



A Management Plan for  
**Helmer Myre**  
State Park

Minnesota Department of Natural Resources

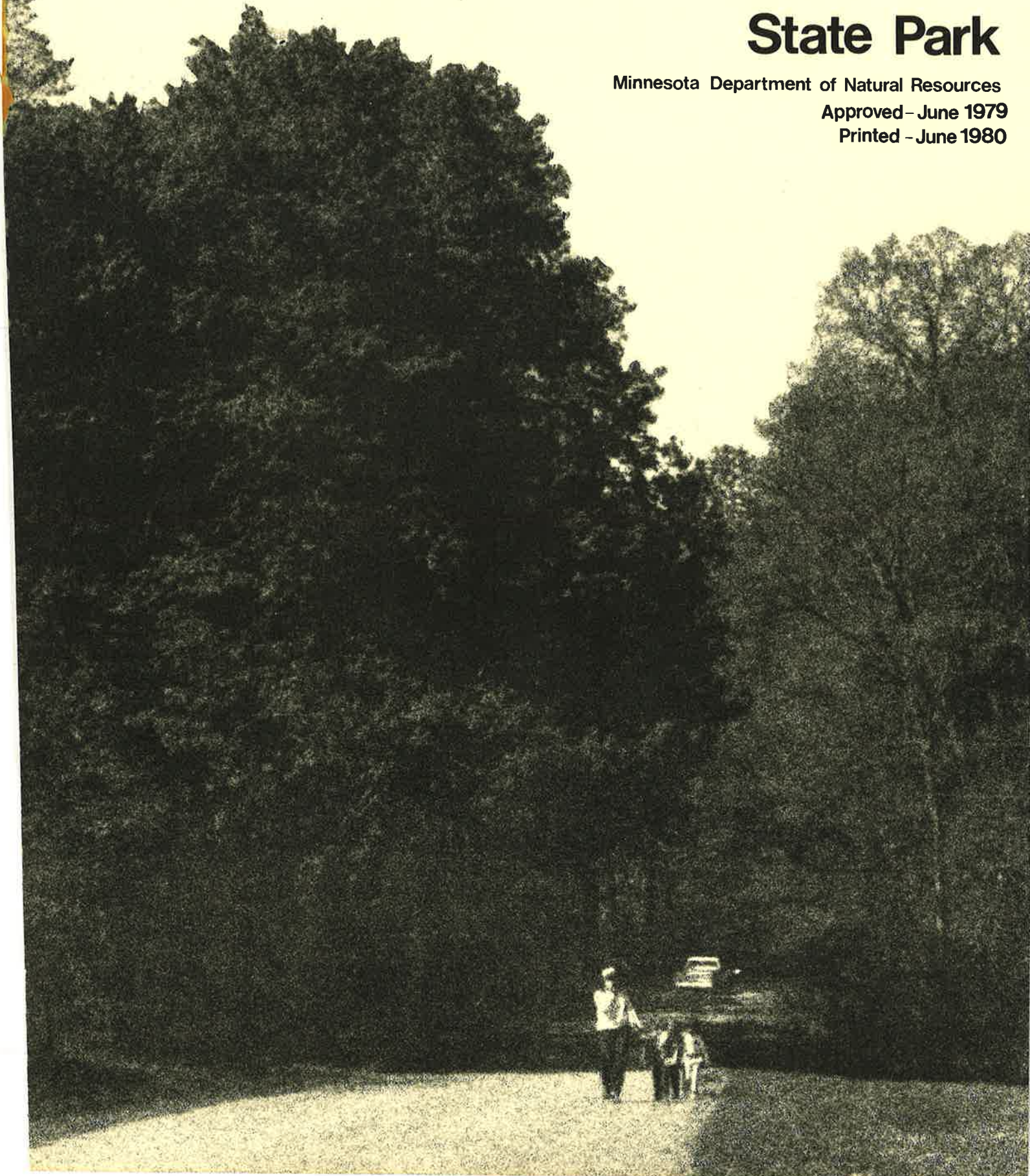


# A Management Plan for **Helmer Myre** **State Park**

Minnesota Department of Natural Resources

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

mi - miles  
km - kilometers  
in. - inches  
cm - centimeters  
ft - feet  
m - meters  
kg - kilogram  
l - liter  
cfs - cubic feet per second  
cms - cubic meters per second  
gmp - gallons per minute  
l/m - liters per minute  
mg/l - milligrams per liter  
DNR - Department of Natural Resources  
GPMP - General Park Management Plan  
MPD - Management Plan Details  
ORA '75 - Outdoor Recreation Act of 1975  
SPA - State Planning Agency  
MHS - Minnesota Historical Society  
SCORP - Statewide Comprehensive Recreation Plan  
CSAH - County State Aid Highway  
TH - Trunk Highway  
I - Interstate  
Mn/DOT - Minnesota Department of Transportation

## PREFACE

The primary concern in the development of the park management plan format for the 1978-79 biennium was the identification of the "audience." For whom are these plans to be written? Eight different audiences were identified.

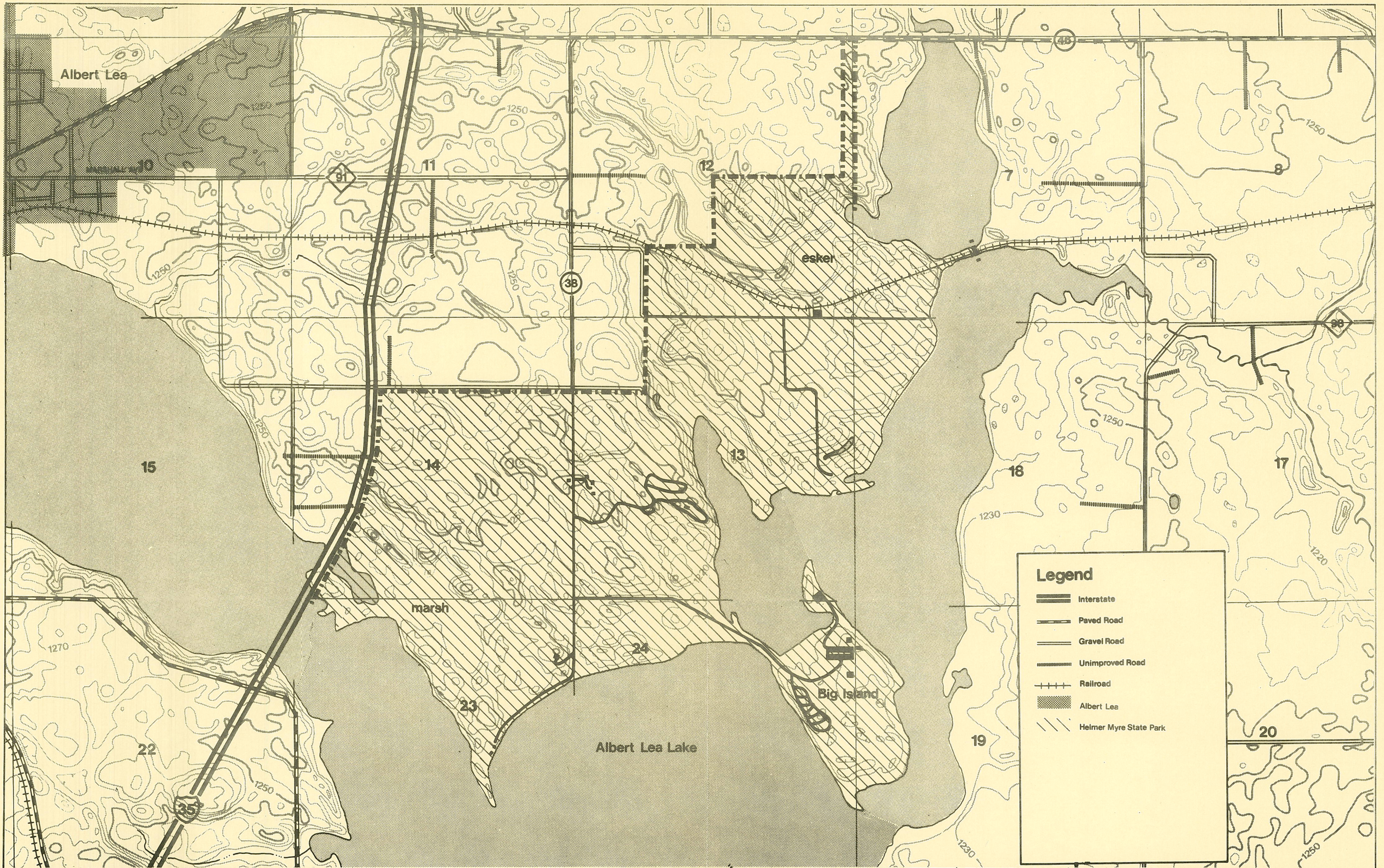
1. DNR reviewers of the whole planning process
2. DNR reviewers whose main concern is one specific part to the plan
3. DNR regional administrators, supervisors, and park managers
4. SPA reviewers
5. The general public
6. Special interest groups
7. Reviewers of the environmental impacts of proposed actions
8. Legislators

The requirements of each of the audiences are different. All audiences require a document which includes some technical data, but the degree of detail as well as the manner of presentation varies. Some audiences require that specific topics be discussed in detail in all phases from inventory through recommended management. Other groups require a short, non-technical, yet comprehensive and logical management plan. A plan, obviously, cannot be both technical and non-technical nor can it be both long and short. It seemed logical then to produce two documents: 1) a short, comprehensive, non-technical document for the general public ("General Park Management Plan" GPMP), and 2) a detailed, technical document for specialists ("Management Plan Detail" MPD).

This document is the General Park Management Plan. All recommendations, both resource management and physical development, are included in this document. Detailed inventory data and specific instructions necessary for implementation of the plan are not included. This information has been compiled into technical appendices, which are available upon request from:

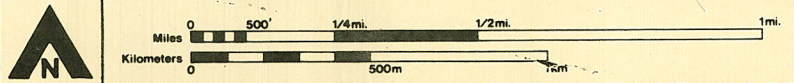
Park Planning  
Department of Natural Resources  
444 Lafayette  
St. Paul, Minnesota 55101





**Legend**

- Interstate
- Paved Road
- Gravel Road
- Unimproved Road
- Railroad
- Albert Lea
- Helmer Myre State Park



**Helmer Myre State Park**





# Introduction



## AN OVERVIEW OF HELMER MYRE STATE PARK

Helmer Myre State Park is located in Freeborn County, 3 mi (4.8 km) southeast of Albert Lea on County State Aid Highway 38 (CSAH 38). Less than 100 mi (161 km) south of Minneapolis-St. Paul, the park is near the intersection of two interstate highways, I-35 and I-90, which provide excellent access both for Minnesotans and out-of-state visitors. The statutory boundary encloses 1,535 acres (614 hectares). All the land within the statutory boundary is state owned. The park is located on the north shore of Albert Lea Lake and is bordered on the west by I-35.

The history of the land in Helmer Myre State Park dates back to prehistoric times. Prehistoric Indians took advantage of the area's wealth of game and other food resources. Many of their stone tools and artifacts have been found by area residents. Owen Johnson donated his collection of more than 50,000 artifacts to the park. These artifacts are now displayed in the Owen Johnson Interpretive Center.

The first documented Army exploration of the area was in July, 1835, when a force of 160 men passed through the area under orders to explore portions of southern Minnesota. One of these explorers was Colonel Albert Lea, for whom the town was later named.

From its earliest settlement in the mid 1850s, Albert Lea has been a prime agricultural area. Much of the area which is now park land was cleared for crop production. Fortunately, most of the forest on Big Island was maintained by its owners, who allowed local citizens to use it as a recreation area.

In the mid 1940s, lumber companies began to pressure the owners of Big Island to harvest the timber. The citizens of Albert Lea responded by organizing a campaign to purchase the island and make it a state park. Their goal was accomplished in 1947, when the park was established.

Helmer Myre State Park comprises two distinct landscape forms, each with its own type of vegetation. The major portion of the park is an area of low rolling hills interspersed with small marshes. The original vegetation of this area was oak savanna, a type which once covered vast areas of southern Minnesota. It was characterized by open prairie dotted with marshes in the low areas and small clumps of bur oak on the drier hillsides. The prairie species included tall grasses such as big and little bluestem, sideoats grama, and Indian grass, as well as a wide variety of flowering plants.

The 116 acres (46.4 hectares) of Big Island is the park's other major landscape form. The island is fairly flat with steep banks on the east and west and more gradually sloping shores to the north and south. Quite distinct from the oak savanna of the mainland, the vegetation of Big Island is dominated by a dense maple-basswood forest. Such a forest is rare in this part of Minnesota.

In addition to these two landscape types, the park contains two outstanding natural features. The first is a glacial esker located in the northeast portion of the park, and the second is a large marsh near the southwest corner of the park. Both provide exceptional opportunities for environmental study and wildlife observation.

The park provides a variety of facilities including: two campgrounds with a total of 142 campsites; a large picnic area with an enclosed shelter; the newly constructed Owen Johnson Interpretive Center; a group camp with dining, crafts, and sanitation facilities; and 15 mi (24 km) of trails.

In addition to activities associated with these facilities, the park is used frequently by the local school system as a site for environmental education studies and by local birders as a prime bird watching area.



## THE PLANNING PROCESS

The variety of outstanding natural, cultural, and historical resources of Minnesota provide abundant opportunities for outdoor recreation and education. In order to ensure that present and future generations will have the opportunity to enjoy these resources, we must plan now to protect, perpetuate, and provide access to these resources. For this reason, the Minnesota Legislature passed the Outdoor Recreation Act of 1975 (ORA '75).

This act mandated that a comprehensive management plan be completed for each of the major units in the state recreation system. In the course of this planning process, each park will be classified in recognition of its resources and its role in the statewide system.

This plan sets the long range goals and objectives for resource management and recreational development which are appropriate for the park's classification. The actions that should be taken to move toward fulfilling these goals and objectives are then stated and scheduled.

The planning process consists of five steps:

1. Compilation of an inventory of natural resources and existing facilities. Task forces of specialists from other DNR divisions and sections are mobilized to assist in collecting pertinent data. At this point the first public workshop is held.
2. Identification of alternatives for park management and development. A second public workshop is held to review these alternatives and invite further public comment. These alternatives are then reviewed by the Division of Parks and Recreation.
3. Classification of park, development of park goal, and writing draft plan. This step culminates in the first interdepartmental review, followed by a 30 day public review. Within this 30 day period, the third public workshop is held.

4. Revision of the draft plan according to information received from public and interdepartmental reviews. Plan is then sent to the State Planning Agency for a 60 day reviewal period.
5. Implementation of development plan by the Division of Parks and Recreation.

## SUMMARY

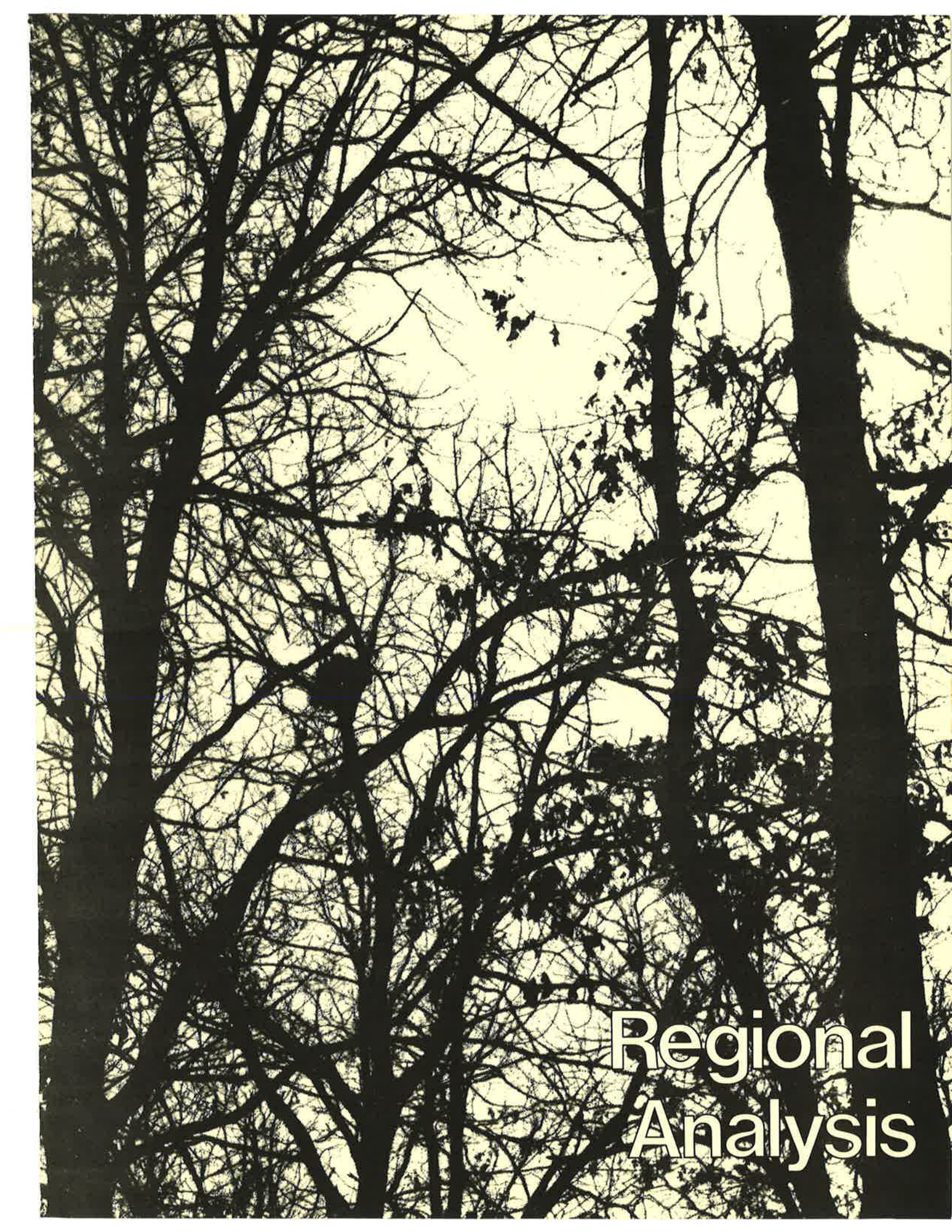
A natural state park classification is proposed for Helmer Myre State Park. This classification directs the park's development and resource management toward preserving and reestablishing the resource conditions that existed prior to European settlement.

The general thrust of vegetation management will be to maintain the dense forest conditions on the island, reestablish and maintain the open prairie and scattered oaks on most of the mainland, reestablish all marshes and wet meadows, and reestablish dense forest in the northeast portion of the park.

