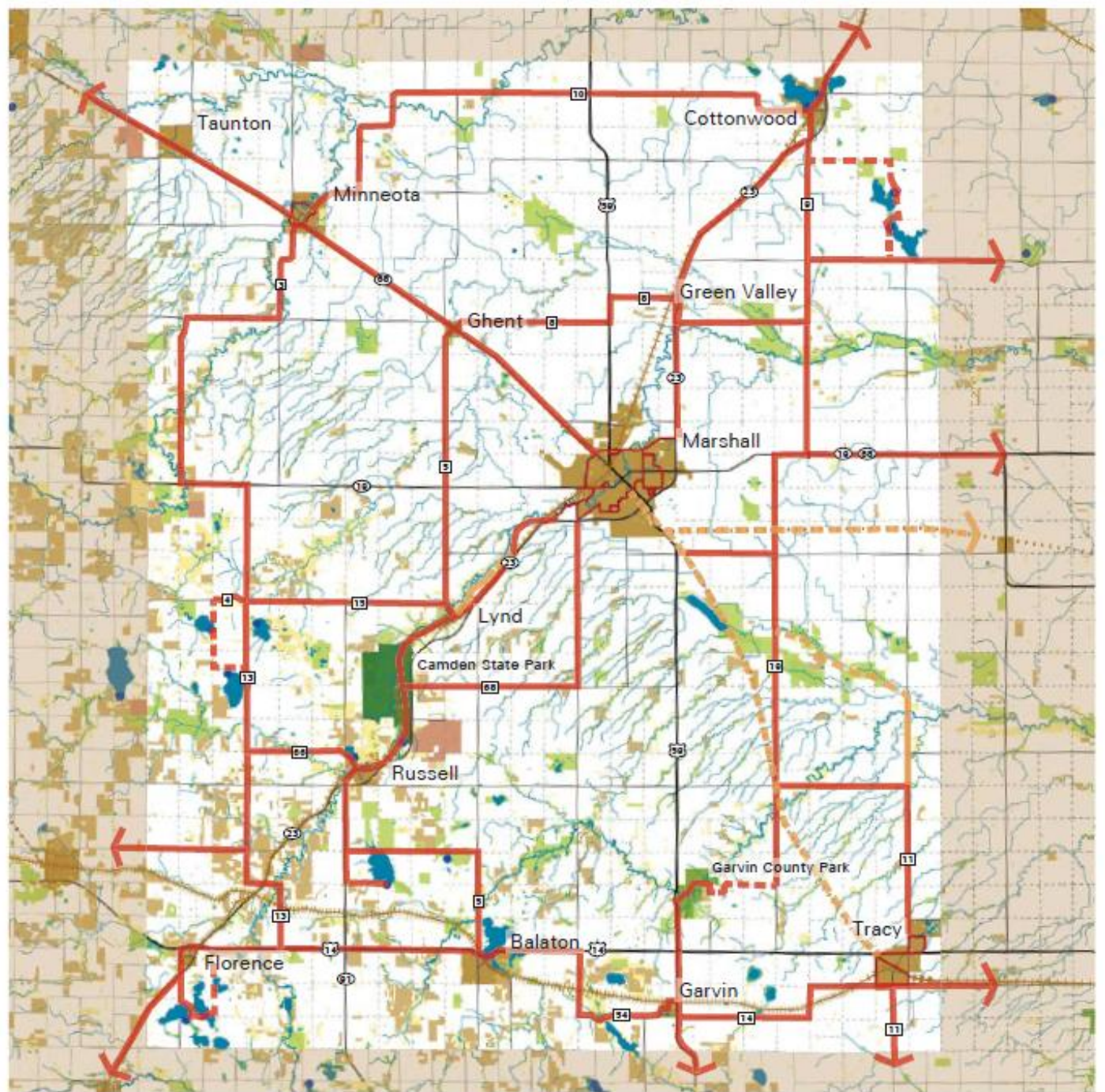
<http://www.marshallmn.com/portal/images/stories/pdf/bike/A-Pedestrian-and-Bikeway-Plan-10-2008.pdf>



# Camden State Park Management Plan Amendment

## Figure 2: Proposed Lyon County Trails

Map courtesy of The Center for Changing Landscapes, College of Design,  
College of Food, Agriculture, and Natural Sciences, University of Minnesota.



- |                      |                     |  |
|----------------------|---------------------|--|
| Municipalities       | Private CRP Land    | Proposed County Trails Adjacent to Paved Roads           |
| Federally Owned Land | Grassland/Shrubland | Proposed County Trails Adjacent to Unpaved Roads         |
| DNR Owned Land       | Forested Land       | Alternate Proposed County Trails Adjacent to Paved Roads |
| County Owned Land    | Local Trails        | Alternate Proposed County Trails Through Private Land    |

## PLANNING ISSUES AND PROPOSED CHANGES

Ten miles southwest of the city of Marshall and its 13,680 residents<sup>7</sup>, Camden State Park has the ability to play an important role in the Department of Natural Resources' (DNR) ongoing efforts to connect people to the outdoors through the use of Minnesota State Parks and Trails. Park programs and special events focus on bringing people – particularly youth, young adults, families with children, and minority populations – into the parks for activities that will encourage them to become regular park users. Programs specializing in outdoor skill building – including camping, fishing, archery, paddling, and climbing – have been popular throughout the Minnesota State Parks and Trails system.

At Camden State Park, special events like the Camden Classic, the availability of fly fishing equipment, and innovative programs like “Experience Fly Fishing at Camden” have attracted more people to the park. The Camden Classic, held at the park annually between 2003 and 2008, consisted of several bike rides and races. It included an Introduction to Mountain Biking, a Kid’s Bike Rodeo, two mountain bike races, and road rides of varying distances.

People can be attracted to parks through programs and special events, and through the addition of amenities that make park visits easier or more attractive, such as regional trail connections or new trail opportunities. Such efforts have stimulated discussions as to whether some facilities at the park should be improved to attract more of the targeted visitors, or if new trails or facilities should be developed. Higher and more intensive use levels need to be balanced with efforts to maintain the high quality natural and cultural resources in the park. The ongoing challenge will be to successfully balance the park’s role in providing sustainable forms of recreation while maintaining its natural and historic character.

### *Marshall to Camden Regional Trail Connection Options*

Camden State Park has 14.8 miles of hiking trails, 10.2 miles of horseback trail, 4.2 miles of bike riding trails, 5 miles of ski trails, and 7.6 miles of snowmobile trails. Figure 3 shows Camden’s existing trail network and the proposed regional trail and trailhead locations, according to “County Trail System Design: Lyon County”<sup>8</sup> (Lyon County Trail Plan).

With regard to the trail design, the Lyon County Trail Plan recommends the following:

- Trail accesses should be located at both the northern and southern access points.
- Two trailheads, one north and one south, should be located in the park.