Wildlife management will maintain and reestablish, where feasible, those wildlife species present in the park before European settlement. The natural wildlife habitat will be enhanced by planting food shrubs and thickets and by restoring drained marshes. The combined migrant and resident deer herds will be controlled. Public hunting is probably the most effective way to do it. Because of the proposed classification and federal regulations, wildlife food plots will be reduced in size and operated on a non-profit basis.

The major proposed changes to existing park facilities include: realignment of park roads; construction of a contact station/park office; addition of some campsites to White Fox Campground; construction of a group picnic area with a combination picnic shelter/trail center/ winterized sanitation building; reorganization of the winter trail system to accommodate ski touring; development of bike trails; construction of wildlife observation blinds; and development of six walk-in campsites.



A low-angle photograph of bare tree branches against a bright sky. The branches are dark and intricate, creating a complex web of lines. The sky is a pale, uniform color, providing a high-contrast background for the dark branches. The text "Regional Analysis" is overlaid in the bottom right corner in a white, sans-serif font.

# Regional Analysis



## INTRODUCTION

In order to determine a park's role in protecting and perpetuating natural resources and fulfilling recreational needs, a state park analysis process has been initiated. The analysis is designed to look at a given park's interrelationship with:

the state park system

the biocultural region system

state park use patterns

regional influence/impact factors

Recognition of a state park's interrelationship with these components helps to ensure that park development will be planned to protect natural resources, meet appropriate recreational demands, and avoid undue competition with other recreation providers.

### The State Park System

Minnesotans traditionally have a great appreciation for nature. The variety and everchanging beauty of our 65 state parks testify to the vast natural and historic wealth of our state. The goal of Minnesota's state park system is to protect and perpetuate these natural resources while offering the public a variety of recreational opportunities.

There is a delicate balance which must be maintained when recreational facilities are provided for large numbers of people in areas of outstanding, often sensitive resources. Generally, certain resources are best suited for particular types of recreation. To help ensure this recreation/resource balance, the Minnesota State Legislature outlined in the ORA '75 the components which comprise all state recreational lands. These components are: historic sites; state forests; water access sites; rest areas; state trails; wildlife management areas; scientific and natural areas; wild, scenic, and recreational rivers; wilderness areas; and state parks. Also included in this legislation is a classification system which identifies general

criteria for planning and management direction. The two primary classifications for state parks are natural or recreational.

A natural state park classification places primary emphasis on perpetuation of the natural resources. Recreational state park classification, while not allowing major disruption of the natural resources, focuses on providing a variety of recreational facilities for large numbers of people. This classification determines each park's role as a unit in the statewide park system. (See Classification Section, p 21 for further discussion.)

It is the intent of the state park system to perpetuate not only those resources which attract large number of users, but all representative examples of the varied resources of Minnesota.

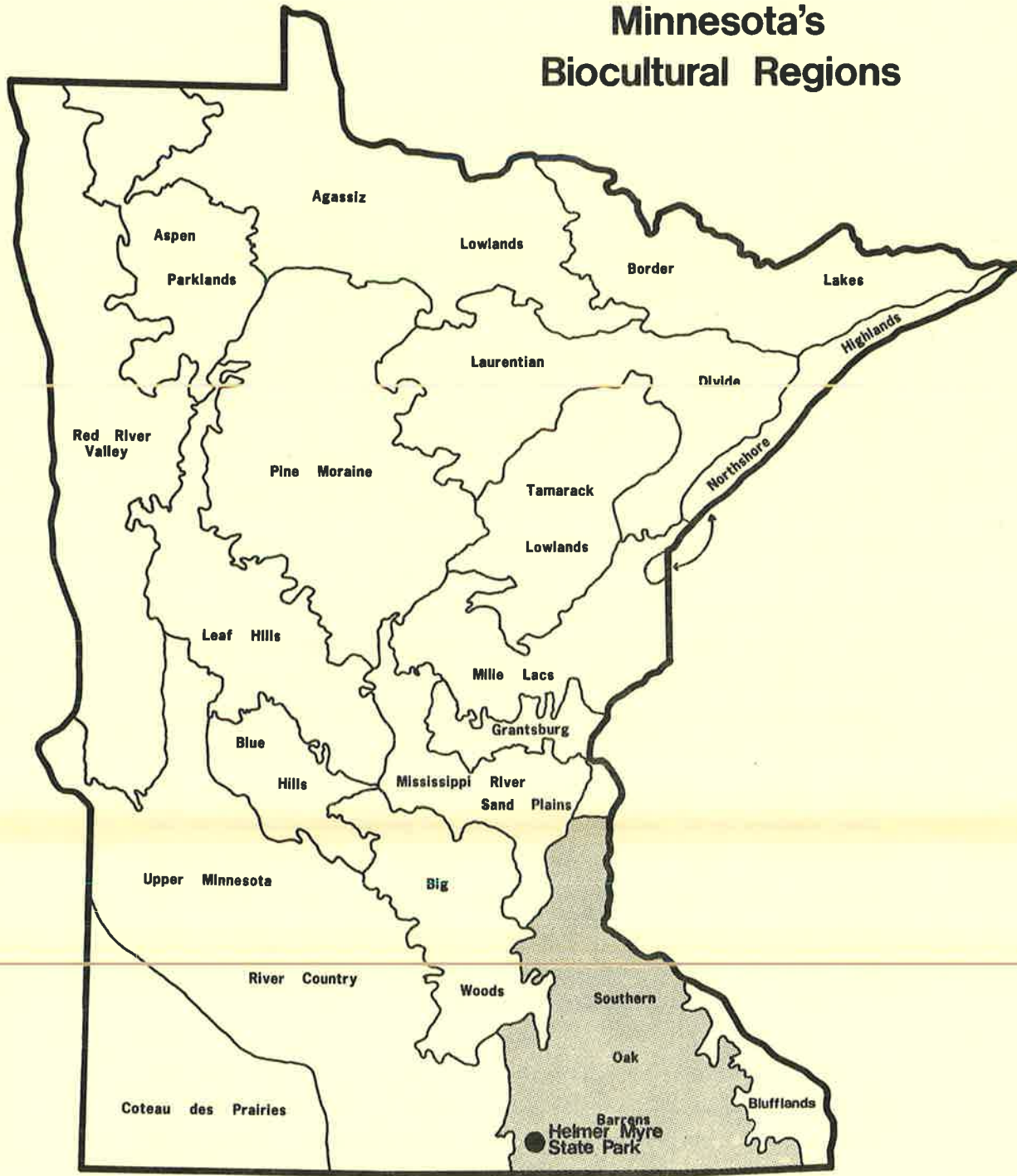
Although Helmer Myre is located in a part of Minnesota which does not draw large numbers of statewide and out-of-state tourists, it has resources which are of statewide significance.

#### Biocultural Region System (Formerly Landscape Region System)

The ORA '75 defines a landscape region as "an identifiable geographic region with generally homogeneous natural characteristics which exemplify the natural processes which formed the geography, geology, topography, and biology of the state." Since 1975, it has become apparent that human impact on the landscape has not been included to a sufficient extent in this system. As a result, several studies have been directed toward amending the system to include the interrelationship of cultural, biological, and geological impacts on the environment. The system has been renamed the biocultural region system. This system divides the state into 18 regions which are differentiated according to the characteristic plant life, animal life, and landforms of presettlement times and the cultural impacts which have altered the landforms since settlement.

Helmer Myre State Park is located in the Southern Oak Barrens Biocultural Region. This region was characterized by remnants of tall grass prairies, clumps of bur oak, and small marshes. A few small

# Minnesota's Biocultural Regions





clusters of oak trees and the marshes still exist in the park. However, the tall-grass prairie vegetation which once flourished in this region was nearly eliminated by farming practices prior to park establishment. With proper management, this type of prairie can be restored in portions of the park.

#### State Park Use Patterns

State park users are often classified into two types -- destination and non-destination users. A comparison of the differences and similarities of these users groups will help to clarify the park's role in providing resource and recreation opportunities.

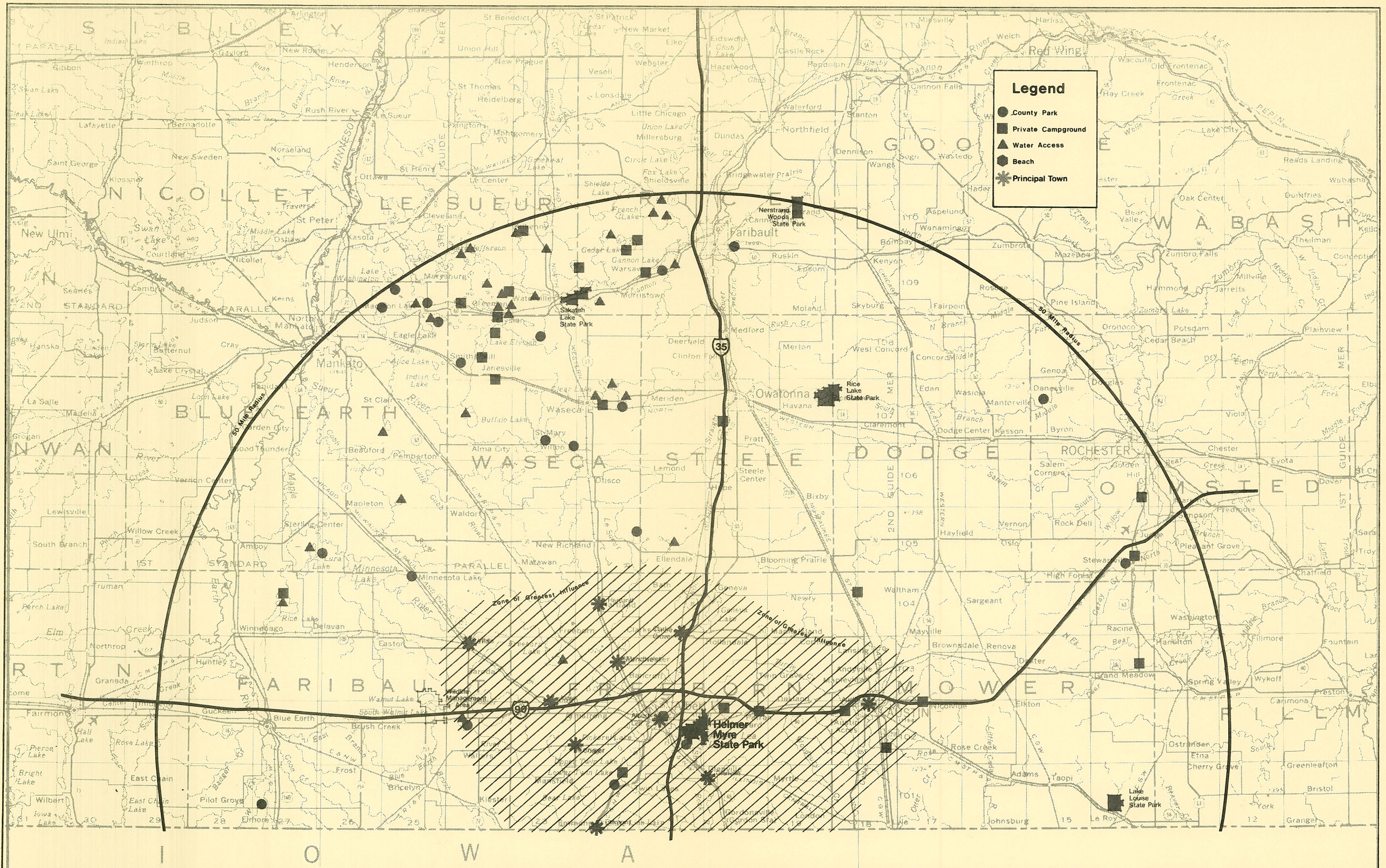
The park manager estimates that the majority of Helmer Myre day users come to the park to picnic, and 90% of these picnickers come from within 50 mi (80 km) of the park. This clearly demonstrates the park's resource and recreational attraction to local residents. The manager also estimates that the majority of overnight visitors in Helmer Myre come from outside a 50 mi (80 km) radius and use the park as a stopover point en route to a principle destination. Its close proximity to I-35 and I-90 establishes the park as a convenient and desirable camping facility for travelers. In addition, the park is a key gateway stop for people driving north on I-35 from Iowa. The park's clean, safe, and well-maintained facilities, and its diversified resource and recreational offerings help create a positive impression of Minnesota's state park system.

#### Regional Influence/Impact Factors

Recreation patterns in the region surrounding a state park must be analyzed in order to adequately plan a park. The basis of this analysis is the relationship between a particular facility and the expectation of the user. The user will visit a state park because of: natural resources, location, facilities, and the experience sought.

The park manager estimates that the influence zone shown on the Regional Analysis Map, p 13 best illustrates communities most likely to frequent Helmer Myre on a regular basis. In addition, the influence





**Helmer Myre State Park Regional Analysis**



zone highlights area recreational facilities which may complement and/or benefit from park facilities and services.

Recreational facilities within a park's influence zone may duplicate services. However, some people will consistently choose to frequent one area over another in the pursuit of a particular experience. For example, camping is a recreational activity which state parks provide. Municipal and county parks located within the vicinity of a state park may also have campsites. However, some people will consistently travel to the state park because of the type of experience it offers, namely, camping in a natural setting augmented by other recreational opportunities such as hiking and wildlife observation. Camping facilities may be duplicated elsewhere, but the total activity experience is not.

This interrelationship of activity demand and facility supply is an integral part of the regional analysis process. The connection can best be analyzed according to the recreational activities available in a park, the experiences people seek by participating in these activities and the identification of complementing facilities in the park's influence zone.

On the following chart, Helmer Myre's activities and experiences are analyzed on the left and complementing facilities in the influence zone are analyzed on the right.

## Activity/Experience

### Picnicking

Eighty-seven percent of the state's population picnics at least once a year. The park manager estimates that the majority of weekend day users at Helmer Myre are picnickers. People enjoy picnicking at this park because the activity is complemented by the scenic environment. Other outdoor pursuits such as wildlife observation, hiking, and interpretive programs heighten the picnicking experience.

### Interpretation

The functions of the Helmer Myre interpretive program and the Owen Johnson Interpretive Center are to orient visitors to park facilities and resources and to display interpretive exhibits. People enjoy a wide variety of programs which include slide shows, arts and crafts exhibitions, and nature hikes. In addition, a large collection of Indian artifacts is exhibited here.

## Complementing Facilities

### Picnicking

Although there are many other picnic areas in the park influence zone (approximately 800 picnic tables are provided in this zone, compared to 50-60 picnic tables in Helmer Myre), the combined picnic/activity experience of Helmer Myre is not duplicated elsewhere.

### Interpretation

The J. C. Hormel Nature Center in Austin 14 mi (22.4 km) from the park also provides nature interpretation within the influence zone. There is some duplication in the content format of each center. However, each facility presents an interpretive theme emphasizing resources unique to that location. The Owen Johnson Interpretive Center augments other park activities, while the J. C. Hormel Nature Center specializes in specific environmental learning experiences. Each center has its own particular draw and complements the other in function.



## Hiking

Helmer Myre park visitors can hike through prairies, marshes, the woods of Big Island, rolling terrain, and along the glacial esker. Approximately 30 percent of all hikers are bird-watchers. The park's varied terrain provides one of the best birding spots in southern Minnesota.

## Camping

Helmer Myre's proximity to the freeway system (Interstates 35 and 90) establishes the park as a convenient and desirable area for nondestination campers.

Destination campers have indicated their preference to camp at Helmer Myre because of the facility's cleanliness, the beauty and diversity of the park's resources, and its convenient location.

## Snowmobiling

Snowmobiling in Helmer Myre's influence zone is a very popular activity. The park's snowmobiling trail and trail center will be linked to the county trail system.

## Hiking

Other than the nature trails in the J. C. Hormel Nature Center and trails in the Freeborn County parks, area opportunities for hiking in a natural setting are limited.

## Camping

Approximately 90 primitive campsites and 280 modern campsites are available in private, county, and municipal camping facilities in Helmer Myre's influence zone. This is compared to 142 semi-modern sites available in Helmer Myre. Although many campsites are available in the park's influence zone, the unique camping/activity experience of the park is not duplicated.

## Snowmobiling

Freeborn County has 220 mi (352 km) of grant-in-aid snowmobile trails. Because the existing trail system meets demand, future expansion will be directed toward linking existing trails. The park's snowmobile trail will be one of these links.

### Ski Touring

The popularity of ski touring has grown rapidly in recent years. Skiers come to Helmer Myre because of the varied and scenic terrain, visibility of wildlife, and the lack of other ski touring trails in the area.

### Ski Touring

No other parks in the area have ski touring trails at this time. However, two county parks and an Albert Lea city park will be developing ski trail systems in the near future.

### Miscellaneous Activities

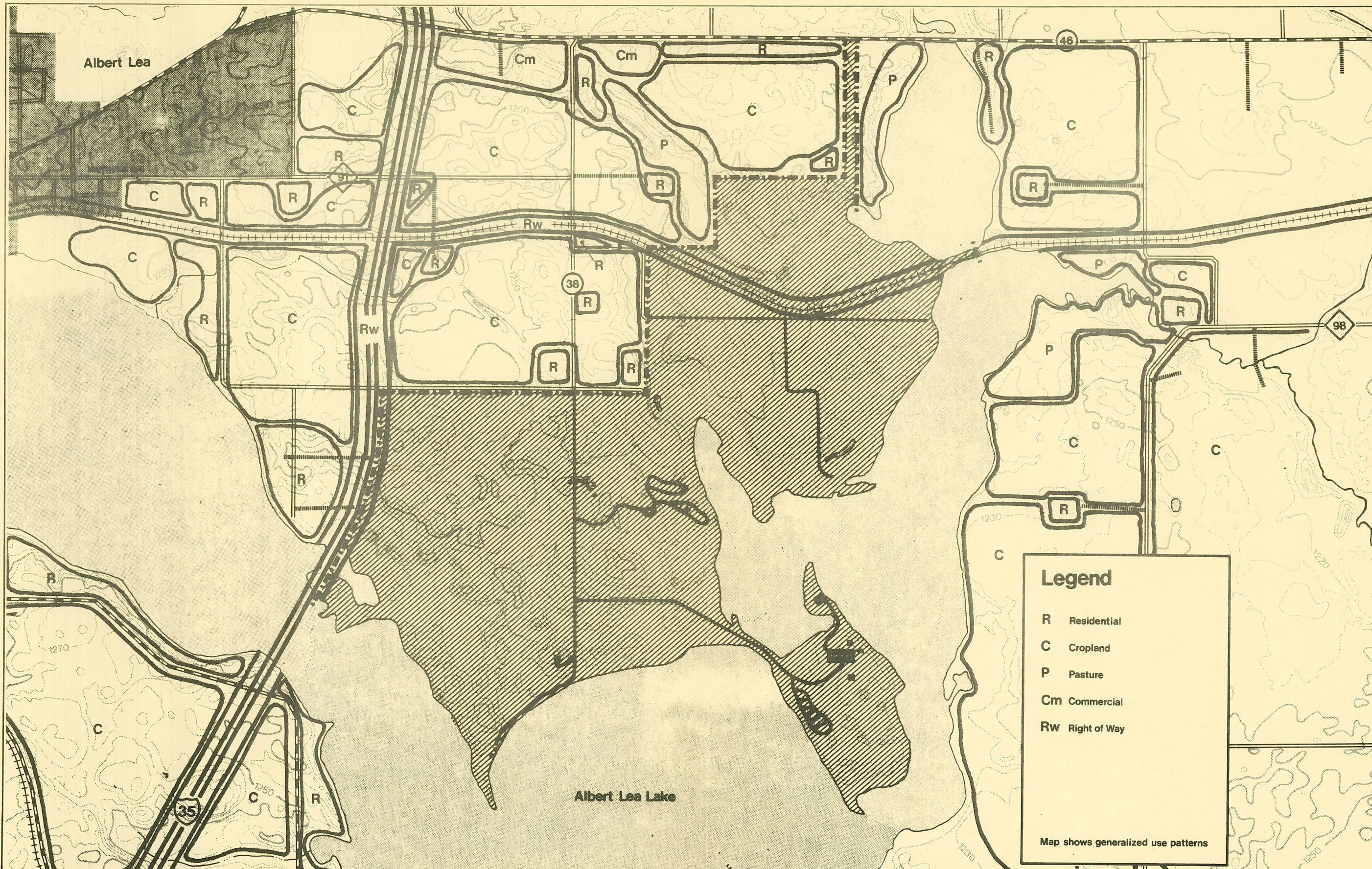
Helmer Myre provides resource and recreational opportunities not otherwise found in the influence zone. For example, an after-dinner sightseeing drive is one of the favorite pastimes of Albert Lea area residents during the summer months. In addition, the park fills a need for organized group activities. Science classes from the Albert Lea school district have used the park's resources for environmental education for 10 years. School picnics are quite popular in May. Senior citizens and groups with special needs from the city of Austin and from Freeborn and other adjacent counties are among the organized groups which consistently use the park for recreational activities.

### Surrounding Land Use

Surrounding land use can have a positive or negative impact on park lands. Understanding this land use helps to direct future development and landscape management. The Adjacent Land Use Map, p 18, describes the general land use around the park. Albert Lea Lake, I-35, and the Chicago-Milwaukee-St. Paul and Pacific Railroad each have a ~~substantial impact on the park.~~

Albert Lea Lake is a scenic focal point of the park. However, its poor water quality and late summer algal blooms have a negative impact. In addition, the lake is heavily used during the winter by snowmobiles and the noise generated by these machines is audible throughout much of the park.





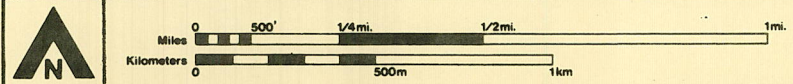
Albert Lea

Albert Lea Lake

**Legend**

- R Residential
- C Cropland
- P Pasture
- Cm Commercial
- RW Right of Way

Map shows generalized use patterns



**Helmer Myre State Park**

**Adjacent Land Use**



I-35 is on the west boundary of the park. Because of its raised elevation and the amount of traffic it carries, it affects the western half of the park. However, it provides a well-defined, controllable park boundary. High fences constructed adjacent to the highway along the park boundary minimize deer road kills.

The Chicago-Milwaukee-St. Paul and Pacific Railroad runs through the park. Although not frequently used, it does pose a hazard, particularly at trail crossings. Therefore, good visibility must be ensured at trail crossings. If, in the future, this railroad right-of-way is abandoned, the alignment would provide an excellent biking, hiking, and snowmobile trail from Albert Lea to the park. Because of the current demand for bike access to the park, a bike trail alignment connecting Albert Lea with Helmer Myre via CR 91 and CSAH 38 has been proposed. This joint city and county planning venture is discussed in the Proposed Development, Trails, Action # 9, p 70.

The existing mixed residential and agricultural land use surrounding the park has minimal impact on the park at present. However, a natural buffer zone should be developed to protect adjacent residents from snowmobile noise on park trails.





Goal  
for the  
Park



## CLASSIFICATION

### Purpose

The purpose of the classification process as stated in the ORA '75 is to establish "an outdoor recreation system which will (1) preserve an accurate representation of Minnesota's natural and historical heritage for public understanding and enjoyment and (2) provide an adequate supply of scenic, accessible, and usable lands and waters to accommodate the outdoor recreational needs of Minnesota's citizens."

### Process

In accordance with the ORA '75, the park planning staff has reviewed the classification of each park under study this biennium. After the park resource inventory was completed for each unit, the planning staff determined:

- A. Which of the 11 classifications from ORA '75 was most appropriate for the unit.
- B. Whether sub-units (e.g., scientific and natural areas or other sub-units authorized in ORA '75) should be considered to deal with special areas within the unit.
- C. Whether administration of the unit should be reassigned to other governmental bodies (e.g., other state agencies, county, or local governments).

Each park has been recommended for classification according to its resources and use potential and will be managed and developed according to the nature of those resources and their ability to tolerate visitor use.

The classification alternatives considered for Helmer Myre State Park were natural or recreational state park with a scientific and natural area.

The extent to which Helmer Myre fulfills the criteria, as defined by the ORA '75, is summarized below.

## Natural State Park Alternative

### ORA Criterion # 1

"Exemplifies the natural characteristics of the major landscape regions of the state, as shown by accepted classifications, in an essentially unspoiled or restored condition or in a condition that will permit restoration in the foreseeable future; or contains essentially unspoiled natural resources of sufficient extent and importance to meaningfully contribute to the broad illustration of the state's natural phenomena."

Helmer Myre is in the Southern Oak Barrens Biocultural Region, which has a very diverse mix of vegetation. Examples of every vegetative type of this region exist or can be restored in Helmer Myre.

### ORA Criterion # 2

"Contains natural resources sufficiently diverse to attract people from throughout the state."

A large portion of Helmer Myre's visitors come from farther than 50 mi (80 km). They use the park as a stopover on the way to other destinations. However, the park's plant communities, geologic and archaeological features, and wide variety of highly visible wildlife have the potential to attract an even larger number of visitors from throughout the state. The park is also receiving increased use from environmental education classes and bird watchers.

### ORA Criterion # 3

"Is sufficiently large to permit protection of the plant and animal life and other natural resources which give the park its qualities and provide for a broad range of opportunities for human enjoyment of these qualities."

Helmer Myre is approximately 1,535 acres (614 hectares) in size. With proper management and development, the natural resources of the park can be maintained while providing for the enjoyment of these resources by park users.



## Recreational State Park Alternative

### ORA Criterion # 1

"Contains natural or artificial resources which provide outstanding outdoor recreational opportunities that will attract visitors from beyond the local area."

The natural and artificial wildlife ponds and marshes provide excellent wildlife habitat. The many opportunities for distant views make the park's large wildlife population highly visible, attracting many visitors from beyond the local area.

### ORA Criterion # 2

"Contains resources which permit intensive recreational use by large numbers of people."

Much of the park contains resources which can be used by large numbers of people without undue disruption of these resources. Areas that are sensitive can be avoided or developed so that disruption is minimized.

### ORA Criterion # 3

"May be located in areas which have serious deficiencies in public outdoor recreation facilities, provided that recreational state parks should not be provided in lieu of municipal, county, or regional facilities."

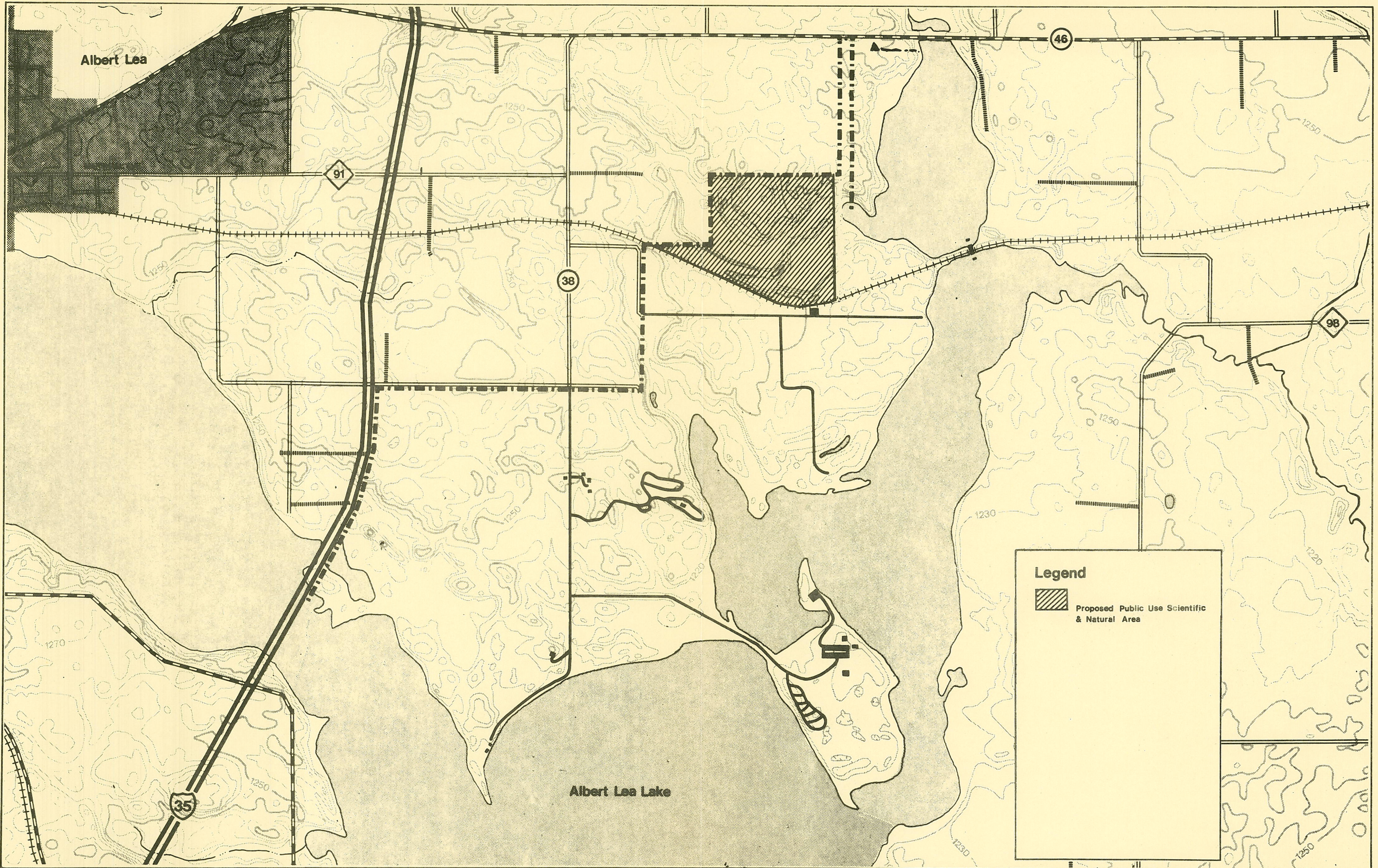
Good municipal and county facilities are available in the vicinity.

### Recommended Classification

A natural state park classification is recommended for Helmer Myre State Park, with a public use scientific and natural area.

The natural state park classification is recommended because Helmer Myre can portray the diversity of vegetation and topography better than any of the other state parks within its biocultural region.





**Helmer Myre State Park**

**Classification**



The fact that there are excellent recreational facilities in the area makes extensive development in Helmer Myre unnecessary.

There are few glacial eskers in the state which are as well defined as the one in the northeast corner of Helmer Myre. It is recommended that this area be designated a public use scientific and natural area. This designation will allow public use yet ensure preservation and restoration.

#### THE GOAL FOR HELMER MYRE STATE PARK

ORA '75 defines the purpose of a natural state park:

"A natural state park shall be established to protect and perpetuate extensive areas of the state possessing those resources which illustrate and exemplify Minnesota's natural phenomena and to provide for the use, enjoyment, and understanding of such resources without impairment for the enjoyment and recreation of future generations."

This is the goal for Helmer Myre State Park.

ORA '75 defines the purpose of a scientific and natural area:

"A state scientific and natural area shall be established to protect and perpetuate in an undisturbed natural state those natural features which possess exceptional scientific or educational value."

This is the goal for the scientific and natural area in Helmer Myre.



A black and white photograph of a bird perched on a reed stem in a marshy area. The bird is positioned in the center-right of the frame, facing left. The background is a soft, out-of-focus landscape with reeds and water. The overall tone is serene and naturalistic.

Resource  
Management



## RESOURCE MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES

The following general objectives are designed to give direction to the management of all the park's resources. To ensure consistent management throughout the state park system, comprehensive objectives have been formulated for all natural state parks.

They are:

To maintain or reestablish plant and animal life which represent pre-European settlement biotic communities

To use resource management techniques that will harmonize with the park's natural systems

## ELEVATION AND SLOPE

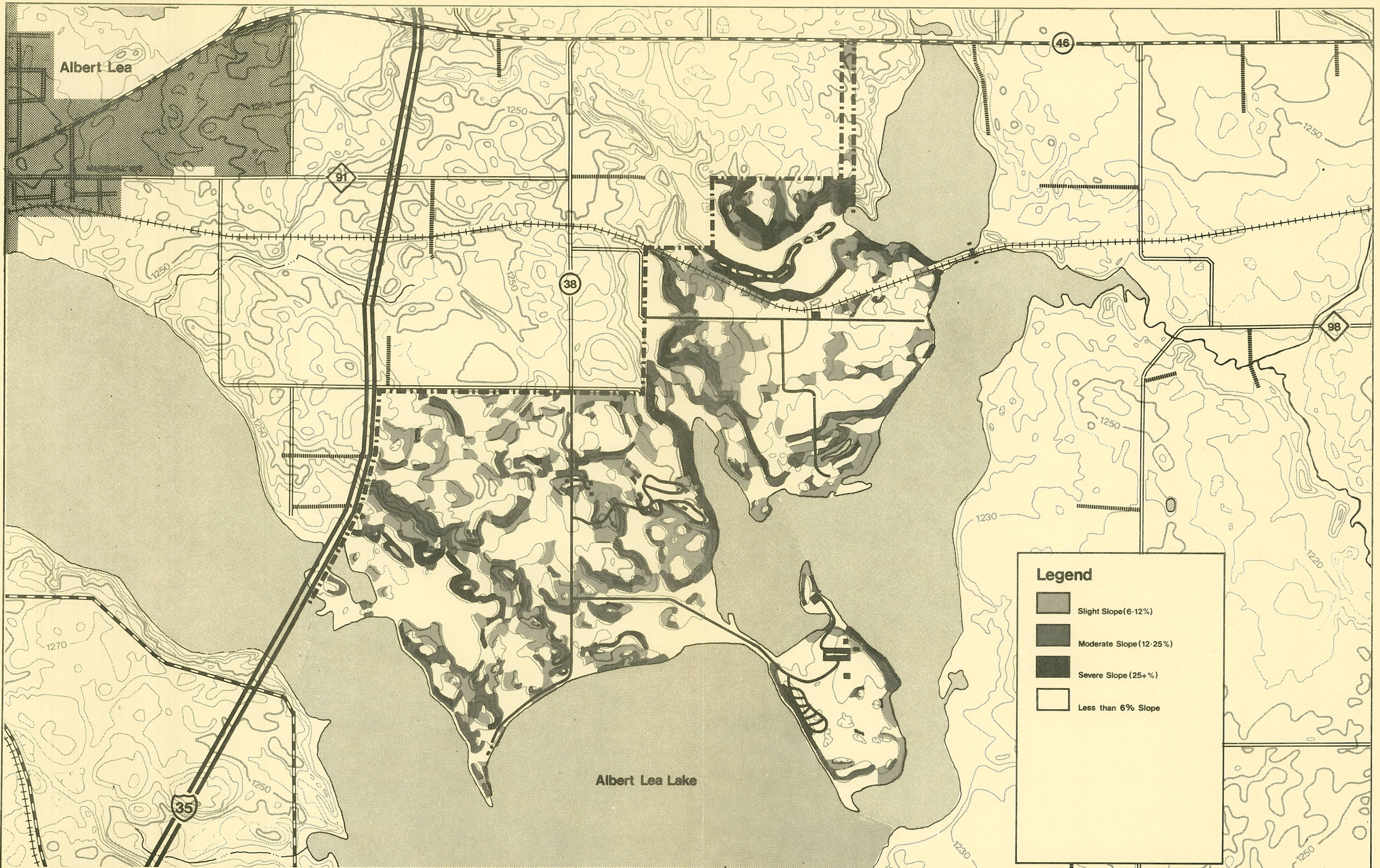
The Slope Map on p 29 was developed from an analysis of the contour lines on a U. S. Geological Survey Map. Use of this map will aid in the site selection and management of park facilities.

The land in Helmer Myre is gently rolling. There are some moderate hills and a few steep slopes. To provide the most exciting and varied ski touring experience, trails should be designed to take advantage of all possible variations in terrain.

Most areas of the park have slopes suitable for snowmobiling. However, there are some slopes which are too steep to allow snowmobile use because of the danger of erosion.

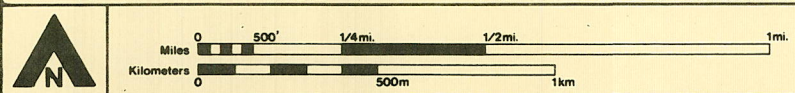
New construction is proposed for the park. Construction in some areas should be avoided because of steep slopes. Slopes which are not too steep, but which have unstable soils should also be avoided.





**Legend**

- Slight Slope (6-12%)
- Moderate Slope (12-25%)
- Severe Slope (25+%)
- Less than 6% Slope



**Helmer Myre State Park** **Slope**



## CLIMATE

Average summer temperatures in Minnesota vary only a few degrees from the north to the south. The only major exception is the North Shore of Lake Superior, where average temperatures can range from 10-15°F cooler than southern Minnesota.