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<sup>7</sup> United States Census Bureau. 2010. *Population and Housing Occupancy Status*. [http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=DEC\\_10\\_PL\\_GCTPL2.ST13&prodType=table](http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=DEC_10_PL_GCTPL2.ST13&prodType=table)

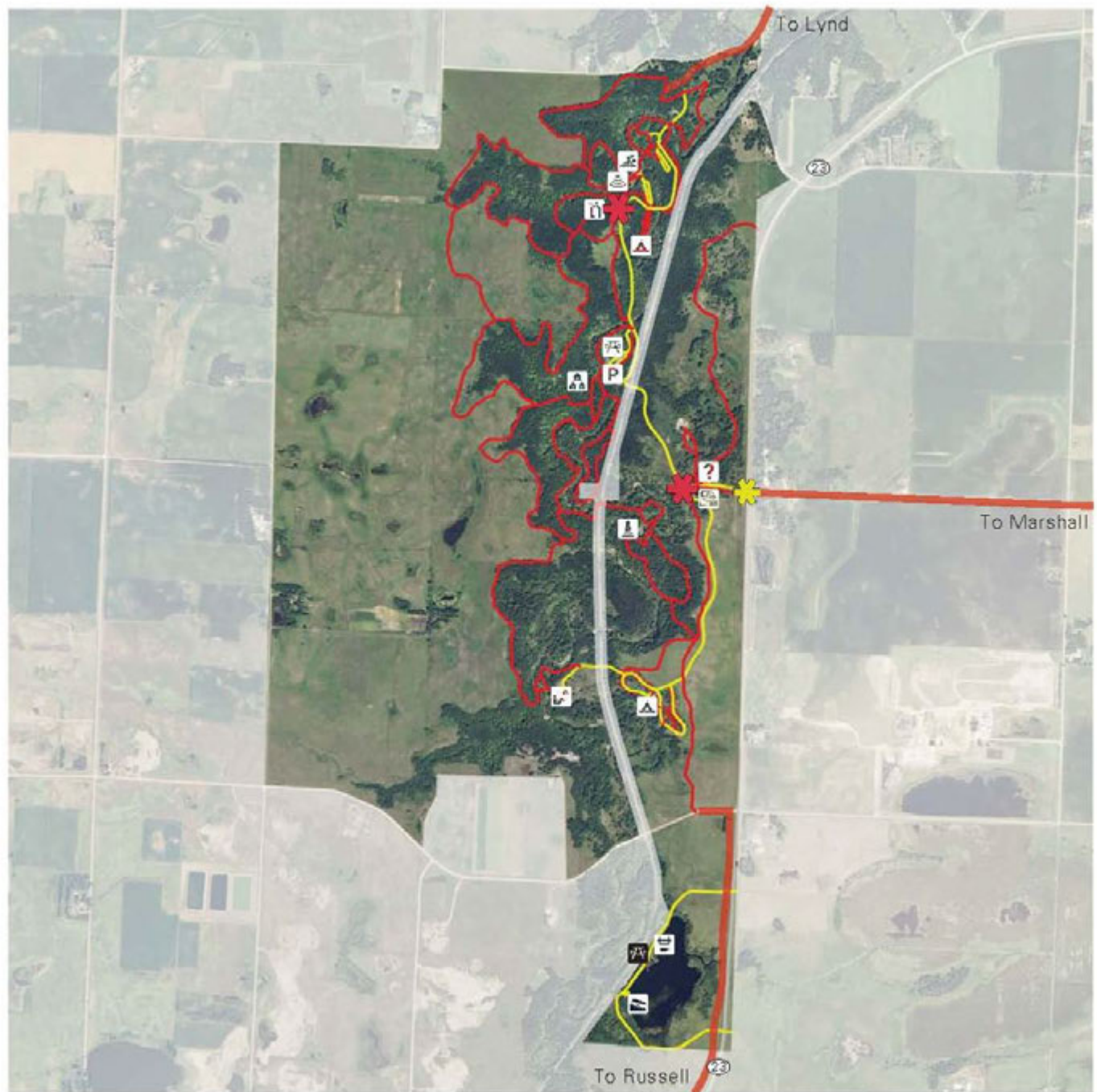
<sup>8</sup> The Center for Changing Landscapes, University of Minnesota. 2010. *County Trail System Design: Lyon County*. Minneapolis, MN. <http://ccl.design.umn.edu/documents/LyonChapter.pdf>



## Camden State Park Management Plan Amendment

### Figure 3: Existing Trail Network and Proposed County Trail Connections

Map courtesy of The Center for Changing Landscapes, College of Design,  
College of Food, Agriculture, and Natural Sciences, University of Minnesota.



- |                         |               |                  |                      |
|-------------------------|---------------|------------------|----------------------|
| — Proposed County Trail | — Park Roads  | <b>P</b> Parking | Trailer Dump Station |
| Proposed Trailhead      | Historic Site | Swimming         | Primitive Group Camp |
| Park Entrance           | Picnic Area   | Campground       | Equestrian Camping   |
| — Park Trails           | Fishing Pier  | Overlook         | Information/Office   |

The map illustrates proposed regional trails segments accessing the park from the north, east, and south sides. From the north, a regional trail would access the state park via the CR25 corridor and the Redwood River valley, and connect to the Camden History Trail. From the west, a regional trail segment would access the park via the CR 68 corridor, and connect to the park's main entrance road and contact station. From the south, a regional trail segment would access the park via the MN 23 corridor, briefly traveling west along CR 59 where the trail would connect with the existing Restoration Area Trail.

Although the Lyon County Trail Plan illustrates how each of the regional trail segments would connect to the park in the locations mentioned above, it does not address how they would connect to each another within the park. If the intent is for trail users to follow the park road or existing park trails, or for DNR staff to determine the best alignment of an off-road, paved trail through the park, neither of these approaches are mentioned in this portion of the plan. Further, potential issues related to topography, accessibility, natural resource impacts, and specific design elements (e.g. paved vs. unpaved) are not addressed.

#### *Proposed Changes in Trail Network and Use*

##### Camden Regional Trail

As part of the planning process for this plan amendment, DNR staff have discussed the latest regional trail proposal by Lyon County, and weighed the advantages and disadvantages of a "through-park" connection. The goal of this effort has been to provide a feasible, safe and attractive trail alignment while continuing to serve other trail users (hikers, horseback riders) and protecting natural and cultural resource values within the park.

Contrary to the map provided in the Lyon County Trail Plan, the latest proposal from the county has the Camden Regional Trail connecting to the state park at the northeast corner of the park, near MN-23. The regional trail would connect to the park's 1.1 mile Restoration Area Trail north of the contact station, which would be paved.

Some of the provisions included in the Cooperative Agreement between the DNR and Lyon County include:

- the DNR's right to review and approve any preliminary or final plans for the regional trail;
- the trail must meet Americans with Disability Act (ADA) requirements; and
- upon completion of trail construction, the County will have primary responsibility for the administration, operations and annual maintenance of the trail surface.



DNR staff agree that paving the Restoration Area Trail north of the contact station would:

- facilitate a regional trail connection;
- provide additional in-park bicycling opportunities;
- provide additional ADA accessible trail miles;
- provide a future connection to proposed mountain bike trails;
- have an acceptable natural and cultural resource impact.

These provisions, in turn, would make the state park more attractive and accessible to current and prospective visitors, and therefore help to address the objective to better connect people and the outdoors. The plan amendment team supports the development of the Camden Regional Trail in collaboration with Lyon County and other partners.

In the future, if the regional trail continues south through the state park – or make other in-park connections – DNR staff should be involved in the planning of the route. Options discussed for extending the regional trail south include paving the existing trail corridor that parallels the park road, or paving the park road and providing sufficient shoulder space and/or bicycle lanes.