In the winter there is a greater variation in temperature within the state. Average winter temperatures are 8-10°F warmer in the Helmer Myre area than in the northern third of the state. Because of its higher average winter temperatures, there is less likelihood of sufficient snowcover for recreational purposes in this area than in the northern part of the state.

A good snow cover comparison can be drawn between Helmer Myre and Itasca state parks. Under most conditions, a snowcover of at least 3-6 in. (76-152 cm) is desirable for snowmobiling and ski touring. On the average, Helmer Myre has such conditions for only 50-60 days a year, while Itasca has an average of 120 days of adequate snowcover.

Helmer Myre is very popular with snowmobilers. If trails are left open when the snow is less than 3 in. (76 cm) deep, soil and sod disruption can be expected. Therefore, the snow depth on trails must be closely monitored and the trails closed if there is inadequate snow cover.



## GEOLOGY

The existing topography of Helmer Myre State Park is the result of glacial activity from the Wisconsin stage of Minnesota's glacial history. Evidence of this activity includes the deposits of the Bemis moraine, and Little and Big islands in Albert Lea Lake. The lake itself was formed by the meltwater of a huge ice block left behind by the retreating glacier. The most spectacular evidence of glacial action is the esker located in the northeastern portion of the park. It is a steep-sided ridge more than 40 ft (12 m) high, with marshes on either side and large trees growing on its slopes. Some geologists believe that eskers were formed by deposits from streams which flowed under a melting glacier. Whatever its origin, the esker in Helmer Myre State Park is one of the finest in Minnesota. It should be preserved so future generations may see this remnant of geologic history.

Because of the deep deposits of glacial till, there are no rock outcrops in the park or the surrounding area. Drilling has shown that the area is underlain by sedimentary rock of the Paleozoic period (570-225 million years ago). Such deposits are extensive, as a well log of the Interstate Power Company in Albert Lea clearly shows. Solid rock was encountered at a depth of 89 ft (27 m) and extended through all the Paleozoic rocks from the Cedar Valley limestone downward to the Jordan sandstone at a depth of 1,040 ft (317 m).



## SOILS

### Inventory

The soil types found within Helmer Myre were developed from glacial till. The original till has been modified through the centuries by vegetation and water. Many of the existing soils were developed under both prairie and forest conditions. The water level of Albert Lea Lake has varied significantly. At one time in the distant past it covered most of the park.

### Soil Characteristics and Limitations

The Soil Conservation Service (SCS) has established recommended limitations for development based on the suitability of soils. Each soil type has been rated to determine whether there are slight, moderate, or severe limitations to specific development. These limitations are one of several factors which must be taken into consideration when a site is selected for a particular facility. As can be seen on the Soil Limitations Map, p 34, much of the park has soils which pose severe limitations to picnic and campground development. Excessive wetness and steep slopes were the most common reasons for the severe limitation designation.

### Management

#### Objectives:

To locate development on soils that are suitable for the intended use

To minimize erosion caused by unauthorized use of unstable areas

#### • Detailed Recommendations

Action # 1. Construct water bar/steps on the lake edge near the Big Island Campground. (For discussion, see Trails, Action # 2, p 67.)

Cost. See p 67



Action # 2. Move the esker parking lot to the west end of the esker.  
(For discussion, see Roads and Parking Lots, Action # 3, p 60.)

Cost. See p 60

Action # 3. Develop a trail in the picnic area along the bank top. This trail will parallel the lakeshore, descending to the lake near the Little Island causeway. (For discussion, see Trails, Action # #, p 67.)

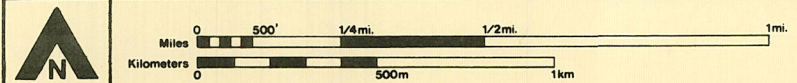
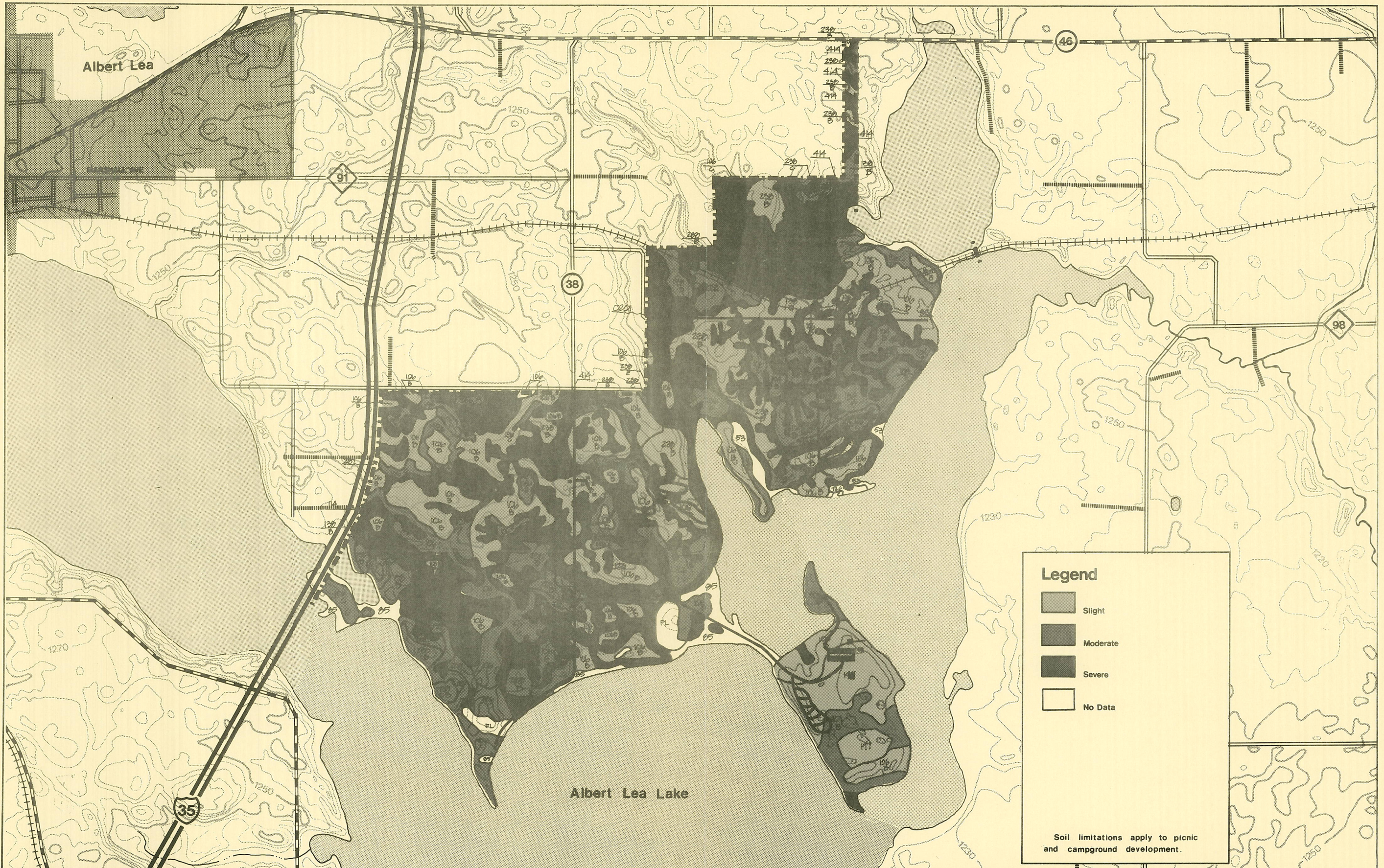
Cost. See p 67

Action # 4. Reestablish dense native prairie sod on the esker to repair eroding and slumping areas.

Hand-grading may be necessary in some areas to reestablish the natural contour.

Cost. Operational Budget





**Helmer Myre** State Park

**Soil Limitations**



## VEGETATION

### Inventory

#### Pre-European Settlement Vegetation

The vegetation patterns at Helmer Myre have fluctuated through the centuries. During periods of drought characterized by frequent grass fires, prairie vegetation was established. During wetter periods, the threat of fire diminished and forest vegetation was established and became dominant. For example, Big Island is currently forested with an excellent example of a maple-basswood forest, but the island's soil shows evidence that it was formed under prairie and oak savanna. When settlers first arrived, Big Island was wooded and most of the mainland portion of the park was oak savanna, wet prairie, or marsh.

#### Existing Vegetation

Helmer Myre contains many large open areas. Much of the park was cultivated at one time and has succeeded to an old field condition. Many clumps of mature bur oak and small marshes dot the landscape. Big Island's vegetation is distinctly different from that of the rest of the park. It has dense northern hardwoods vegetation comprised primarily of sugar maple and basswood.

### Management

#### Objectives:

To retain or reestablish the vegetative cover of the majority of the park consistent with pre-European settlement vegetation patterns

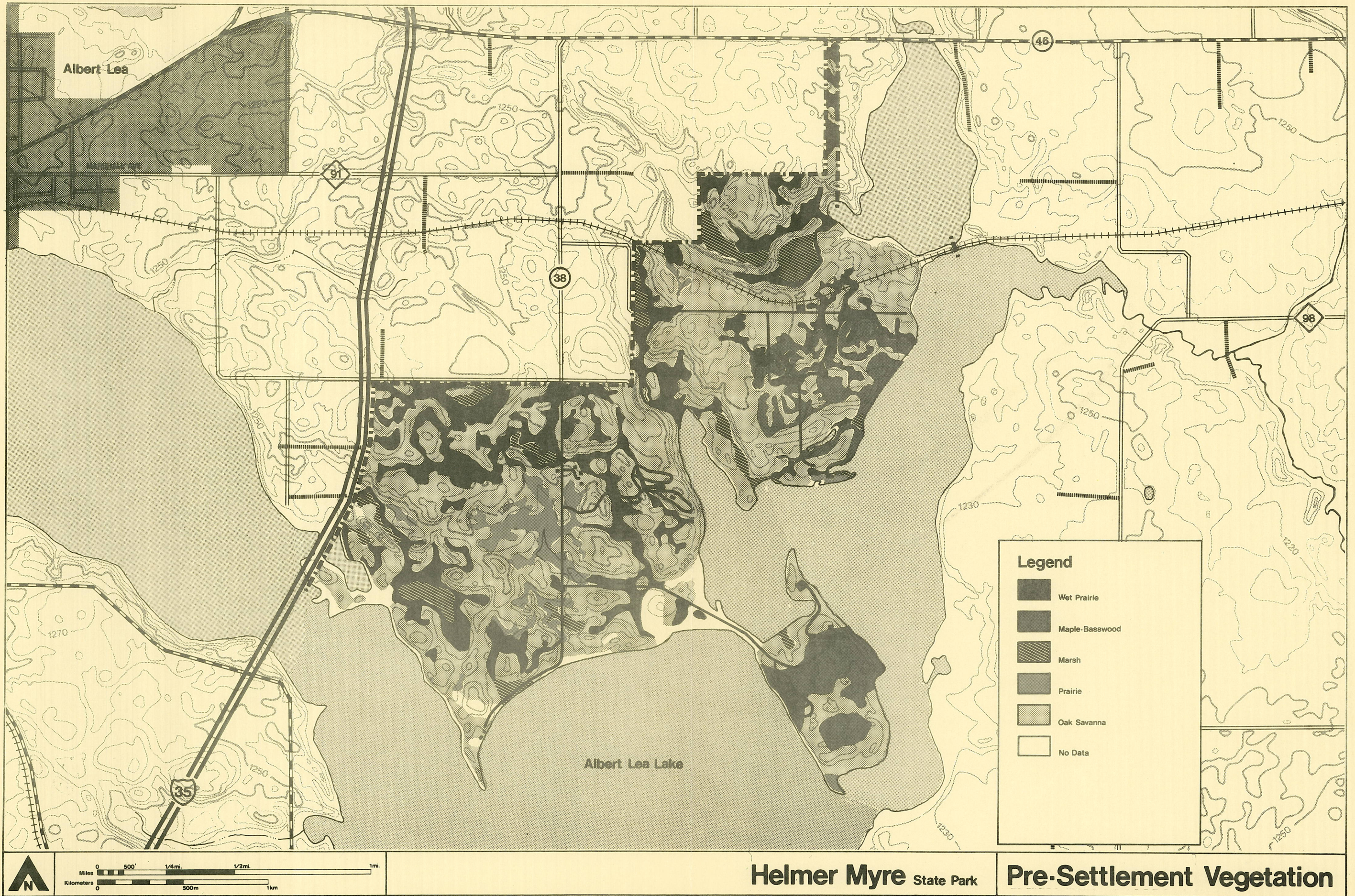
To manage vegetation for scenic diversity

To manage vegetation for diversity of wildlife habitat

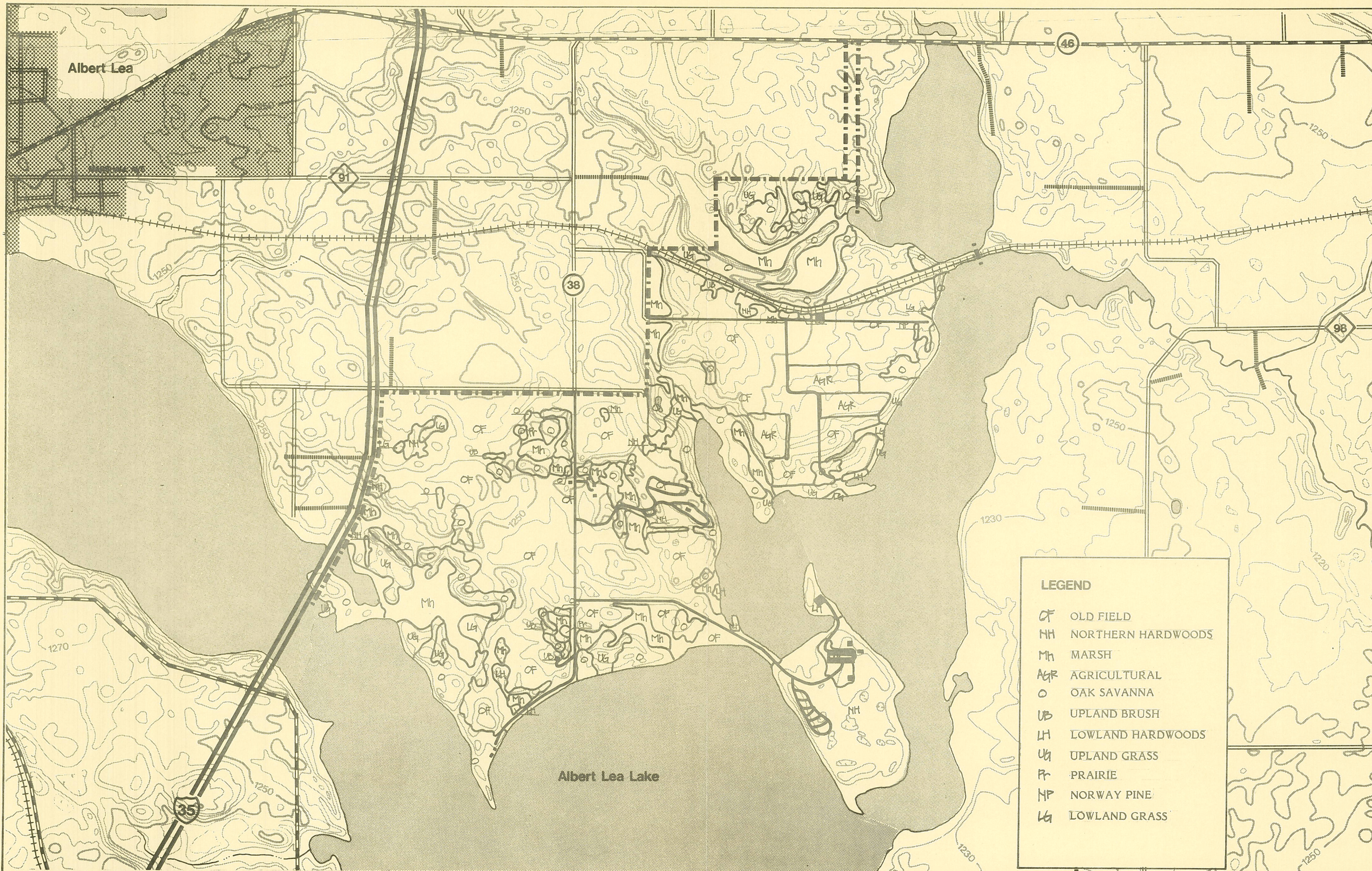
To preserve rare or unusual plant communities

To manage vegetation in development areas to allow intensive use without major resource deterioration



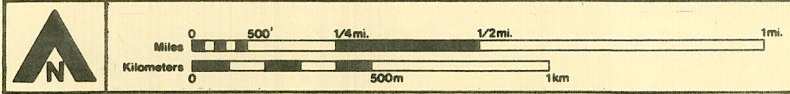






**LEGEND**

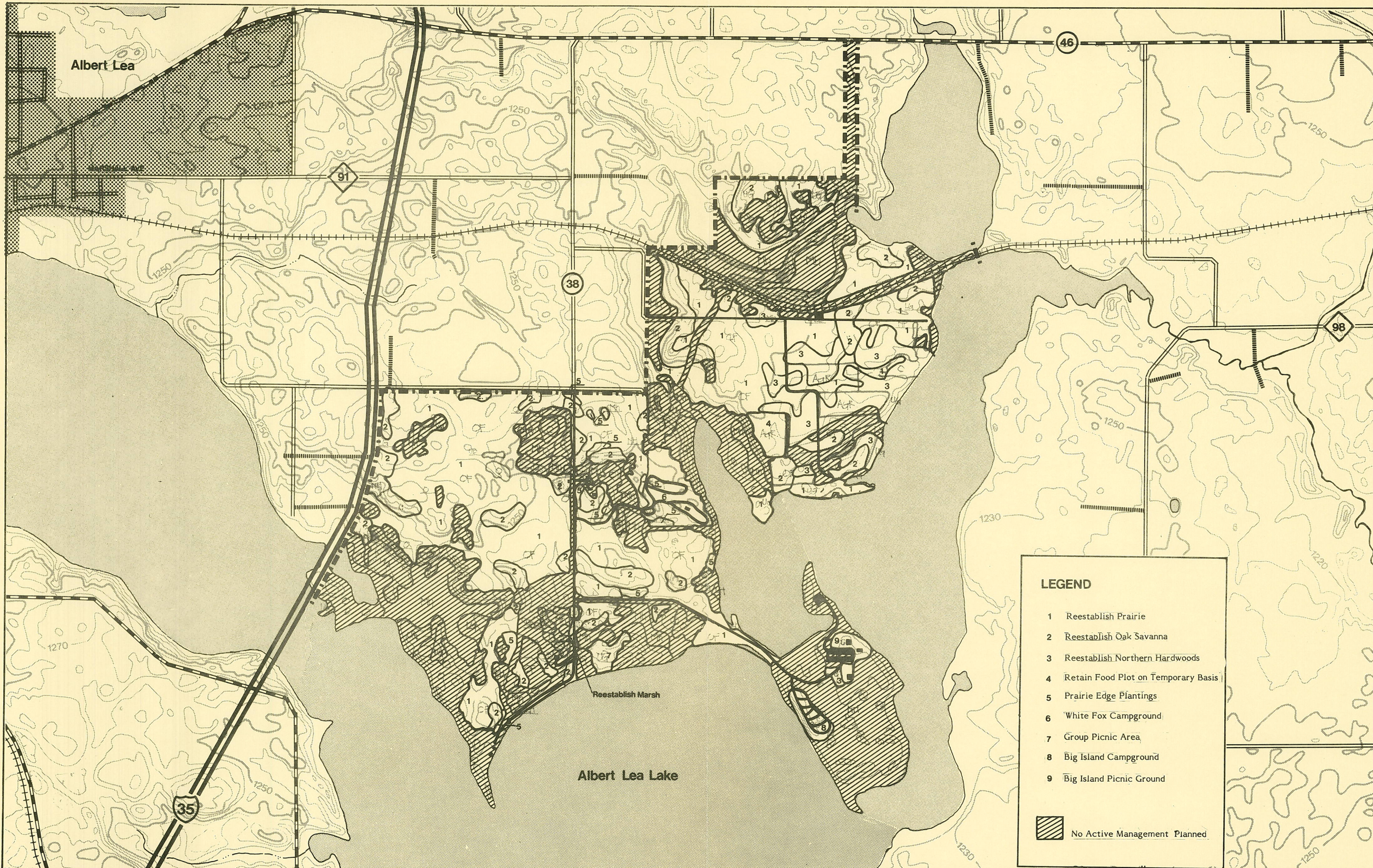
OF	OLD FIELD
NH	NORTHERN HARDWOODS
Mh	MARSH
Agr	AGRICULTURAL
O	OAK SAVANNA
UB	UPLAND BRUSH
LH	LOWLAND HARDWOODS
Ug	UPLAND GRASS
Pr	PRAIRIE
NP	NORWAY PINE
Lg	LOWLAND GRASS



**Helmer Myre State Park**

**Existing Vegetation**





Albert Lea

46

91

38

98


35

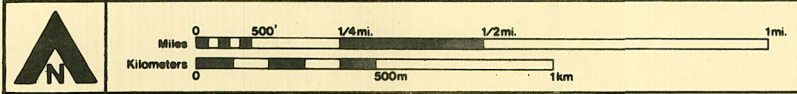
Reestablish Marsh

Albert Lea Lake

**LEGEND**

- 1 Reestablish Prairie
- 2 Reestablish Oak Savanna
- 3 Reestablish Northern Hardwoods
- 4 Retain Food Plot on Temporary Basis
- 5 Prairie Edge Plantings
- 6 White Fox Campground
- 7 Group Picnic Area
- 8 Big Island Campground
- 9 Big Island Picnic Ground

 No Active Management Planned



**Helmer Myre State Park**

**Vegetation Management**



The general thrust of all future vegetation management in Helmer Myre will be to maintain the dense forest condition on the island, to reestablish and maintain the open prairie and scattered oaks on most of the mainland, to reestablish all marshes and wet meadows, and to reestablish the once-dense forest in the northeast portion of the park.

• Detailed Recommendations

\* Action # 1. Reestablish prairie vegetation.

More area will be retained as prairie than is shown on the Pre-Settlement Vegetation Map, p 36. This will result in a variety of opening sizes for scenic enhancement and wildlife observation.

Cost. \$28,000

Action # 2. Reestablish oak savanna vegetation.

Not all of the oak savanna areas on the Pre-Settlement Vegetation Map will be reestablished. Some of these areas will be managed for prairie vegetation in order to retain a variety of opening sizes for scenic enhancement and wildlife observation.

Cost. \$28,000

Action # 3. Reestablish northern hardwoods vegetation.

The northeastern part of the park was more protected from fire than the rest of the park mainland. Some areas developed northern hardwoods vegetation similar to that found on Big Island. To generally reestablish the pre-European settlement vegetation patterns and provide scenic and wildlife habitat diversity, these areas will be reestablished as northern hardwoods.

Cost. \$18,000

Action # 4. Retain wildlife food plots. (See Wildlife, Action # 1, pp 43-44.)

\*Action numbers correspond to the map codes on the Vegetation Management Map, p 38.



Cost. See pp 43-44

Action # 5. Establish prairie edge vegetation.

One vegetation community not noted on the Pre-Settlement Vegetation Map, p 36, but was found in Helmer Myre is the prairie edge vegetation. This community is composed of shrubs and small trees. It is often a transition between prairie and oak savanna or northern hardwoods. Wildlife diversity will be improved by establishing several areas of this community. This community will also be used where fast-growing low plantings are needed to screen undesirable views.

Cost. \$8,000

Action # 6. Manage the vegetation in White Fox Campground.

Because of the slow growth rate of bur oak and the need for shade in the campground, faster growing species that are not major components of the oak savanna community will be planted. Bur oak seedlings will be interplanted so that at some point in the future the faster-growing species can be removed, leaving the bur oaks.

There is currently no screening between campsites. Selected species of the prairie edge community will be planted between campsites to provide more privacy for campers and enhance the wildlife habitat around the campground.

This campground receives relatively light use at present and is open and sunny. The groundcover is therefore in good condition. As public use and amount of shade increase, more active management will be necessary.

Cost. \$10,000

Action # 7. Manage the vegetation in the group picnic area.

To establish a picnic area in this location, tree planting and some brush removal will be necessary. The large open area will be planted with scattered fast-growing tree species and interplanted with bur oaks. As



the bur oaks mature, the faster-growing species will be removed. Some of the brush understory in the existing oak groves must be removed. However, clumps of understory will be retained to provide visual buffers between picnic tables or groups of tables. A groundcover of shade-tolerant lawn grass will be seeded.

Cost. \$8,000

Action # 8. Manage the vegetation in Big Island Campground.

As some sites are removed (see Camping, Action # 1, pp 62-63), the use of the campground will be reduced and more intersite screening can be established. Erosion on the steep slope down to the lake will be minimized by constructing water bar/steps (see Trails, Action # 2, p 67). Although the groundcover is generally in good condition, the growing conditions for the groundcover will be enhanced through soil aeration. The area will also be seeded with a shade-tolerant grass mixture.

Cost. \$5,000

Action # 9. Manage the vegetation in Big Island Picnic Ground.

Most of the vegetation is in good condition at present. Some elm trees have died. They should be replaced with sugar maple and basswood saplings. Clumps of understory vegetation should be planted to provide visual buffers and to establish somewhat secluded spaces within the picnic area.

Cost. \$10,000

Action # 10. Reestablish marsh.

When the new access road to Camp Moraine and the manager's residence is constructed, the old roadbed will be partially graded to conform to natural contour. The northern portion which passes through the marsh will be used as a biking/snowmobiling trail. The lakeshore portion will be used as a hiking/skiing trail. (See Winter Trails Map, p 69.)



Cost. See p 69

Action # 11. Blend fence rows into surrounding vegetation and topography.

There are several very distinct old fence rows in Helmer Myre. The unnatural straight lines of vegetation and the old plow furrows will continue to be apparent for many years. Therefore at least 50 percent of the rows will be removed and graded to conform with the surrounding land, leaving the parts of the fence row with the largest vegetation undisturbed.

Cost. \$2,000



## WILDLIFE

### Inventory

Wildlife is highly visible to the average park visitor in Helmer Myre. Thanks to the efforts of the park manager and the local Audubon Society, the wildlife carrying capacity of the park has been greatly increased. The openness of the vegetation allows the visitor a good chance to see wildlife that is native to southern Minnesota.

### Management

#### Objectives:

To maintain and reestablish, where feasible, those wildlife species present in the park before European settlement

To improve waterfowl habitat by maintaining existing marshes and restoring drained marshes

To enhance wildlife observation as a recreational experience for all park visitors

To ensure adequate food and cover for the wildlife population in the park

#### • Detailed Recommendations

Action # 1. Continue to provide wildlife food plots.

Helmer Myre is a park noted for its abundance of visible wildlife. The park's food plots enhance this situation by attracting migrating birds, white-tailed deer, and other seasonal and year-round wildlife to the park. In so doing, the food plots help to provide a valuable outdoor recreational experience for park visitors.

Elimination of the food now provided will reduce the park deer herd more than is desired and would force migrating birds to look elsewhere in the area for food. Other wildlife now concentrated in the park



would also be dispersed. This would significantly decrease the opportunities for wildlife observation, affecting the quality of the recreational experience park visitors now enjoy.

The annual deer kill total for Freeborn County is almost 100 deer. The park has a resident deer population of 40-50. This figure increases four- or five-fold during the winter, when about 20 percent of the deer in Freeborn County can be found here. If the food plots were removed, it is doubtful that all these deer could find sufficient food elsewhere. The resultant decrease in the deer population would negatively affect hunting throughout the area.

Cost. Operational Budget

Action # 2. Reduce the size of the resident deer herd.

The park's resident deer herd continues to grow. If this growth remains unchecked, the herd could exceed the carrying capacity of the park. Reduction of the herd would return it to a size more representative of pre-settlement times. It would probably result in an increase in plant species deer use for food. The most important of these are wildflowers and bur oak -- both an integral part of the oak savanna restoration program. Reduction of the herd would also mean that the size of the food plots could be kept to a minimum. Opening the park to limited permit public hunting would be the most effective method of reducing the herd.

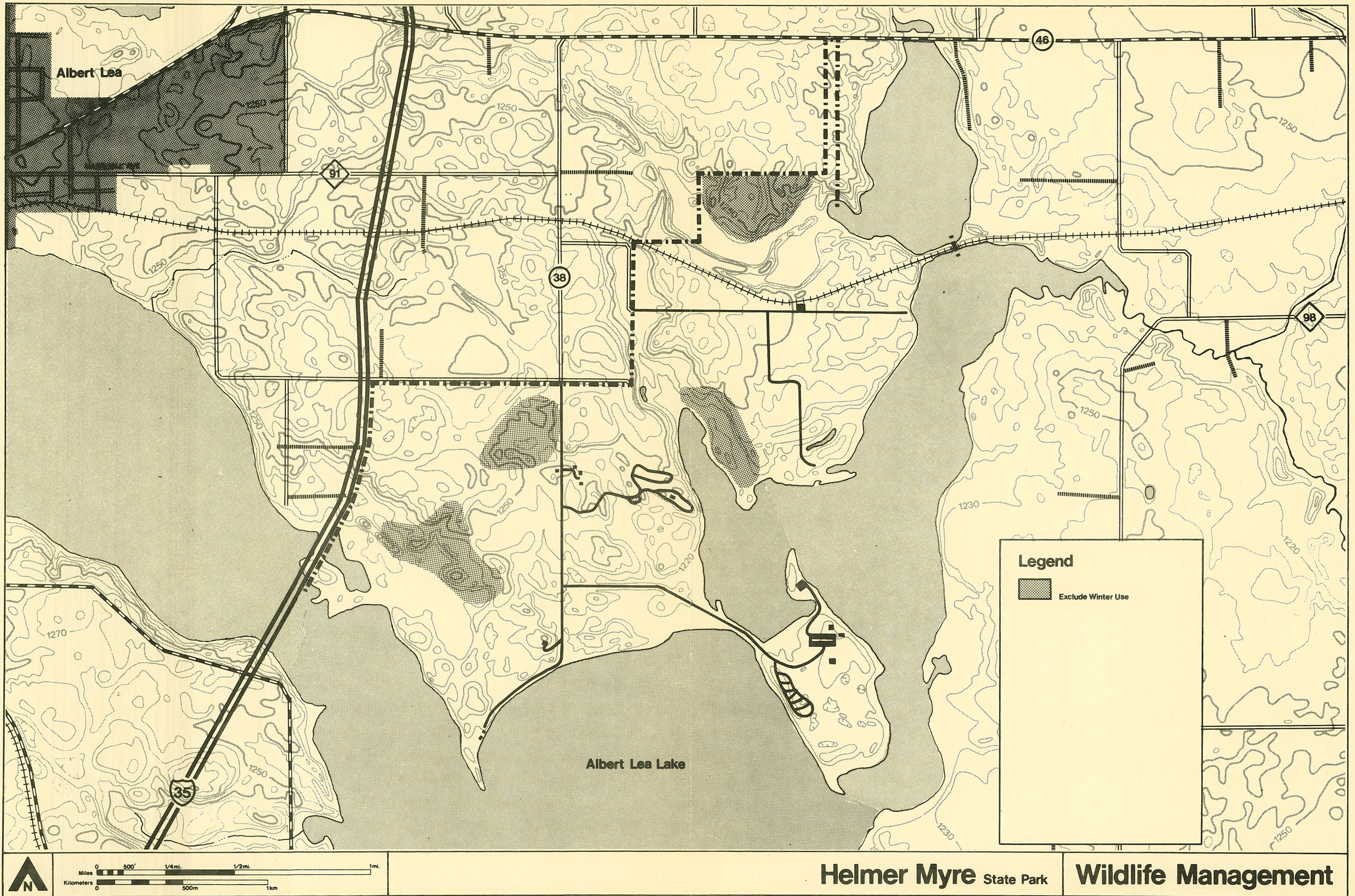
Cost. Operational budget

Action # 3. Reduce the size of the existing wildlife food plots.

At present, 60 acres (24.2 hectares) of land are being used for wildlife food plots. The acreage is divided into three 20 acre (8 hectare) plots located in the northeastern portion of the park.

Because of its abundance of winter cover and available food, the park provides one of the few places in Freeborn County where numbers of deer from the park and the surrounding area can successfully winter.







The majority of the surrounding area is subject to intensive agriculture. Trees and brush have been removed for farming purposes. Crops are harvested in the fall, leaving very little food or cover for deer. The result is that most of the county has a very low winter carrying capacity for deer.

The deer are therefore drawn to Helmer Myre. Removal of the park food plots would have a significant effect on the deer, as well as on the people and resources in the surrounding area. Some deer would probably starve during severe winters. Trees and shrubbery in the park and surrounding private acreage would suffer from overbrowsing. Deer, forced to leave the park in search of food, will create a traffic hazard and road kills will probably increase.

The acreage in which the food plots are located was purchased in part with federal LAWCON (Land and Water Conservation) funds. Federal regulations governing such lands do not permit the production of any crops to be sold for profit. The food plots at Helmer Myre are currently farmed on a share basis. Private individuals prepare the field and plant, maintain, and harvest the crops. They must leave one-half of the crop standing and may keep half of the crop for their own use. This arrangement is in violation of federal regulations.

To comply with regulations, the crop sharing arrangement will be discontinued. Park personnel will be responsible for preparation of the field and planting of the crop. All crops grown will be left for wildlife. None will be harvested. Row planting will be avoided. Hand-seeding a variety of foods with a broadcast seeder will help make the food plots more natural.

Using this arrangement, the total acreage necessary for food plots can be reduced from 60 acres (24.2 hectares) to approximately 20 acres (8 hectares). The plot to be maintained is in a secluded area bordered by trees on three sides.

Reducing the size of the food plots and making them less visible will be more compatible with the park's proposed classification as a natural state park.



Cost. None

Action # 4. Tiling systems currently draining marshes must be blocked to restore the natural water level.

The restoration of the drained marsh areas will provide increased waterfowl habitat in the park. Habitat improvement should increase the populations of waterfowl resulting in better wildlife observation for park visitors.

Cost. \$1,000

Action # 5. Reestablish Franklin's ground squirrel in the park.

This species was once found in the park. Its reintroduction will help restore presettlement wildlife populations. It will also increase the raptor food supply which may increase the raptor population. In both instances, wildlife observation will be improved.

Cost. Operational budget

Action # 6. Develop four deer enclosure areas, two of which should also exclude rabbits.

Small fenced areas (approximately 20 sq ft (1.8 sq m) would provide check areas to determine the impact of the deer and rabbit populations on the park's vegetation. These areas should demonstrate wildlife's impact on park vegetation. The sites will be selected in coordination with area wildlife and forestry managers.

Cost. \$2,000

Action # 7. Reestablish natural wildlife habitat (see Vegetation Management, pp 39-40.)

To maintain a large wildlife population in the park, more natural food plants and thickets for nesting and protection should be established. This would decrease the dependence of wildlife on the existing food plots.



Cost. Covered in Vegetation Management

Action # 8. Exclude park visitors from several small areas in the park during the winter (see Wildlife Management Map, p 45). This will be accomplished by keeping trail alignments out of these areas.

Wildlife may be under stress conditions during hard winters. There are several areas in the park where wildlife concentrate during the winter. Park visitors snowmobiling, skiing, or walking through these areas can frighten the animals. This increases the use of the animals' energy reserves. Eliminating these unnatural disturbances will allow the wildlife to maintain a better physical condition during the winter and improves the chances of survival.

Cost. Operational budget



## SURFACE WATERS

### Inventory

Helmer Myre has no permanent bodies of water within its boundary. It does, however, have many small marshes. After spring melt, these marshes hold up to 2 ft (.6 m) of water. Depending on seasonal rainfall, by late summer most have become wet meadows. These marshes are a valuable resource for waterfowl production.

The only permanent body of water in the vicinity of the park is Albert Lea Lake, which borders Helmer Myre on the south and east. Because it is extremely shallow (average of 3.5 ft (1.8 m)), it is unusable for activities such as motorboating and waterskiing. The lake also has very poor water quality, and game fish are virtually nonexistent. As a result, active recreational use of the lake is limited to occasional use by canoes, rowboats, and small sailboats. However, the lake does provide many scenic vistas.



## GROUNDWATER

Available information on groundwater supply is not extensive but it does give some idea of water quality and the depth of the aquifers. A bedrock of Cedar Valley limestone is located approximately 190 ft (58 m) below the surface. This is overlain by deep deposits of glacial material, primarily clay with an occasional lens of sand. The sand deposits provide sufficient water for residential wells. In most cases, however, because of the irregular nature of the sand lense deposits, it is necessary to drill to the bedrock for an adequate supply of water.

### Management

#### Objectives:

To maintain high quality groundwater

To provide high quality drinking water for park users

To improve the water quality in Albert Lea Lake

#### • Detailed Recommendations

Action # 1. Connect all modern sanitation facilities in the park to the sewage lagoon disposal system.