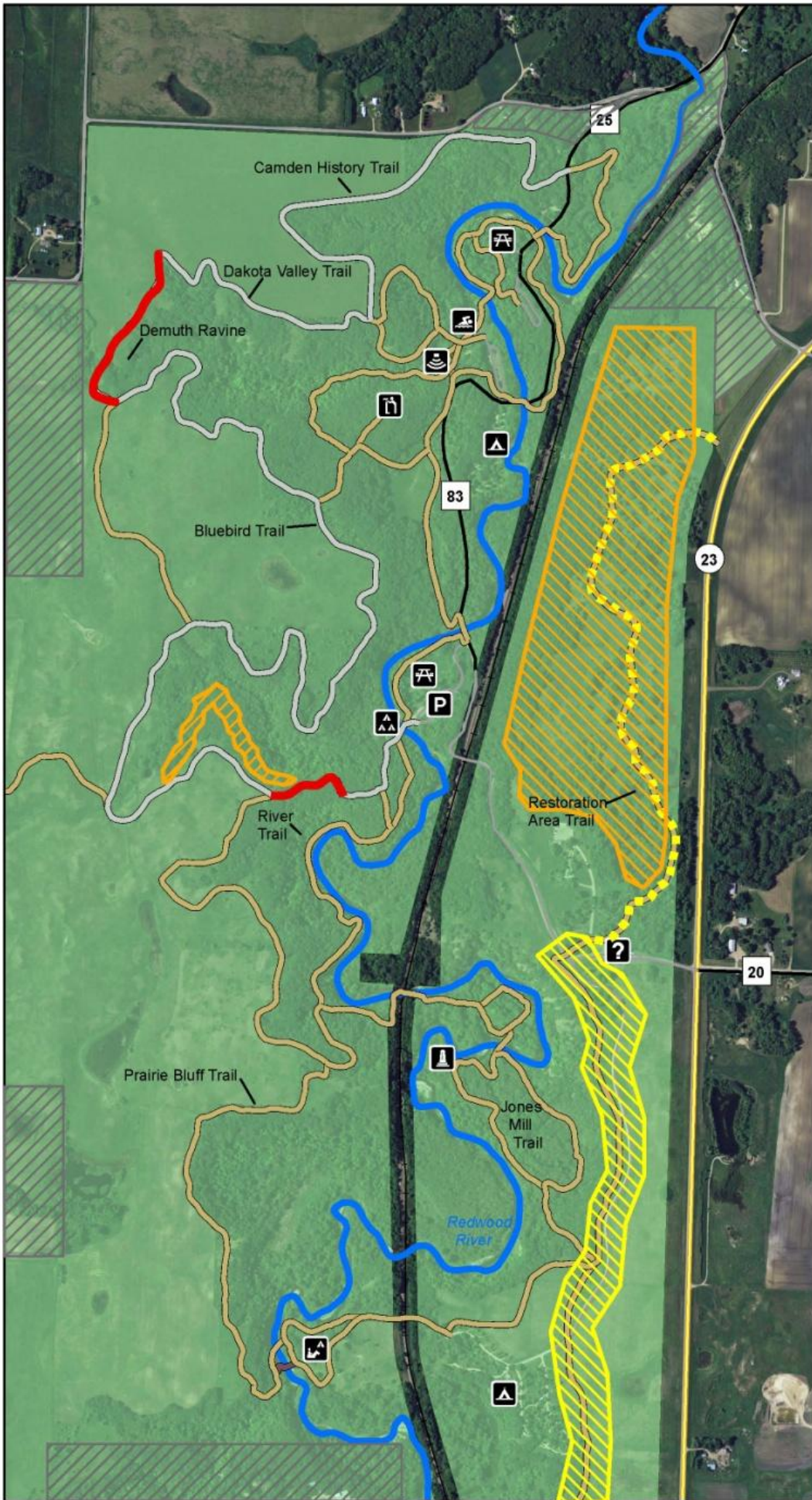
#### Mountain Biking as a Recommended Park Activity

Though not included as one of the recommended park activities in the 1978 Plan, mountain biking was piloted as a park activity in the years that followed and has become a fairly popular activity at Camden. Mountain bike trails include the Camden History Trail, the Dakota Valley Trail and Bluebird Trail, and are shared with horseback riders and hikers. This management plan amendment recognizes mountain biking as a recommended park activity.

According to park staff, trail use conflicts between the different user groups has been minimal. If conflicts arise in the future, park staff reserve the right to take appropriate action, including educating trail users on appropriate trail etiquette, separating trail uses, the closing of trails or trail segments to particular uses, or other actions deemed necessary to resolve the conflict. In the future, if a separation of trail uses becomes necessary, any new trail development must follow the Division's standard project review process.

*The plan amendment team supports the development of the Camden Regional Trail in collaboration with Lyon County and other partners.*

*This management plan amendment recognizes mountain biking as a recommended park activity.*



## Camden State Park

Figure 4: Proposed Changes in Trail Network

### Legend

- State Park
- Private Property
- River

### Existing Trail Uses

- Hike/Horse/Mtn Bike
- Hike/Horse
- Hike

### Proposed Trail Changes

- Planned Regional Trail segment
- Future Regional Trail segment search area
- Rehabilitate existing trail
- Proposed single-track mountain bike trail(s)

### Roads and Railroads

- MN Trunk Highway
- County Highway
- Municipal Road
- Township or Other Road
- DOT Railroads

- Campground
- Primitive Group Camp
- Equestrian Camping
- Picnic Area
- Information/Office
- Historic Site
- Parking
- Overlook
- Amphitheater



0 0.15 0.3 Miles



Minnesota DNR  
Division of Parks and Trails

### Rehabilitation and/or Rerouting of Existing Shared-Use Trails

Some of the shared use trails in the park have experienced erosion problems due to initial design issues and/or as the result of significant rainfall events. In the areas where such problems have been identified, the plan amendment team recommends the trails be rehabilitated or rerouted to create more sustainable trail conditions.

Trails that directly ascend or descend a hillside are known as fall line trails.<sup>9</sup> They typically follow the shortest route up or down a hill; the same path that water flows. The problem with fall line trails is that they focus water down their length.

Water flowing down such trails strips the trail of soil and creates gullies. Once a trail has become incised or gullied, it is very difficult to drain water off of the trail. Trail users cause additional damage by widening the trail as they seek a smoother route.

According to the International Mountain Bicycling Association (IMBA), the most sustainable trail design on a slope/grade is a rolling contour trail. It is characterized by a sidehill location, an alignment mainly perpendicular to the fall line, a gentle trail grade, undulations known as grade reversals that drain water, and an outsloped tread that tilts slightly toward the outer edge. These features minimize erosion by allowing water to drain in a non-erosive fashion, generally following the path it traveled before the trail existed, and containing users on the trail tread where their impact can be managed.

Two trail specific reroutes were proposed by a local chapter of Minnesota Off-Road Cyclists (MORC) on portions of the Dakota Valley Trail and the Bluebird Trail. According to the project proposal, the reroutes would take the shared use trail off the fall-line thereby decreasing the trail grade and improving safety, and reducing the future maintenance needs of the trail.

Following discussion and site reconnaissance, the plan amendment team recommends implementing one of the two reroutes proposed by the local MORC chapter. Specifically, the team recommends implementing the reroute southwest of the park's group camp. This reroute would address problems with the existing trail's fall-line alignment.

The plan amendment team does not recommend implementing the proposed trail reroute into Demuth Ravine as it is currently laid out. The 1978 Plan identifies this ravine as part of an Ecological Protection Zone and the soils are identified as having the potential for severe erosion. Subsequent resource assessments illustrate that this is an area rich in natural resource diversity.

*In the areas where such problems have been identified, the plan amendment team recommends the trails be rehabilitated or rerouted to create more sustainable trail conditions.*

*The plan amendment team recommends implementing one of the two reroutes proposed by the local MORC chapter.*

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<sup>9</sup> International Mountain Bicycling Association. 2007. *Managing Mountain Biking: IMBA's Guide to Providing Great Riding*. Publication Printers Corp. Denver, CO.