Some of the sewage disposal facilities in the park are antiquated. These facilities could affect the water quality of either the lake or the groundwater. Connecting all sewage disposal facilities to the sewage lagoon system would minimize that possibility.

Cost. Included in the cost of each development



## FISHERIES

### Inventory

Albert Lea Lake supports a large population of carp and bullhead. Game fish are seldom found in the lake, except during periods of high water when they have access to the lake through the Shell Rock River. Game fish that enter the lake do not survive long. They become the victims of winterkill, because of the extremely fertile and shallow conditions of the lake.

Efforts are being made by the city of Albert Lea to improve the water quality of the lake. Cleanup will benefit the park, but will have little effect on improving the game fish habitat in the lake.



## HISTORY/ARCHAEOLOGY

### Inventory

The Albert Lea Lake area has been inhabited since prehistoric times. Although many archaeological sites have been identified, they have not been thoroughly investigated, and therefore, the relative dates and cultural traditions have not been determined. Artifacts collected suggest that the area was occupied several thousand years ago.

In Helmer Myre, there is one identified site consisting of three burial mounds 3 ft (1 m) in height and 16 ft (5 m) in diameter. These mounds are on the north side of the Big Island picnic ground. It is expected that several other sites soon will be identified within the park. The Archaeology Department of Mankato State University is systematically testing the park for prehistoric sites. Several potential site areas have already been located and, with further work, specific sites may be pinpointed (see History/Archaeology Map, p 54.)

### Management

#### Objectives:

To preserve and protect all important prehistoric and historic sites in the park

To use information gathered in the study of prehistoric and historic sites for interpretive purposes

- Detailed Recommendations

Action # 1. Check proposed development sites for prehistoric and historic remains before any new construction.

Where remains are found, an assessment will be made of the significance of the site and the possible impacts of the proposed construction. When necessary, the site will be excavated before construction. If the site proves to be of significance, consideration should be given to moving development to another site.



It has been established that the area around Helmer Myre has a rich prehistoric heritage. However, not enough research and excavation have been done to give a complete picture of prehistoric life here. Under these circumstances, it would be unfortunate if an important site were destroyed. Therefore, appropriate caution will be exercised with any development in potential site areas.

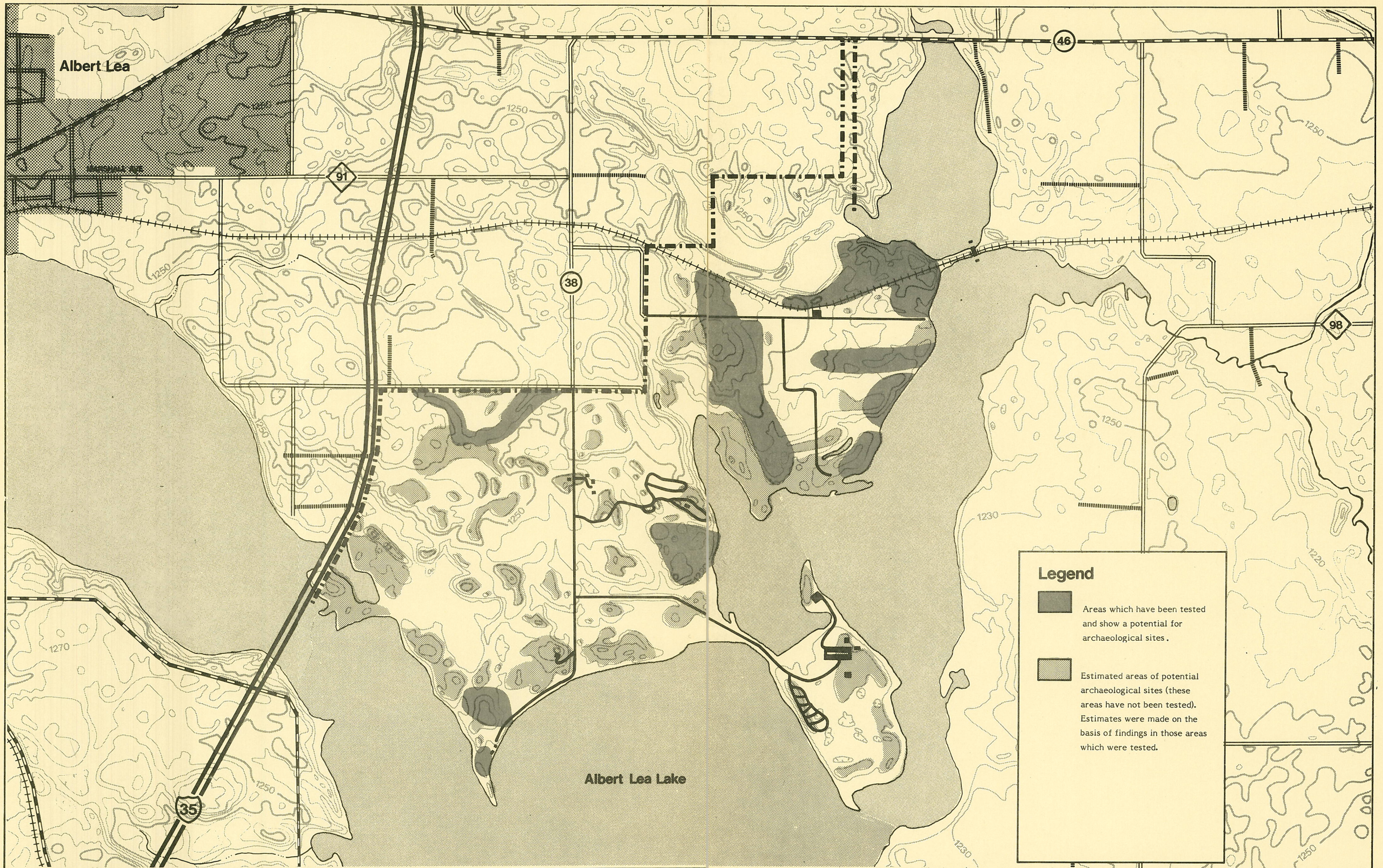
Cost. \$11,000

Action # 2. Continue to support the archaeological testing being done by Mankato State University.

Such studies will help increase the understanding of prehistoric human occupation in the park. This information will be used for future interpretive programs.

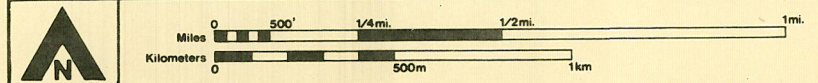
Cost. None





**Legend**

- Areas which have been tested and show a potential for archaeological sites.
- Estimated areas of potential archaeological sites (these areas have not been tested). Estimates were made on the basis of findings in those areas which were tested.



**Helmer Myre State Park**

**History / Archaeology**



A black and white photograph of a park. In the foreground, a large tree trunk is visible on the right side. The middle ground shows several picnic tables scattered across a grassy area. In the background, more trees and a fence line are visible. The overall scene is a peaceful park setting.

Physical  
Development~  
Recreation  
Management



## RECREATION MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES

These recreation management objectives are intended to guide the development of recreational facilities in all natural state parks:

To coordinate park development with private and other public facilities and resources in the vicinity

To limit park development to that which is necessary for efficient management and for the public to experience, study, and enjoy the natural resources

To locate park development where it will have the least impact on sensitive natural or historic resources, will not detract from the enjoyment of other users, and will allow easy access to areas of high scenic or study value

To make major facilities in the park accessible to special populations (i.e., persons with physical disabilities, the elderly, and the very young)

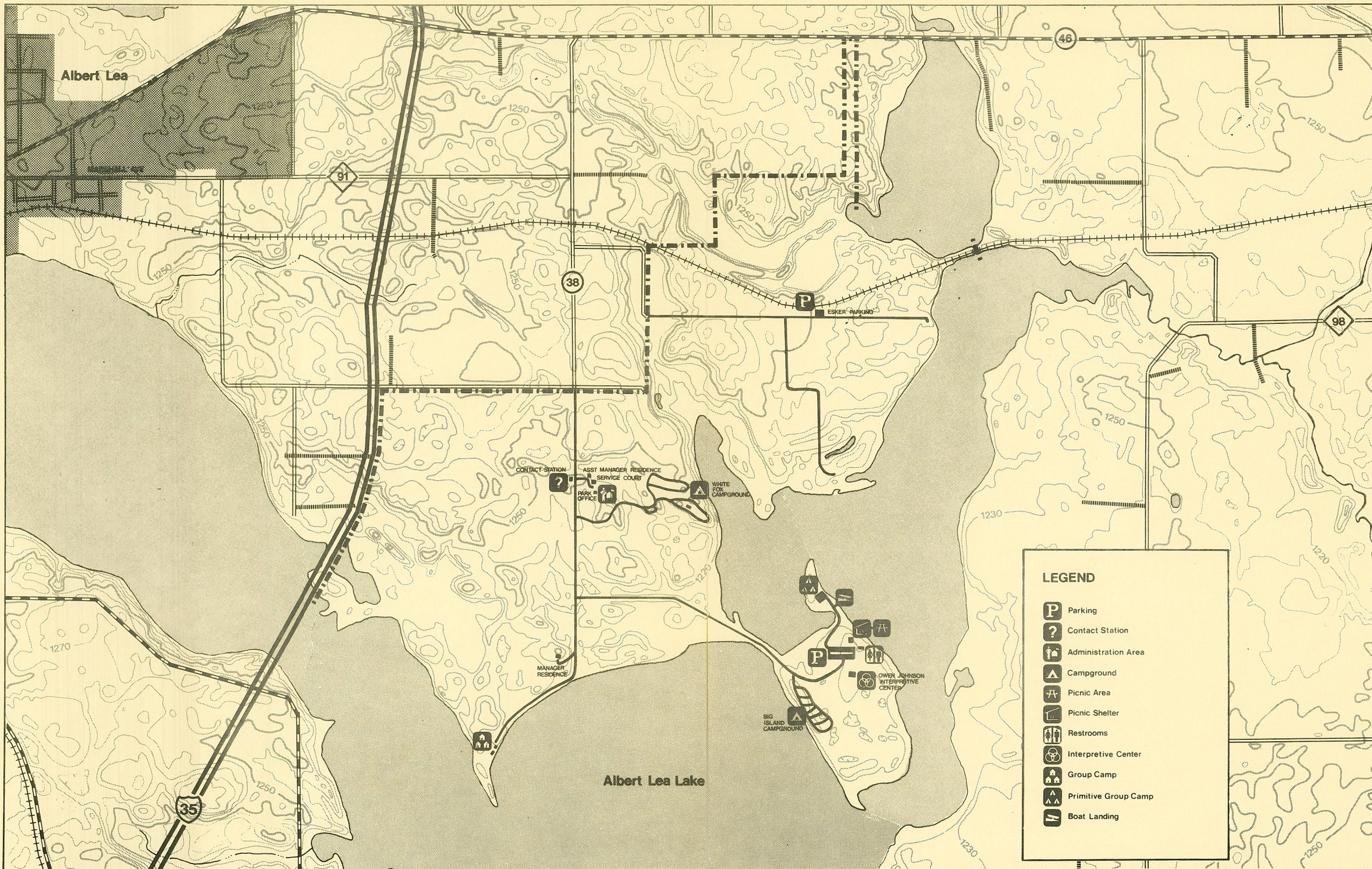


## EXISTING DEVELOPMENT

Existing development in Helmer Myre State Park includes:

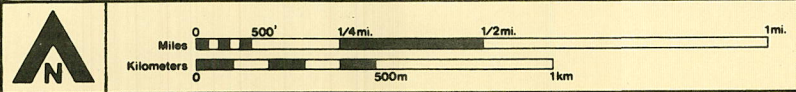
- Two campgrounds with a total of 142 campsites. Each campground has modern sanitation facilities.
- A group camp with kitchen, dining, and sanitation facilities.
- A primitive group camp with water and pit toilets.
- A picnic ground with tables, a sanitation building, and a picnic shelter.
- An interpretive center with two display rooms. The first focuses on stone tools found in the Albert Lea area. The second room contains displays on the wildlife of the park.
- A boat launch.
- A multi-use trail system totaling 15 mi (24 km) of trail.
- Two residences for park staff.
- A service court including the park office, workshop, and storage building.
- A contact station.
- Road access to all park facilities with vehicle parking space where needed.





**LEGEND**

- Parking
- Contact Station
- Administration Area
- Campground
- Picnic Area
- Picnic Shelter
- Restrooms
- Interpretive Center
- Group Camp
- Primitive Group Camp
- Boat Landing



**Helmer Myre State Park Existing Development**



## PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

### Overview

The major proposed changes to existing park facilities are as follows:

- Realign park roads
- Construct a contact station/park office
- Add campsites to the White Fox Campground
- Construct a new group picnic area with shelter/trail center and modern winterized sanitation building
- Reorganize the winter trail system to accommodate ski touring
- Develop bicycle trails
- Develop overlooks and wildlife observation blinds along the trail system
- Develop six walk-in campsites

### Detailed Recommendations

#### •Roads and Parking Lots

##### Objective:

To provide slow-paced vehicular access to major park facilities in a way which will have minimal impact on the natural resources

Action # 1. Realign the park road near the entrance so that it curves to the east and then curves back to join the existing alignment. Remove the old roadbed and grade it to conform with the natural contour. Plant with native vegetation.



A park entrance should set the tone for the whole park. By introducing a broad curve at the park entrance, the traffic speed will be slowed, a variety of scenic views will be possible, and sufficient room for construction of a contact station/park office will be provided.

The new alignment will be developed through old field vegetation, so native vegetation will not be disturbed. Because it is not a through road, local traffic patterns will not be affected.

Cost. \$31,000

Action # 2. Develop a new road to Camp Moraine and the manager's residence. Reduce the width and height of the portion of the existing alignment that will be used as a trail, and remove the remaining roadbed. Grade the removed portion to conform with the natural contour and plant with native vegetation.

Most of the existing access road is located right on the lake's edge. Scenic areas such as this should be reserved for more passive and less intensive uses than an access road. Once the road is removed, the lakeshore portion of the old alignment will be used as a hiking and ski touring trail. Small parking lots along the new road will allow good access to observation areas overlooking the lake and the marsh.

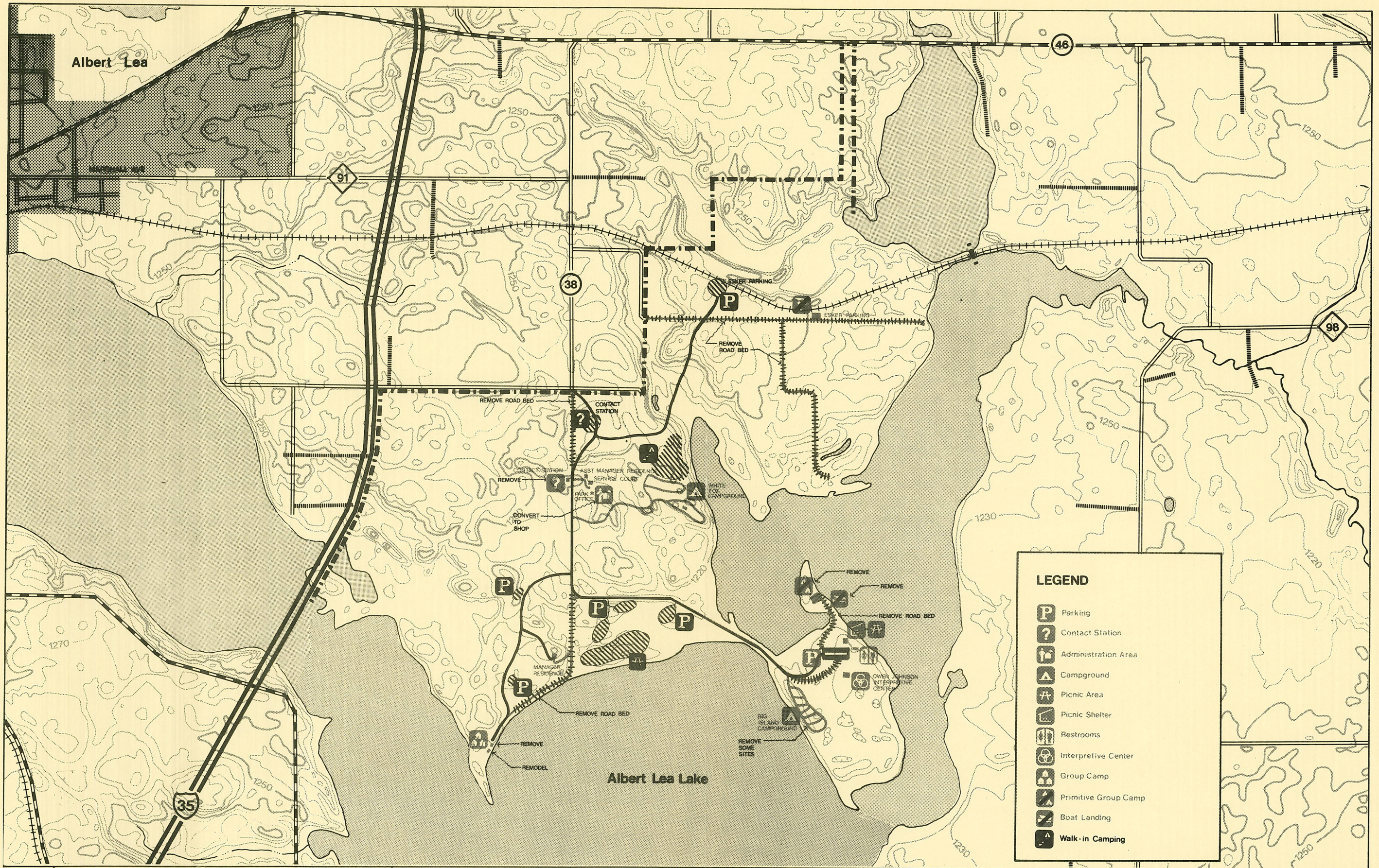
Cost. \$53,000

Action # 3. Change the site of the esker parking lot to allow access to the esker top trail along a gentle slope.

The trail from the existing parking lot leads hikers along the esker to its west end and then up to the top of the esker. Many people now cut across the wet meadow and climb up the steep hillside to the trail on the esker top. Moving the parking lot to the west end of the esker will direct users up the gentlest slope, minimizing erosion potential.

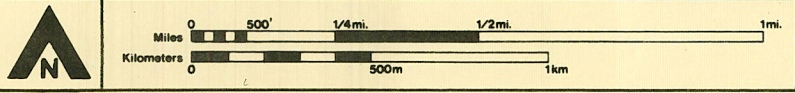
Cost. \$3,000





**LEGEND**

- Parking
- Contact Station
- Administration Area
- Campground
- Picnic Area
- Picnic Shelter
- Restrooms
- Interpretive Center
- Group Camp
- Primitive Group Camp
- Boat Landing
- Walk-in Camping



**Helmer Myre State Park Proposed Development**



Action # 4. Develop a road to the new esker parking lot. Remove the old roadbeds and grade to conform with the natural contour. Plant native vegetation.

Cars can now enter and leave the northeast portion of the park without passing the contact station. In order to control unlawful and destructive use of this area, this access must be closed. The proposed road would pass the contact station and can be constructed with minimal tree removal and grading.

Cost. \$37,000

Action # 5. Realign the park road between Big Island Campground and the picnic area parking lot.

Traffic will circulate more efficiently if the picnic area parking lot is entered at the end rather than the middle. A well-defined, one-way circulation pattern will be established. It will also be much easier to remove snow.

Cost. \$4,000

- Camping

Objectives:

To provide camping facilities which will allow the public the opportunity to enjoy park resources 24 hours a day

To provide well-screened camping sites which are accessible by car and located in a natural setting

To provide overnight camping opportunities at individual sites removed from vehicle access areas

To provide camping facilities for groups, particular children

Action # 1. Remove some campsites from Big Island Campground.



Some sites are very close together and should be spread out so that a camper is more aware of the natural environment than of other campers. The character and vegetation of Big Island must be protected and perpetuated. This will be facilitated by decreasing and spreading out the campsites. Approximately 10-15 campsites will be removed.

Cost. \$1,000

Action # 2. Construct one new loop with approximately 30 sites at White Fox Campground, if the amount of use warrants it.

Although White Fox Campground receives light use at present, an increased demand for camping is expected in the future. The existing campsites are open, with minimal shade. When shrubs and trees are established they will provide shade and intersite screening, making this campground more desirable. (See Vegetation Management, Action # 5, p 40.) As sites are removed from Big Island Campground, more use of White Fox Campground is expected.

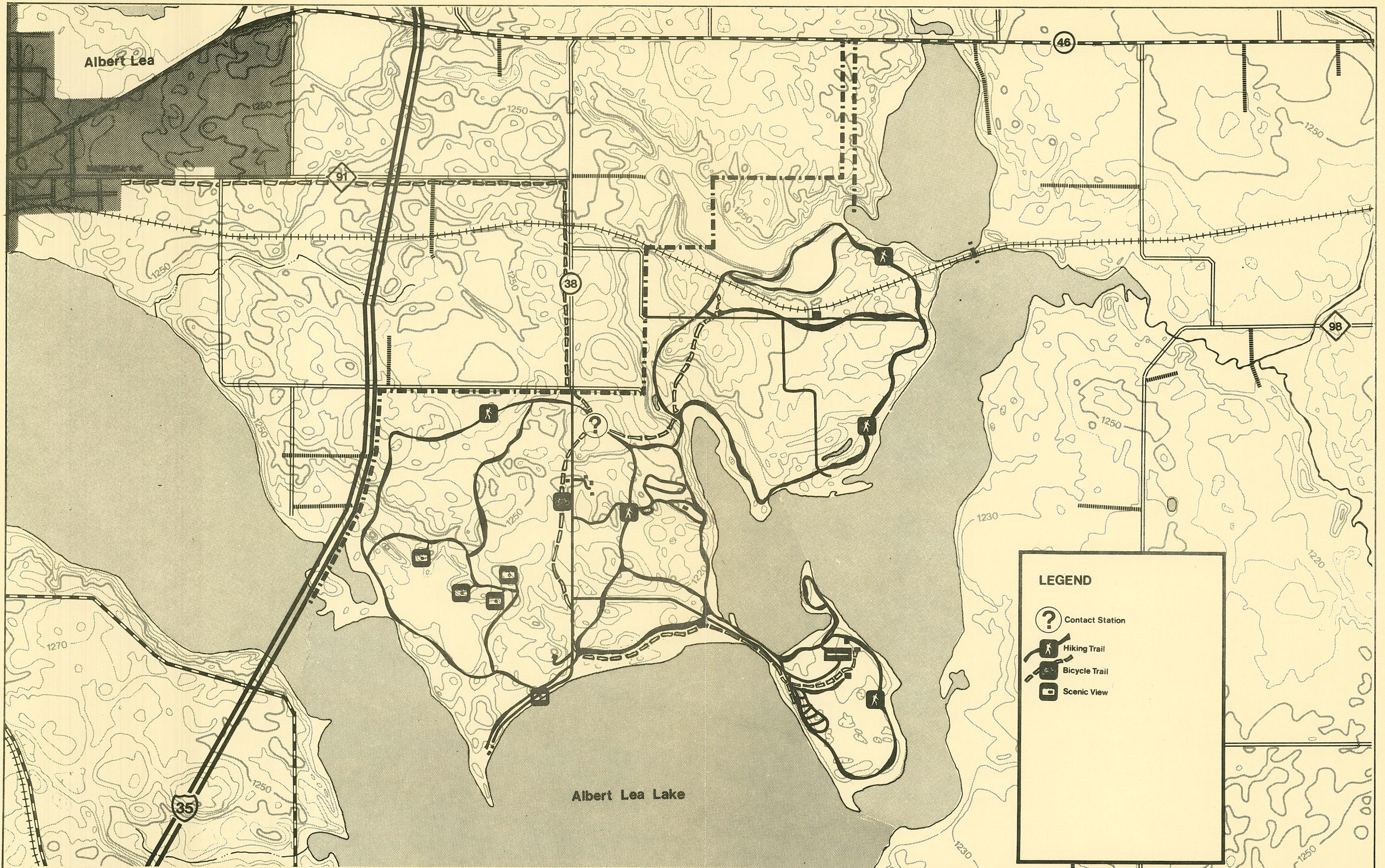
The Helmer Myre campgrounds are designed as a base from which a park visitor can experience and learn about the park's natural resources. Many travelers will use the park's campground but it is hoped that existing private campgrounds in the vicinity will expand, or new ones will be constructed to accommodate the projected increase in demand for camping facilities. Therefore, a major campground expansion in the park is not recommended.

Cost. \$150,000 (Conditional)





Action # 3. Develop six walk-in campsites directly north of White Fox Campground (see map, p 61).

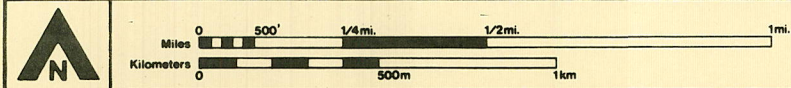
These campsites will be in two separate clusters accessible only by a short hike or by bicycle. They will be widely spaced, well-screened, and located in a natural setting. A fire ring, picnic table, and a level area for a tent will be provided at each site. A pit toilet and a water pump will be provided in the vicinity of each cluster.





**LEGEND**

-  Contact Station
-  Hiking Trail
-  Bicycle Trail
-  Scenic View



**Helmer Myre** State Park

**Summer Trails**



At present all campers must camp beside their vehicle fairly close to other campers. Many campers prefer to get away from roads, cars, and other campers to experience nature. Walk-in or bike-in campsites can provide this experience. By having two small clusters of campsites, small groups can also be accommodated.

Cost. \$3,000

Action # 4. Provide kitchen, dining area/classroom, and toilet and shower facilities in Camp Moraine.

The two existing structures in the group camp both require major rehabilitation. One structure has toilets and showers in the basement and an unfinished classroom on the main level. By constructing an addition to this building which includes a kitchen and enlarged classroom/dining room, the other building can be removed without loss of facilities. One remodeled building will require less maintenance and will minimize visual impact. If it is determined by the Bureau of Engineering that it would be more cost-efficient to construct a new building, both existing structures should be removed. The facility should be connected to the park's central sewage system.

Cost. \$160,000

- Picnicking

Objective:

To provide scenic, shaded areas where park visitors, both large groups and individual parties, can prepare and eat meals in relative privacy

Action # 1. Construct a picnic ground on the mainland portion of the park (see Proposed Development Map, p 61) which will include a picnic/trail shelter, two 30-car parking lots, a winterized toilet building, 50-60 picnic tables, and 20-30 grills.

The existing facilities on Big Island are not large enough to accommodate the numbers of people who picnic in the park on summer weekends. Often the congestion in the existing picnic area is



increased by one or more large groups of picnickers. This new area would be designed primarily for groups. A system should be established for reserving the proposed picnic shelter.

Continued heavy use of the existing picnic area may result in damage to resources (soil compaction, root damage, erosion). Construction of this new facility will help alleviate these problems. The picnic shelter will be designed so it can easily be winterized and used as a winter trail shelter with direct access to both the ski touring and snowmobile trails.

Cost. \$208,000

Action # 2. Connect all park developments on big Island to the central sewage system.

The campground, picnic ground, and interpretive center will be retained on Big Island. These areas should therefore be connected to the central sewage system.

Cost. \$75,000

- Trails

Objectives:

To provide access to a variety of areas within the park along alignments chosen for slight gradient, scenic views, interesting study areas, avoidance of sensitive areas, and separation of conflicting uses

To connect park trails with county grants-in-aid trails

Hiking

Action # 1. Expand the hiking trail system to provide access to the northeast portion of the park. The trail should run parallel to the lakeshore.



This trail addition will complete a loop to the esker trail and back. It will provide access to several areas of scenic and educational value. This trail will increase hiking trail mileage to 14 mi (22.5 km).

Cost. \$5,000

Action # 2. Construct water bar/steps on the lake's edge near Big Island Campground.

People are attracted to water. A developed trail is not provided to the water's edge in the campground. This has resulted in an unauthorized, eroded path down the steep slope. Construction of water bar/steps down the slope will provide direct camper access to the lake. Water will be diverted away from the eroded trail area onto undisturbed groundcover which is resistant to erosion.

Cost. \$2,000

Action # 3. Develop a trail in the picnic area parallel to the lakeshore, which provides access to the lake near the Little Island causeway.

This trail should lead picnickers along the lake's edge to a point where access to the water can be provided on a gentle slope where erosion will be minimized.

Cost. \$4,000

Action # 4. Develop a level, surfaced trail between Big Island Campground and the interpretive center.

Many of the campers now use the road as a trail to the interpretive center and the picnic ground. It would be much safer to provide a fairly direct trail connecting these two high-use areas. This trail should be surfaced to allow use by special populations.

Cost. \$7,500



### Ski Touring

Action # 5. Develop approximately 5 mi (8 km) of ski touring trails. The trails will be organized into four connected loops beginning at the proposed trail center (see Picnicking, Action # 1, p 65). The ski trails will not cross snowmobile trails.

This trail system will provide access to Big Island and Camp Moraine. The interconnected loop system will provide a variety of trail lengths. This portion of the park was chosen because of the rolling terrain, the amount of trail that can be aligned through the trees, and because it avoids major winter wildlife concentrations and other sensitive resource areas.

Cost. \$2,500

Action # 6. Continue use of the Big Island picnic shelter as a winter trail shelter for skiers.

Use of the facility will be restricted to ski tourers. The building will serve as a warming shelter for skiers using the trail on Big Island.

Cost. None

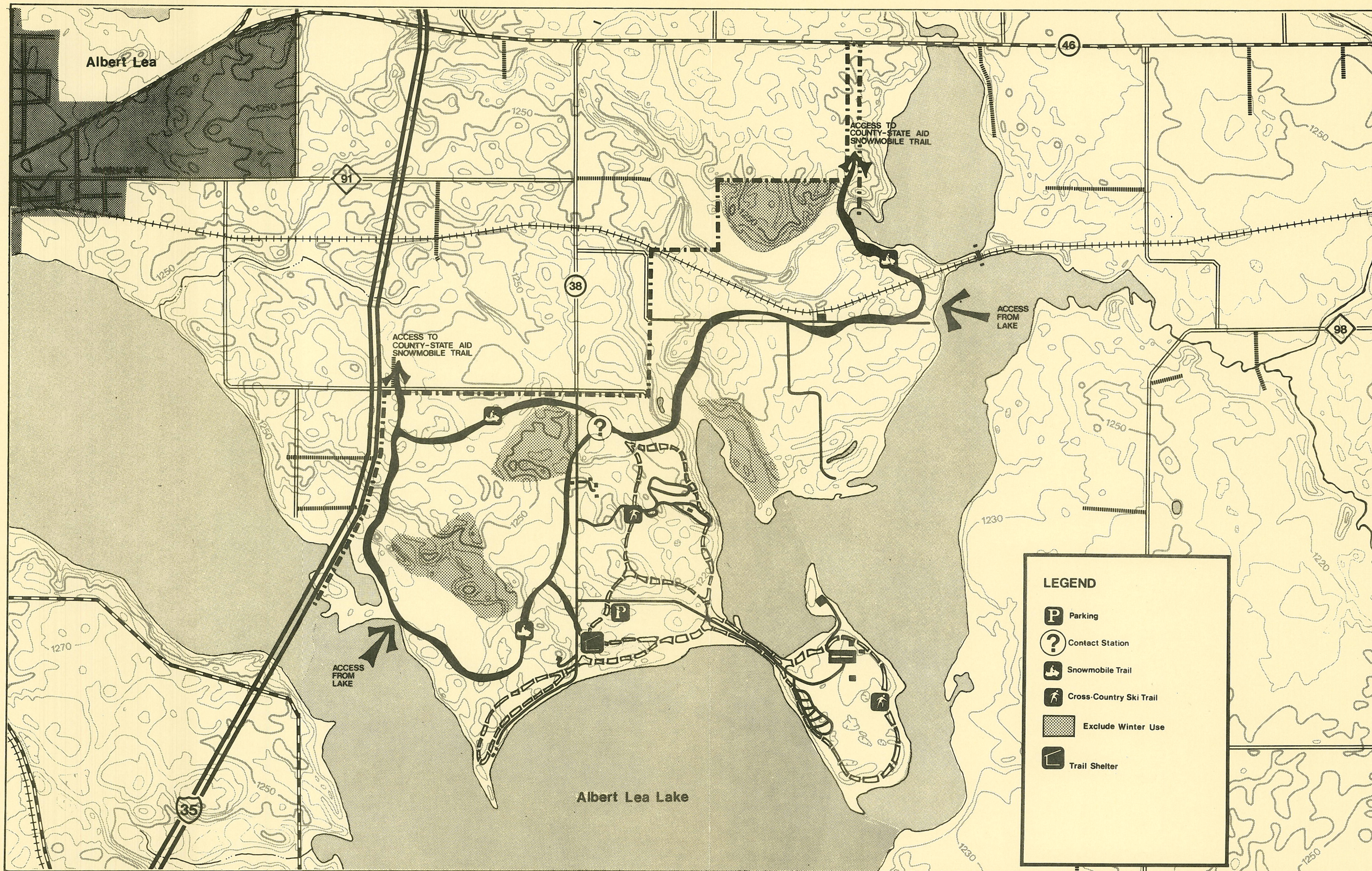
### Snowmobiling

Action # 7. Realign some of the snowmobile trail alignments. Maintain approximately 5.5 mi (9 km) of trail in the park.







The park trails will join the county snowmobile grant-in-aid trail system in two places and two access points from the lake will be provided. A trail center will be provided in the proposed group picnic area shelter (see Action # 1, p 65).

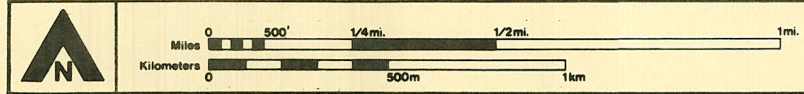
At present most of the winter trail use in the park is by snowmobilers. However, there is an increasing demand for ski touring trails. By realigning the snowmobile trails, an adequate ski trail system can also be developed without decreasing total trail mileage. Proposed trails





**LEGEND**

-  Parking
-  Contact Station
-  Snowmobile Trail
-  Cross-Country Ski Trail
-  Exclude Winter Use
-  Trail Shelter



**Helmer Myre State Park**

**Winter Trails**



generally follow existing noise corridors near I-35, the park road, Albert Lea Lake, or unplowed park roads. Areas with major wildlife concentrations will be avoided, but wildlife will be visible from the trails. It is illegal to direct trail users onto lakes. Because Albert Lea Lake is heavily used by snowmobilers, two signed trail access points from the lake into the park will be provided. A small bridge will be necessary east of the esker to minimize resource damage.

Cost. \$7,500

### Biking

Action # 8. Request that the city of Albert Lea and Freeborn County provide bicycle access between the park and Albert Lea.

Biking the short distance of 2-3 mi (3-5 km) from Albert Lea to the park would be an enjoyable recreational activity. This route will also encourage campers to bring bicycles to ride to town. The proposed route would go north on the park entrance road (CSAH 38) to Marshall Avenue (Cty Rd 91) and west into Albert Lea. A proposed city bicycle trail could easily be connected to Marshall Avenue.

Cost. The cost of this project would have to be born by the city of Albert Lea or Freeborn County, although matching funds may be available through Mn/DOT.

Action # 9. Develop off-road bicycle access to the major facilities within the park, 3.4 mi (5 km).

Bike paths to major park facilities will provide an alternative means of transportation and recreational activity. Bike trails separated from the roads will provide a safer, more enjoyable experience for both bicyclists and motorists.

Cost. \$92,000



- Water Activities

Objectives:

To increase the scenic attraction of Little Island

To decrease the amount of materials, machinery, and labor hours needed to maintain Little Island

Action # 1. Remove the boat launch.

The present condition of Albert Lea Lake makes it undesirable for most recreational activities other than occasional shore fishing and some small boat use. Even if it were not so polluted, the shallow depth of the lake would limit use to small sailboats, canoes, and boats with low horsepower engines. In midsummer the high algae content of the water creates an unpleasant smell and appearance, further limiting use. For these reasons, the boat launch receives little use. Labor hours currently needed to maintain the launch and adjacent parking area could be put to better use. Little Island is a secluded, scenic area and removal of the boat launch would enhance the scenic quality of the site.

Because use of the facility is so limited, the launch will not be relocated. People who wish to use a canoe or small sail boat on the lake can portage from the picnic parking lot or the group picnic parking lot. If recreational use of the lake increases in the future and justifies the need for a boat launch, it can be relocated in a more suitable area of the park.

Public access to the lake will still be possible at the county boat launch located directly across the lake from the park.

Cost. \$1,500



• Administrative and Support Facilities

Objectives:

To provide an administrative facility which will ensure efficient, effective operation of the park

To improve control of the park entrance

To alleviate current storage problems

Action # 1. Construct a year-round use contact station/park office with a 5-10 car parking lot.