These considerations, however, do not preclude park staff – in consultation with other Division staff and partners, and using the Division’s standard project review process – from implementing trail reroutes and/or developing new trails in other areas of the park in the future.

For example, areas of the park that were not included in the original proposals may be considered for future trail rehabilitation and/or development projects, as determined by park management and based on site conditions, efforts to better connect people to the outdoors, and other needs. Other trails within the park have been identified as needing trail rehabilitation or have been suggested as potential areas for trail development, including the area north of the contact station (see Figure 4: Proposed Changes in Trail Network).

The area north of the state park contact station, west of Highway 23, and east of the railroad tracks is predominately former gravel pits. The result of this land use is gently- to moderately-undulating terrain which may be appropriate for developing a range of single-track mountain bike trail opportunities or a mountain bike “experience zone”. Experience zones divide parks or other recreation areas into specific zones designed around particular uses. These zones can provide a variety of visitor and trail user experiences that reduce conflict between different user groups while providing sustainable, long-lasting trails.<sup>10</sup>

*The area north of the state park contact station...may be appropriate for developing a range of single-track mountain bike trail opportunities.*

This area, outlined in Figure 4: Proposed Changes in Trail Network, encompasses more than 100 acres of land and includes the Restoration Area Trail, which is proposed to be paved to provide a connection with the Camden Regional Trail. The paved trail, accommodating multiple trail user types, could provide easy access to the single-track mountain bike trails. Other locations for single-track mountain bike riding opportunities may also be considered.

Other trails within the park – including the River Trail, adjacent to the Redwood River in the center of the park – are in need of rehabilitation. Rehabilitating the River Trail and adjacent areas could help to stabilize the shoreline, improve trout habitat, and provide additional shore fishing opportunities.

Any trail development, repair or rehabilitation in the park should be guided by the Department’s *Trail Planning, Design and Development Guidelines* and will consider IMBA’s *Trail Solutions* and *Managing Mountain Biking* manuals, as appropriate. Natural and cultural resource specialists, and professional trail design and construction specialists will be consulted before any new development is undertaken.

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<sup>10</sup> International Mountain Bicycling Association. 2007. *Managing Mountain Biking: IMBA’s Guide to Providing Great Riding*. Publication Printers Corp. Denver, CO.



## *Resource Management*

### Timber Harvest Management

The Division employs a variety of tools as part of its resource management activities including prescribed burning, control of invasive species, special hunts, seed collection, planting of trees and other vegetation, mowing and timber harvest. These tools are often used in combination as part of multi-step, often multi-year, efforts to improve the extent and quality of the unit's native plant and animal communities.

This plan amendment clarifies the use of timber harvesting as a resource management tool in Camden State Park.

The Division uses timber harvesting as a tool to meet its resource management goals, and to facilitate interpretive and recreation activities. Timber harvests take place in state parks and state recreation areas primarily to restore or manage native plant communities. In some cases, a harvest is necessary to restore visitor usage and reduce fuel loads following a storm event.

Timber harvests are conducted in state parks and state recreation areas to achieve various results:

- Stands of trees or other woody species not native to the park may be removed in order to “preserve, perpetuate and interpret natural features that existed in the area of the park prior to [European] settlement” (MS 86A.05 subd. 2c).
- Trees are harvested as part of restoring native plant communities such as oak savannas and prairies or to integrate planted stands into surrounding forest communities.
- Trees are sometimes harvested to prepare a site for regular resource management through prescribed fire – the timber harvest is used first to reduce the fuel load.
- Trees may be harvested to address an insect or disease issue, or to thin the stand for better growth.
- On occasion, trees are harvested to restore visitor access by clearing trails and other facilities, and to reduce fuel loads following a storm event.

The Division may contract with a commercial operator to conduct timber harvest activities. The division does not have the necessary equipment or staff to efficiently conduct timber harvests, especially larger-scale projects often utilized for natural community restoration projects.

*This plan amendment clarifies the use of timber harvesting as a resource management tool in Camden State Park.*

### Bison Restoration

In 1961, Blue Mounds State Park, in far southwestern Minnesota, adopted three bison from Niobrara National Wildlife Refuge in Nebraska.<sup>11</sup> Today, a herd of around 100 adult bison roam a 500-acre enclosure, all of it open grassland.

In an effort to “reintroduce, where practicable, species that were present ...before European settlement”<sup>12</sup> in or near state parks where bison once roamed, the Division proposes extending the bison herd to other state parks in the system. Given the abundant acreage of restored and/or reconstructed prairie grassland – a critical consideration for locating future bison herds – Camden State Park and other state parks in southern and western Minnesota are being considered.



In addition to the ecological benefits realized by restoring a faunal species once known to inhabit the area, restoring bison to Camden or other state parks would have educational benefits and provide more Minnesota residents and visitors the opportunity to see this historic and majestic animal first hand.

As with operations at Blue Mounds, the Division would provide interpretive opportunities at any state park containing bison. These opportunities could include naturalist-led hikes and programs; informational brochures, posters, podcasts, and virtual tours; viewing platforms; and more. The Division is currently considering ways in which it can better connect people and bison, while maintaining visitor and animal safety.

*The Division proposes extending the bison herd to other state parks in the system...Camden and other state parks in southern and western Minnesota are being considered.*

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<sup>11</sup> Minnesota Conservation Volunteer. July-August 2008. *Home on the Plains*. Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. St. Paul, MN.

<sup>12</sup> Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Division of Parks and Recreation. 1978. *A Management Plan for Camden State Park*. St. Paul, Minnesota.

### *Facility Proposals*

Several facility proposals were evaluated during the plan amendment process including the improvement of existing campgrounds; the development of a new group camping facility, camper cabins, and backpack or walk-in campsites; and the conversion of the former manager's residence to a guest house.

#### Group Camping Facility, Existing Campgrounds

There are three primary classes of group centers or group camps in the Minnesota State Park system. They include:

1. Modern group centers
2. Semi-Modern group centers
3. Rustic or primitive group camps

Modern group centers include facilities for sleeping, dining, cooking, and bathrooms. Some have staff quarters, craft buildings, and other facilities. Six Minnesota state parks have either seasonal or year-round modern group centers, including Flandrau, Lake Carlos, Lake Shetek, Sibley, St. Croix, and Whitewater.

Semi-modern group centers include a dining room, kitchen, and bathrooms. There are no cabins or barracks for sleeping. Guests must provide their own sleeping accommodations such as tents or RVs. Two Minnesota state parks have typical semi-modern group centers, including Itasca and Myre-Big Island. Both of these semi-modern group centers are seasonal. Other state parks have invested in their rustic or primitive group camps to add electricity or other amenities, creating a more semi-modern group center-like experience.

Rustic or primitive group camps contain less built infrastructure, but include vault toilets and standard campsite amenities like picnic tables and fire rings with grills for cooking. Showers and/or flush toilets are typically not available. Fifty four Minnesota state parks have rustic group camps, many of which have more than one group camp in the park. Camden State Park has a rustic group camp located to the southwest of the South Picnic Area.

A 2005 DNR report<sup>13</sup> included several recommendations that relate to Camden State Park. First, the report includes a recommendation to upgrade Camden's primitive group camp by adding electricity to campsites. The report also recommends a goal of "providing electric service to 50% of all drive-in campsites." Campsites with electricity are in high demand by the camping public and currently Camden State Park does not provide this level of service. Increasing amperage at existing electric sites is also desired to

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<sup>13</sup> Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Division of Parks and Recreation. 2005. *Minnesota State Parks Facility Recommendations Related to Generation of Income: Camper Cabins, Campsites with Electricity, and Group Camps*. St. Paul, Minnesota.

accommodate larger rigs and changing visitor needs. Further, the report includes a proposal to develop a new group camp at the park in the location identified in the park's 1978 Plan.

The proposed group camp is located west of the Lower Campground, near several other park amenities (see Figure 5: Proposed Facility Development). Other locations for this type of facility may be considered. The proposed location once housed a Veteran's Conservation Corps (VCC) tent camp and therefore offers opportunities to interpret the unique history of the VCC and the park's early development history.



This amendment differs from the 1978 Plan in that it recommends a semi-modern group camping facility or group center be developed.

Semi-modern group centers take somewhat different forms throughout the state park system. Typical semi-modern group centers include a centrally-located building containing kitchen facilities, a dining room and flush toilets surrounded by several electric campsites that can accommodate either tents or hard-sided equipment like pop-ups, campers, RVs, and fifth wheels. Interspersing electric campsites with camper cabins or other types of overnight lodging opportunities, like yurts or wall tents, is also an option.

Depending on the site and available funding, new group camping facilities may have a smaller development footprint than typical semi-modern group centers and may not include a kitchen or dining room. Rather, the focus of the group center could be an enclosed or partially-enclosed picnic shelter with electricity and possibly flush toilets.

Following the appropriate natural and cultural resource assessments, the plan amendment team recommends adding electricity to campsites in the existing group camp and drive-in campgrounds, increasing the amperage at existing electric campsites, and developing a semi-modern group center.

*The plan amendment team recommends adding electricity to campsites in the existing group camp and drive-in campgrounds, increasing the amperage at existing electric campsites, and developing a semi-modern group center.*



### Camper Cabins and Other Overnight Lodging Opportunities

Often reserved several months in advance, camper cabins are consistently one of the most popular overnight lodging options in Minnesota State Parks. Camper cabins are rustic, one-room wooden cabins that provide basic shelter for visitors who want a "camping out" experience but don't have or prefer not to deal with a tent.



According to the 2005 DNR report referenced above, camper cabins are also a good investment; they generate more income than they cost to operate. With an estimated payback period of six to eight years, camper cabins are one of the best revenue generating investments the Division of Parks and Trails can make.<sup>14</sup>

Minnesota State Parks currently offer 83 camper cabins in 26 parks, and that number is likely to grow given the popularity of the accommodation and their strong return on investment.

The Division of Parks and Trails is also in the process of exploring other types of similarly-sized overnight lodging opportunities in the state park system, including yurts and wall tents. Like camper cabins, these structures would accommodate groups of up to six or eight people.

Following the appropriate natural and cultural resource assessments, the plan amendment team recommends developing a cluster of camper cabins or another similarly-sized overnight lodging opportunity. One location, west

*The plan amendment team recommends developing a cluster of camper cabins or another similarly-sized overnight lodging opportunity.*

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<sup>14</sup> Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Division of Parks and Recreation. 2005. *Minnesota State Parks Facility Recommendations Related to Generation of Income: Camper Cabins, Campsites with Electricity, and Group Camps*. St. Paul, Minnesota.

of the Lower Campground, was discussed by the plan amendment team (see Figure 5: Proposed Facility Development). Other locations for situating these types of facilities on the landscape may be considered.

Like the proposed group center location, this area of the park is amenity rich and camper cabins situated here would provide easy access to the park's trail system, popular swimming area, playground, amphitheater, and North Picnic Area.



Related, the plan amendment team recommends that the “Instructor’s Cabin,” adjacent to the park’s amphitheater, be demolished and rebuilt in the style of the original building to provide a camper cabin-like overnight lodging opportunity in this amenity-rich area (see Figure 5: Proposed Facility Development). This historic facility has been damaged by multiple forest blowdown events and is currently in a critical state of disrepair. This location is within the park’s CCC/WPA/Rustic Style Historic District and therefore requires oversight from Minnesota’s State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO).

*The plan amendment team recommends that the seasonal residence or “Instructor’s Cabin,” adjacent to the park’s amphitheater, be demolished and rebuilt in the style of the original building to provide a camper cabin-like overnight lodging opportunity.*





## Camden State Park

Figure 5: Proposed Facility Development

### Legend

#### Proposed Facilities

-  Guest House
-  Camper Cabin
-  Backpack Campsite
-  Group Camping Facility

#### Existing Facilities

-  Campground
-  Picnic Area
-  Parking
-  Overlook
-  Amphitheater

#### System Level Land Cover

-  Floodplain Forest System
-  Mesic Hardwood Forest
-  Upland Prairie System
-  Wet Meadow/Carr System
-  Other Natural System (lakes, rivers, wetlands)
-  Non-Natural System (prairie or savanna reconstruction, old field, gravel pits)
-  Facilities System (campgrounds, service areas, private property)

#### Trails

-  Hike/Horse/Mtn Bike
-  Hike/Horse
-  Hike



0 0.05 0.1 Miles



Minnesota DNR  
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### Guest House

Unlike the standard size and style of camper cabins, guest houses and other cabin-like opportunities vary greatly throughout the Minnesota State Park system. Eight parks offer over 40 guesthouses or cabins,<sup>15</sup> the majority of which are at Itasca State Park.

At Camden, the plan amendment team recommends that the former manager's residence or "Custodian's Cabin" northeast of the North Picnic Area be converted to a guest house (see Figure 5: Proposed Facility Development). This location, like the "Instructor's Cabin", is also within the park's historic district and therefore requires oversight from SHPO.



*The plan amendment team recommends that the former manager's residence or "Custodian's Cabin" northeast of the North Picnic Area be converted to a guest house.*

### Backpack or Walk-in Campsites

On the other end of the overnight lodging spectrum from cabins and guest houses, backpack or walk-in campsites provide a more secluded camping experience. These remote campsites are inaccessible by motor vehicle, but they're a good option for those looking to hike-in or bike-in, where allowed. All sites have a picnic table, a fire ring, and a vault toilet or field latrine.

Backpack campsites are typically more than a quarter mile from designated parking spaces while walk-in campsites are less than a quarter mile. Currently, 34 state parks offer backpack or walk-in campsites.

The 1978 Plan recommended provided "secluded campsites easily accessible by foot, but removed from a parking lot." General locations were identified for these camping opportunities, west of the Redwood River.

The plan amendment team recommends that one or more backpack or walk-in campsites be developed near the locations identified in the 1978 Plan or other suitable locations. Depending on where they are sited, the backpack or walk-in campsites could have relatively easy access to the core amenities of the park, including the swimming area, amphitheater, and North Picnic Area. One such location – the site of a historic VCC firebox – has been identified (see Figure 5: Proposed Facility Development).

*The plan amendment team recommends that one or more backpack or walk-in campsites be developed near the locations identified in the 1978 Plan or other suitable locations.*

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<sup>15</sup> Lodge and group center accommodations excluded.

### *Park Boundary*

The plan amendment team discussed the possibility of extending the park's statutory boundary to provide additional opportunities for ecological protection and restoration, interpretation, and outdoor recreation at some future time.

Options for extending the park's statutory boundary to the south, west, and north of the existing boundary were discussed. Township roads currently provide a well-defined perimeter around much of the park in these areas. However, these township roads are low-volume, gravel roadways that would pose little or no safety risk to visitors if the park's trail system were extended into areas that might be acquired at a future time.

After conducting field reconnaissance of these areas, the plan amendment team does not recommend expanding the park's statutory boundary at this time. Lands outside of the park's statutory boundary may be added at a future time; it is not necessary to complete a state park management plan amendment to do so.

Extending a state park's statutory boundary gives included landowners another option if they ever decide to sell their land, but inclusion in no way obligates a landowner to sell their land to the state of Minnesota. It simply allows the Division of Parks and Trails to be one of the potential buyers. Legally, the Division of Parks and Trails is only able to purchase land that is within the statutory boundary.



## NATURAL RESOURCES IMPACTS

### *Important Natural Resources*

Within the park, the hardwood forest community within the Redwood River Valley and its tributaries offers a distinct and refreshing change from the agricultural lands and prairie that surround it.

In 1971, a joint survey by the Minnesota Academy of Science and The Nature Conservancy found that the park was of particular scientific interest because it contained one of the westernmost natural occurrences of the sugar maple in North America<sup>16</sup>.

The sugar maple is a characteristic mesic hardwood forest species, stands of which also often include basswood, green ash, and bur oak. Many of the terraces and steep slopes within the park contain this type of vegetation.

Recent resource assessments have also identified rare hydrologic and natural features in the park, like sidehill seeps. These seepage zones support populations of unique plant species like cut leaf water parsnip, American ginseng and rare orchids.

Prior to Euro-American settlement, most of the land above the bluffs of the Redwood River Valley was vegetated with upland prairie. With settlement came agriculture, however, and most of the prairie was plowed to make way for row crops. Characteristic dry prairie species include big bluestem, little bluestem and side oats grama grass.

The 1978 Plan made use of a zoning system which classified the various features or elements within the park. The final zoning map included areas of Ecological Protection, General Environment, Cultural/Historical significance, and Development locations (see Appendix).

The Ecological Projection Zone “includes areas having ecological communities which are either sensitive to certain uses, require special management or protection and/or have significant value for research.”<sup>17</sup> Areas “sensitive and valuable enough to justify their inclusion in this zone” included the park’s steep slopes, the Redwood River, and prairie remnants. Only very small portions of the park’s steep slopes were not included in this zone to allow for vehicular access to the park’s core from the east, and to allow for trail access out of the valley on the northern edge.

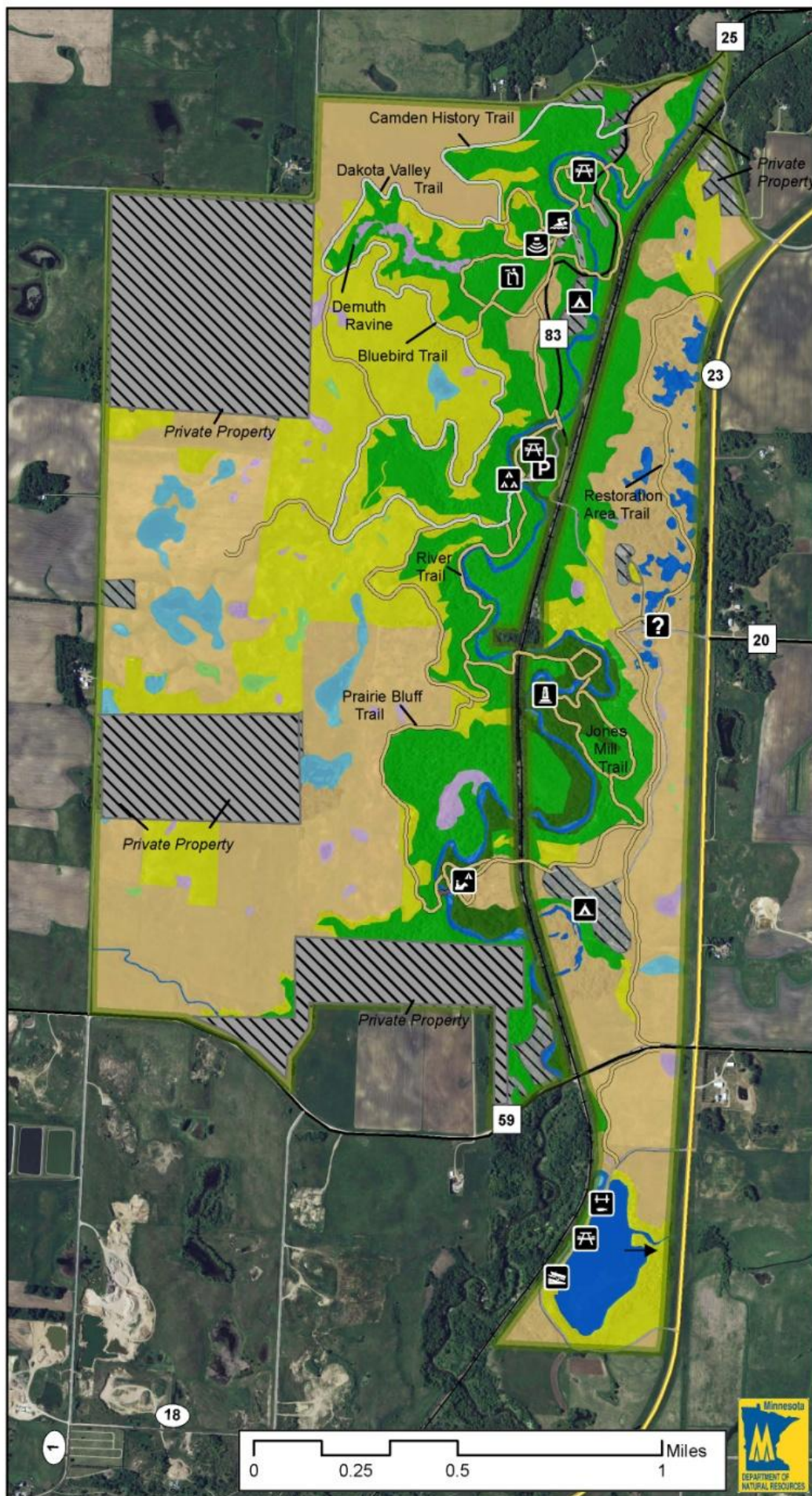
Today, natural resource specialists rank the quality of native plant communities (NPCs), and this helps to identify areas requiring special

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<sup>16</sup> Meyer, Roy Willard. 1991. *Everyone’s Country Estate: A History of Minnesota’s State Parks*. Minnesota Historical Society Press. St. Paul, Minnesota.

<sup>17</sup> Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Division of Parks and Recreation. 1978. *A Management Plan for Camden State Park*. Central Office. St. Paul, Minnesota.





## Camden State Park

Figure 6: Land Cover

### Legend

State Park

#### System Level Land Cover

- Mesic Hardwood Forest
- Floodplain Forest System
- Upland Prairie System
- Wetland Prairie System
- Wet Meadow/Carr
- Marsh System
- Other Natural System (lakes, rivers, wetlands)
- Non-Natural System (prairie or savanna reconstruction, old field, gravel pits)
- Facilities System (campgrounds, service areas, private property)

#### Trail Uses

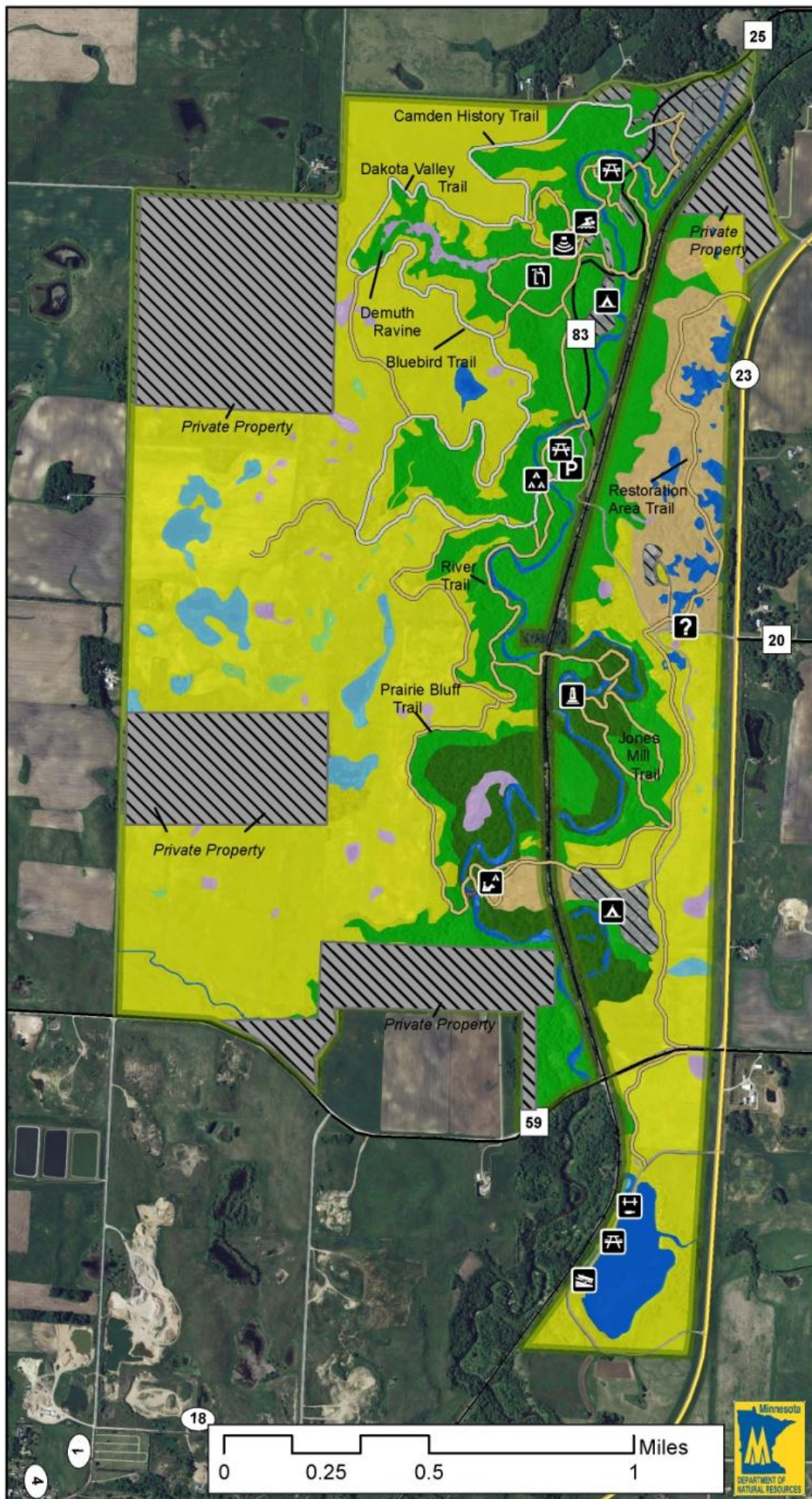
- Hike/Horse/Mtn Bike
- Hike/Horse Trail
- Hike

- Campground
- Primitive Group Camp
- Equestrian Camping
- Picnic Area
- Information/Office
- Historic Site
- Parking
- Overlook
- Amphitheater
- Swimming
- Fishing Pier
- Boat Ramp



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## Camden State Park

Figure 7: Desired Future Land Cover

### Legend

State Park

### System Level Land Cover

#### DFC System

- Mesic Hardwood Forest
- Floodplain Forest System
- Upland Prairie System
- Wetland Prairie System
- Wet Meadow/Carr
- Marsh System
- Other Natural System (lakes, rivers, wetlands)
- Non-Natural System (prairie or savanna reconstruction, old field, gravel pits)
- Facilities System (campgrounds, service areas, private property)

### Trail Uses

- Hike/Horse/Mtn Bike
- Hike/Horse Trail
- Hike
- Campground
- Primitive Group Camp
- Equestrian Camping
- Picnic Area
- Information/Office
- Historic Site
- Parking
- Overlook
- Amphitheater
- Swimming
- Fishing Pier
- Boat Ramp



protection or areas which may be suitable for limited forms of development. From a natural resource perspective, development is least problematic in existing use areas, then non-natural communities such as old fields, and then low quality (D-rank) NPCs. Next are good quality (C rank) NPCs and reconstructed NPCs. Development is of most concern in high quality (A-B rank) NPCs and particularly so in those that are also classified as imperiled (S2) or critically imperiled (S1) in Minnesota.

There are eight species of endangered, threatened, or special concern species known to occur in the park, as well as Species of Greatest Conservation Need.

### *Impacts of Proposed Projects*

The paving of the Restoration Area Trail and the area proposed for new single-track mountain bike trail opportunities north of the contact station have been significantly disturbed by past land uses, particularly gravel mining. This land use history has created an undulating landscape with subtle topographic variation in many places. Other portions of the area are generally flat. Trees, both standing and fallen from past wind events, are scattered on the landscape and in close proximity to the existing mowed trail. Prior to any development of new trail opportunities, any areas of potential concern – including wet or steep-sided areas – should be carefully assessed.

Rehabilitating the currently eroded areas of the Dakota Valley trail would have minimal impacts because the area is already in use. However, it could have the following impacts:

- Temporarily disturb plants/wildlife during the project implementation.
- Disturb soil and have the potential for erosion during project implementation.

As mentioned in the *Proposed Changes in Trail Network and Use* section of this document, where erosion or other issues have created unsustainable trail conditions, it is recommended that the trails be rehabilitated or rerouted to create more sustainable trail conditions.

Rerouting of the mountain bike trail into the “Demuth Ravine,” as initially proposed by MORC, could have several negative impacts to the natural resources including:

- Increased spread and introduction of new/current invasive species
- Erosion, sedimentation, and runoff issues associated with trails. (While this can be minimized with proper trail design, it is impossible to completely eliminate in this area due to the very steep slopes in the ravine and the erodible soils.)
- Degradation/disturbance of high quality NPCs

- Disturbance to forest animal communities, especially nesting birds. Habitat avoidance and social disruption are likely responses of mammals to the trail.

Further, a portion of the Demuth Ravine includes a Wet Meadow/Carr NPC with a condition rank of AB (high quality) and a state rank of 2 (imperiled). As mentioned in the *Proposed Changes in Trail Network and Use* section of this document, the plan amendment team does not recommend implementing the proposed trail reroute into Demuth Ravine as it is currently laid out.

However, the plan amendment team does recommend implementing a portion of the proposed trail reroute southwest of the park's group camp. The portion of the reroute that is recommended for implementation is on top of the Redwood River valley and its tributaries, and is predominately level. The reroute would not enter into tributary areas containing significant slopes or ravines.

Portions of this area have been identified as Southern Dry Savanna NPC with a condition rank of D (low quality), but a state rank of 1-2 (imperiled or critically imperiled.) Further, another portion of this area has been identified as Mesic Hardwood Forest NPC with a condition rank of D (low quality) and a state rank of 3 (vulnerable).

The addition of grazing animals, like bison, will likely benefit some species while impacting others since grazers prefer certain species of plants and avoid others. When carefully implemented, grazing can be a valuable management tool in prairie landscapes. Reintroducing bison to Camden would not only return an iconic keystone species to the park, it would restore an important ecosystem function of the prairie landscape.

With regard to the facility proposals outlined in this plan amendment, any areas of potential natural or cultural resource concerns should be carefully assessed. With the exception of the guest house, which would not expand the existing development footprint and is already in a "developed" area, any new development in undisturbed areas would require natural and cultural resource assessments.



## CULTURAL RESOURCES IMPACTS

### *Important Cultural Resources*

A portion of Camden State Park is on the National Register of Historic Places. The Camden State Park CCC/WPA/Rustic Style Historic District, located north of the park's Lower Campground, is noted for its National Park Service landscape design and split-stone buildings and structures built by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) and the Works Progress Administration (WPA) between 1934 and 1938. The historic district includes 13 contributing resources, all located on or near the banks of the Redwood River.<sup>18</sup>

Camden State Park was considered an important component of the growing state park system because it provided recreational facilities to a large portion of western and southern Minnesota residents. The landscape design for Camden State Park is architecturally significant as a notable example of National Park Service master planning that allowed the natural topography of the winding Redwood River to determine the location of the various functional areas in the park.

Camden State Park was developed by CCC Camp "SP-11", which first occupied the park in August 1934. This camp was made up of World War I Veterans. Camps like this were also known as Veteran Conservation Corps (VCC) camps.

Several WPA projects were initiated at Camden State Park after the VCC camp left. This included dismantling the VCC camp buildings that had been located at the present-day site of the campground. Three buildings in particular were moved to a remote location in the park to be used as a group camp facility. The Swimming Instructor's Cabin and the Ice and Wood House were also constructed as WPA projects.

Interpretive kiosks in the parking area for the swimming beach contain several historic photographs and articles describing the VCC camp and their work at Camden State Park. One kiosk, entitled "A New Deal Work Program Builds Camden State Park," features information about President Roosevelt authorizing the New Deal and the "Camp Life of Company No.2713." Another kiosk illustrates how the VCC collected stone and built roads, as well as showcasing the fruits of their labor. These interpretive kiosks honor the critical contributions of the VCC in the development of the state park.

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<sup>18</sup> Minnesota Historical Society. Camden State Park, National Register Listing: April 1991. <http://www.mnhs.org/places/nationalregister/stateparks/Camden.html>



The state park also contains several archaeological sites. According to the Cultural Resource Reconnaissance Survey<sup>19</sup> for the trail reroutes previously discussed, there are eight designated state archaeological sites and one Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) “alpha site” at Camden State Park. An alpha site is one where correspondence or written accounts indicate a possible archaeological site, but they have not been field verified by a professional archaeologist.

#### *Impacts of Proposed Projects*

Personal communication with Minnesota Historical Society’s State Park Archaeologist indicated no initial cultural resource concerns related to the paving of the Restoration Area Trail or the development of single-track mountain bike trail opportunities in the area north of the contact station. As mentioned previously, this area has been significantly disturbed by past land uses, particularly gravel mining.

With regard to the trail reroutes discussed earlier, the Minnesota State Park Cultural Resource Management Program of the Archaeology Department of the Minnesota Historical Society completed an archaeological reconnaissance survey and architecture/history review.

The Redwood River Terrace site (21LY130), a late nineteenth or early twentieth century house foundation, was identified in the southern trail reroute project area. Avoidance of the foundation is recommended.

Overall, a no effect finding is recommended for archaeological considerations. The architecture/history review found no significant architecture/history properties in, or adjacent to, the project area. A no properties finding is recommended for architecture/history review.

With regard to the possible restoration of bison to the state park in the upland prairie areas west of the Redwood River, one archaeological site (21LYa) exists in this area and would warrant investigation prior to any expansion of the bison herd to Camden.

As mentioned previously, the plan amendment team recommends that the “Instructor’s Cabin,” adjacent to the park’s amphitheater, be demolished and rebuilt in the style of the original building to provide a camper cabin-like overnight lodging opportunity (see Figure 5: Proposed Facility Development). This location is within the park’s CCC/WPA/Rustic Style Historic District and therefore would require oversight from SHPO.

The plan amendment team also recommends that the “Custodian’s Cabin” northeast of the North Picnic Area be converted to a guest house (see

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<sup>19</sup> Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. Division of Parks and Trails. 2010. *Cultural Resource Reconnaissance Survey for a Horse Trail Reroute Project, Camden State Park, Lyon County, Minnesota*. St. Paul, MN.

Figure 5: Proposed Facility Development). This location, like the Instructor's Cabin, is also within the park's historic district and therefore would require oversight from SHPO. The Custodian's Cabin is also within an identified archaeological site (21LY0118).

The single walk-in or backpack campsite location examined by the plan amendment team – the site of an historic VCC firebox – may also be within the park's historic district and would require the same oversight from SHPO if any site development were to occur there. Other walk-in or backpack sites generally identified in the 1978 Plan appear to be outside of the park's historic district.

As currently sited, the other proposed facility developments – including camper cabins or other overnight lodging opportunities, and a semi-modern group center – are not within the park's historic district.

Personal communication with Minnesota Historical Society's State Park Archaeologist indicated agreement with the recommendations of the plan amendment team.

## **RECREATION AND VISITOR USE IMPACTS**

### *Trail Users*

Hikers, horseback riders, and bicyclists would benefit from improvements to the trail system at Camden, including the rehabilitation and/or rerouting of unsustainable trails on the west side of the Redwood River.

On the east side of the river, the paving of the Restoration Area Trail would provide a smooth, accessible trail surface affording opportunities for trail users of all ages and abilities. The development of single-track mountain bike trail opportunities in this area would benefit off-road cyclists or mountain bikers.

The goal of future trail rehabilitation and/or rerouting is to have no net loss of trail opportunities for any existing user groups, but unsustainable trail conditions may require the temporary or permanent closure of some trails, thereby having an effect on some or all types of trail use.

Winter trail uses, including snowmobiling, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, and walking will not be affected to any appreciable degree by changes in the trail system outlined above.

### *Facilities*

The addition of electricity to the primitive group camp, and the development of a semi-modern group center, camper cabins or other overnight lodging opportunities, and walk-in or backpack sites would provide park visitors with attractive amenities that have proven to be popular in the Minnesota State Park System. The conversion of the Custodian's Cabin to a guest house would provide visitors with another type of overnight lodging opportunity.

## **OPERATIONAL IMPACTS**

Changes in the trail network proposed in this amendment would add some maintenance requirements for any new trail segments, though Lyon County would have primary responsibility for the operations and annual maintenance of the regional trail surface. New single-track mountain bike trails would likely be maintained by both park staff and volunteers interested in caring for the system of trails.

Changes to the park in the form of new facility developments would add management and maintenance responsibilities for park staff.

## **MANAGEMENT PLAN TEXT REVISIONS**

The amendment supplements the "Recreation Management" and "Resource Management" sections of the 1978 Plan.

The park's current boundary replaces that shown in the 1978 Plan.

## **PUBLIC REVIEW**

The draft plan amendment was released for public review on October 1, 2012 and an open house was held at the Lyon County-Marshall Library on October 9, 2012. The open house meeting was attended by approximately 35 people. Comments were also received through the mail.

Comments were generally supportive of the proposals outlined in the management plan amendment.

All comments are kept on file along with additional background information at the DNR Central Office.

## APPENDIX

### A. Final Zoning Map from *A Management Plan for Camden State Park* (1978)