The contact station and park office are now located in two buildings. Limited funds for staffing make off-season operation of the contact station difficult. As a result, there are many times when control of the park entrance is inadequate. Vehicles can enter without purchasing a sticker and it is difficult to know how many visitors are in the park. The new facility will permit one person to sell stickers and provide information while continuing to function as an office clerk. Costs for energy, maintenance, and staffing will be kept to a minimum, while better control of the park entrance will be maintained.

Cost. \$176,000

Action # 2. Construct a maintenance building with a heated shop in the service area.

Present storage facilities are not adequate for park maintenance equipment. As a result, the manager is forced to store some equipment in less accessible buildings in the park or leave equipment outside. The building which is used for the majority of equipment storage also houses the park workshop. Equipment storage often infringes on the work area.



To resolve this problem, a 30 x 60 ft (9.1 x 18.2 m) maintenance building with a heated shop will be constructed in the service area. Trees and shrubs will be planted around the entire area to screen it from public view.

Cost. \$100,000

#### Utilities

Action # 1. Put all park electrical lines underground.

Above-ground electrical lines disrupt the natural visual character of the park. The electrical lines to Big Island also have proven to be hazardous to waterfowl. Several pelicans and other waterfowl have been killed by flying into these lines. Electrical power to Big Island has occasionally been disrupted because of these incidents.

Cost. \$30,000

Action # 2. Request that the electrical line which crosses the esker be removed.

The DNR has no jurisdiction over this power line. However, if the adjacent landowner who is presently serviced by this line could receive service from another direction, the natural views of this significant landform would be greatly enhanced.

Cost. Cannot be estimated - contingent on negotiations with the landowner and the power companies.



## ARCHITECTURAL THEME

The visual character of most of Helmer Myre will continue to be open oak savanna and prairie with gently rolling hills. Most of the existing buildings have very simple functional designs. The Owen Johnson Interpretive Center is the only existing structure with a definite architectural design character. The curved laminated beams and cedar shingles are two of the design elements that can be carried through into the new building designs. The tall arch design of the interpretive center is fitting in its maple-basswood forest surroundings. Where the contact station/park office and the group picnic shelter/trail center will be located a shorter, flatter arch would be more appropriate. The low profile and energy efficiency can be enhanced by setting structures half in the ground.



## VISITOR SERVICES

### Introduction

Interpretation is "an educational activity which aims to reveal meanings and relationships through the use of original objects, but first-hand experience, and by illustrative media, rather than simply to communicate factual information" (Freeman Tilden). In this light, the interpretive services program fosters in the public an understanding of park resources and management by:

1. Revealing the kinship of park visitors to the park environment and, by association, their even broader involvement with ecosystems
2. Illuminating the historic and ongoing impacts of natural forces within the park and upon the people who use them
3. Assisting park visitors in the discovery of meaningful and satisfying ways in which to enjoy their visits without intruding on the experiences of others or impairing the quality of the park environment
4. Explaining the mission of the DNR, interdisciplinary park management practices, and the importance of public participation and support in the operation and maintenance of our state park system

Interpretive programs will be developed in recognition of the following:

1. All parks are fragile communities of life which can be perpetuated only through careful management
2. People are a natural and necessary element in park environments— free to enjoy them in non-destructive ways



3. All natural resource units and the public they serve are tied to one another ecologically, economically, socially, and politically

It is hoped that the people who recreate and learn in the parks will, by experiencing the parks and related interpretive services, derive a better quality of life and gradually increase their environmental awareness. As people are encouraged to think and to feel more about park environments, they can be expected to do more on behalf of these environments. They can also be expected to strengthen their own ties with the land and with our state's cultural heritage.

Helmer Myre has been recommended for classification as a natural state park because, with proper vegetation management, it can serve as an excellent example of the Southern Oak Barrens Biocultural Region. Because of its excellent portrayal of the biocultural region, it is being considered as a nodal, or primary, interpretive unit. Interpretive efforts will focus on topics dealing with the geology, biology, prehistory, history, and aesthetics of the park.

Geological features in the park are primarily glacial in origin. They include the esker, a long, snake-like mound of gravel probably formed by a glacial stream; Albert Lea Lake and the many marshes in the park; moraines, ridges formed by glacial deposition; and the composition of the soils found in Helmer Myre and the surrounding area.

Biological features are varied and excellent for interpretation. Plant life includes small remnants of native prairie, a maple-basswood forest, and excellent potential for reestablishing an oak savanna - a combination of clustered oaks and prairie plant life.

Animal life includes a variety of small mammals. Most of these were present during presettlement times. Other small mammals, such as Franklin's ground squirrel, once lived in the park and will be reintroduced. Interpretation of bird life is excellent because Helmer Myre is located along the flight path of numerous migrating birds.



Waterfowl such as ducks, pelicans, and geese are attracted to the area because Albert Lea Lake provides exceptional waterfowl habitat.

At present, there is only one identified prehistoric archaeological site in the park, a group of three burial mounds located in the Big Island picnic ground. However, the potential for finding other sites is great. Over the years, thousands of stone artifacts have been found by collectors in the park and surrounding area. The Owen Johnson Interpretive Center on Big Island houses a substantial collection of stone artifacts representing the various tools and weapons used by prehistoric people. The collection is on display and is used for teaching purposes.

In addition, Mankato State University is conducting chemical tests on the soil in the park to determine whether any areas were inhabited. Their preliminary findings are quite promising.

The potential for historical interpretation is minimal. Some interpretation of the discovery and exploration of the area is possible. Settlement of the area for agricultural purposes can also be discussed.

Aesthetics as an interpretable feature is limited in Helmer Myre. The landscape of the park does not contain dramatic features. However, the park is pleasing in appearance, with many beautiful views of Albert Lea Lake. As the prairie/oak savanna is reestablished, views of the park will be able to give visitors an idea of what the area looked like before settlement.

### Interpretive Facilities

#### Objectives:

To improve the interpretive potential of the Owen Johnson Interpretive Center

To improve audio-visual programming

To develop self-guided interpretive trails and overlooks to enhance the interpretive program



• Detailed Recommendations

Action # 1. Complete display facilities in the interpretive center.

East Wing - Establish a small library with books on early American Indian cultures, stone and ceramic artifacts, and geology of Minnesota. Construct a display showing the location of Indian cultures within the state, the nation, and the continent.

West Wing - The temporary displays now being used must be replaced by permanent displays. These displays must be designed so that they can be placed in different arrangements. Display topics should include:

- surface collection of artifacts
- glaciation
- the formation of the esker
- the formation of ice block lakes (many of the marshes in the park were formed this way)
- glacial till
- a "touch and feel" area for younger children

Cost. \$28,000

Action #2. Remodel the west wing of the interpretive center to include the installation of skylights, the construction of a projection booth/storage room, the construction of an office and a workroom for the naturalist staff, and the provision of portable seating for audio-visual programs.

At present there is no storage space of audio-visual equipment. This equipment is expensive to replace and should be stored in a secure area. A projection booth would provide secure storage, and the equipment would still be easily accessible for use. There would also be additional space in the booth for miscellaneous storage.

Seating for the audio-visual programs now consists of wooden benches. They are unpadded and have no back support. Such seating is uncomfortable, particularly for adults. Seating with back support



should be provided. The most feasible form of seating would be movable benches or stack chairs.

There is no office or work space in the interpretive center. Office space is needed because space at the reception desk is crowded and inadequate for the naturalist's needs. Work space is needed for the preparation of materials used in displays and demonstrations. For example, the naturalist does taxidermy work and there is no space in the building to do it.

Both the office and workroom can be located on the west end of the building. The storage room could be remodeled for use as an office. Remodeling would include some electrical rewiring, wall paneling to cover the insulation, and the installation of a window. A stairway, probably spiral to save space, would also have to be constructed to provide access.

The workroom would be located directly below the office. At present there is a fire exit leading outside. Outside the exit is a wide roof overhang. The area below the overhang could be enclosed to provide the needed work space. Construction needs would include counter space, a sink, a small refrigerator/freezer for storage of plant and animal specimens, and relocation of the fire exit on the west wall.

The west wing has no windows or doors and must rely completely on artificial lighting. This lighting is insufficient and results in a rather dimly lit room. The addition of skylights would be an improvement over the current lighting arrangement.

Cost. \$10,000

Action #3. Install an anti-theft alarm system in the interpretive center.

The center is located in an isolated area. When the park is closed during the evenings, the building is poorly protected from theft or vandalism. For the protection of the artifact collection and the



interpretive equipment kept in the building, an alarm system should be installed which can automatically notify the manager and the local police if a break-in occurs.

Cost. \$3,500

Action # 4. Construct a council ring adjacent to the west end of the interpretive center.

The council ring is in need of rehabilitation. However, rather than repair the existing ring, a new one should be constructed adjacent to the west end of the interpretive center. Electricity is easily accessible in this location, allowing the council ring to be used for outdoor audio-visual programs. This is an option not available at the present council ring and one that the park interpretive staff has requested. In addition, if a program in progress is rained out, it could easily be moved into the interpretive center.

The requirements for this kind of facility include: a sloped area, log or bench seating, and a movie screen suitable for outdoor use.

Cost. \$5,000

Action # 5. Develop the esker trail in the northeast portion of the park as an interpretive trail with a printed brochure to interpret the outstanding features along the trail.

A self-guided interpretive trail should be designed for the esker, as it is one of the most unique landforms in the area. This trail will include stops marked by numbered posts and an interpretive brochure keyed to these stops explaining the formation of the esker and the marshes adjacent to it.

Cost. \$2,500

Action # 6. Develop scenic overlooks for viewing the marsh in the southwest part of the park.



A broad variety of wildlife inhabit or visit these marshes and woods. Steep slopes in several areas would provide excellent views. Wooden decks and selective pruning of surrounding trees would provide good wildlife observation points.

Cost. \$10,000





**Boundary  
Adjustments**



## BOUNDARY ADJUSTMENTS

### Introduction

The Minnesota State Legislature has changed the statutory boundary of Helmer Myre State Park several times. The park was first established in 1947, and included only Big Island (112.25 acres or 44.9 hectares). Since that time the park has been expanded four times. The present statutory boundary encloses 1,535 acres (614 hectares). All the land within this statutory boundary is owned by the state of Minnesota, under the custodial control of the DNR, Division of Parks and Recreation.

The statutory boundary is well marked. In most cases the boundary is located on easily discernible features, such as the lake edge, I-35, and township roads. The only problem area is in the northeast corner of the park. The boundary line fence ends in a shallow bay near the tip of the esker.

### Objective:

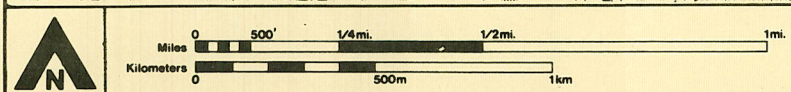
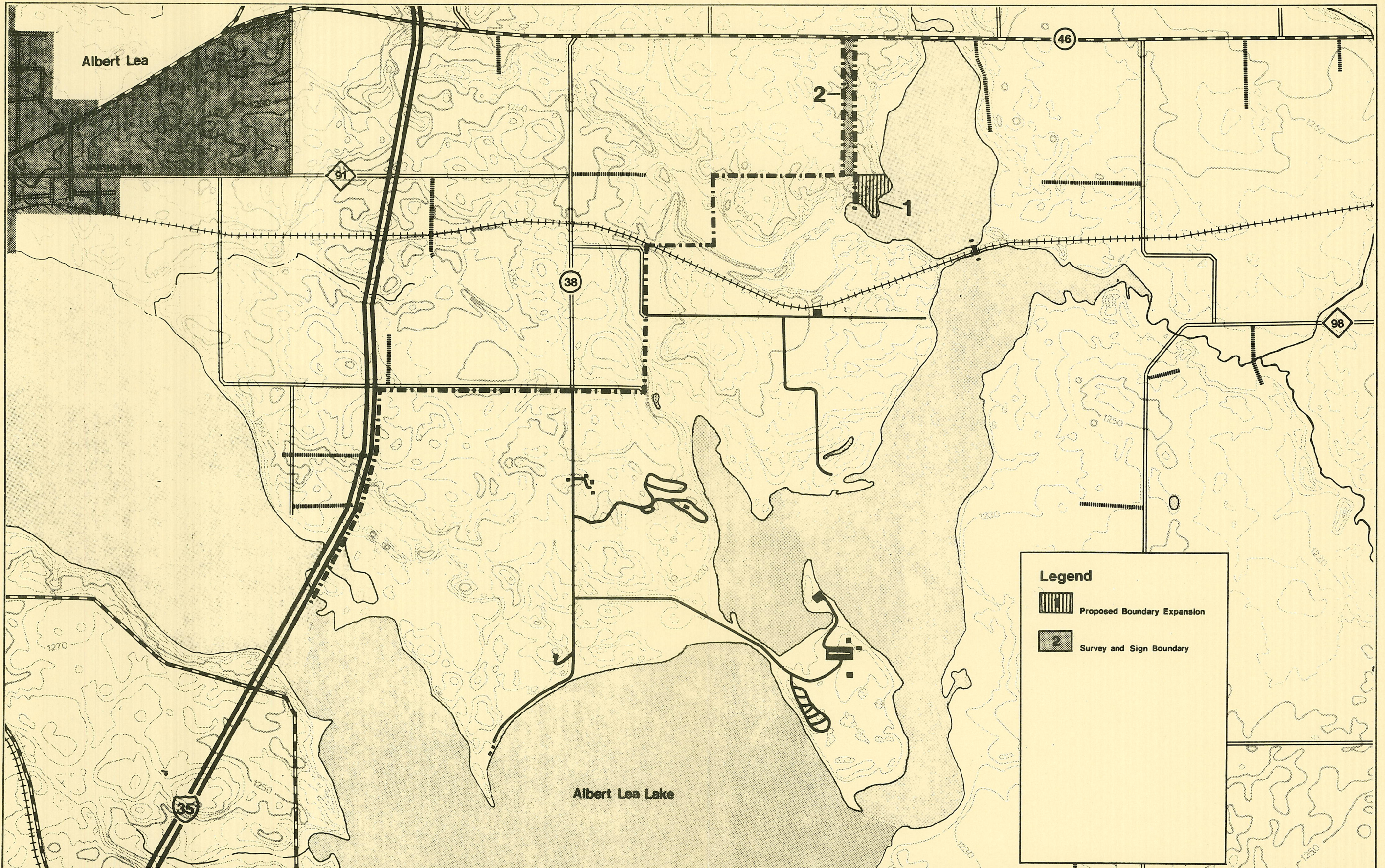
To provide sufficient park acreage to preserve and perpetuate the natural resources and provide the necessary recreational facilities to interpret and enjoy these resources, without including acreage that would be unnecessary or unreasonable to purchase

Action # 1. Expand the statutory boundary (see Boundary Adjustments Map, p 84), if the landowner is willing to sell 19 acres (7.6 hectares) to the state of Minnesota.

The esker is a significant feature of the park. Most of the land viewed from the esker is within the park. The 19-acre parcel in question is highly visible from the esker. Preservation of the scenic qualities of this parcel is critical to maintain the natural character of the esker area.

Purchase of this parcel would also result in improved cattle control. The point at which the current statutory boundary meets Albert Lea Lake is in a shallow bay. The property adjacent to the park here is





**Helmer Myre State Park**

**Boundary Adjustments**



rented out as a pasture. Because of the shallow water in the bay, cattle can walk around the end of the fence. A fence constructed along the proposed boundary would meet the lake in an area of much deeper water, minimizing the problem of cattle getting into the park.

Therefore, if the landowner is interested in selling, and assuming that a purchase price can be worked out, the state should purchase this tract.

Cost. Contingent on negotiations with the landowner

Action # 2. Survey and sign the boundary of the 2-acre (.8-hectare) piece of park land located directly west of the section line in the northeast quarter of T102 NR21E, Sec 12.

This piece is a thin strip of land 33 ft (10 m) wide and 1/2 mi (.8 km) long, running from CSAH 46 southward along the Albert Lea-Hayward township line and adjoining a larger body of park land in the southeast quarter of Section 12 (see Boundary Adjustments Map, p 84).

The western boundary of this 2 acre (.8 hectare) piece is now unmarked and lies adjacent to cropland.

Cost. \$2,000





Operations  
and Staffing



## OPERATIONS

Maintenance is an essential responsibility of the DNR, Division of Parks and Recreation. It is responsibility that often goes unnoticed by the park visitor in comparison with new developments. Yet, the park and the DNR are continually judged by the appearance of the park and its facilities.

The task of providing services to the public and security for park facilities and resources 24 hours a day, 12 months of the year is monumental. During the busy season, full-time operation is necessary 98 hours per week (8:00 to 10:00 p.m., seven days a week). The remaining hours are covered by the resident manager. During other seasons, there is only part-time operation 98 hours per week, however, maintenance, repair, and park security accounts for many extra work-hours. If these responsibilities are to be met, competent trained personnel is essential.

There are four basic aspects to maintenance and operations:

1. Maintaining resources
2. Maintaining facilities
3. Providing services to the park visitors
4. Enforcing rules and regulations which protect park visitors, resources, and facilities

One of the major maintenance problems of parks is the heavy impact of large numbers of people concentrated in specific locations. These areas include: campsites, trails, lakeshores, river banks, areas around buildings, and scenic points of interest. This overuse affects the groundcover and frequently exposes tree roots to damage from foot traffic. The eventual result may be erosion, slides, disfigured sites, and even danger to park visitors. A regular maintenance program with adequate personnel, supplies, and equipment controls damage, thereby, avoiding future reconstruction expenditures.



## STAFFING

One of the staffing problems in all state parks is the heavy reliance on federally funded work programs, such as the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA), the Young Adult Conservation Corps (YACC), and Greenview. The low cost personnel provided by these programs makes it possible for parks to offer programs and services which would otherwise be impossible. However, these employees are hired on a short-term basis, usually 8 to 10 weeks and often do not have the training and experience necessary to provide needed services without constant supervision in already understaffed parks. To avoid these problems, funding should be made available to hire trained personnel for major public service and maintenance programs. Temporary employees should only be hired for minor maintenance and special projects.

The following chart summarizes the existing staff in Helmer Myre State Park. Because of the seasonal nature of park operations, the positions in each staffing category have been grouped into total "staff years." Staff years is a common denominator which reflects the amount of time spent in each area of park maintenance and operations.



<u>Existing Staff</u>	<u>Staff Years (In Months)</u>
<u>Management</u>	
1 full time park manager	9
1 assistant park manager	9
Laborer	3
<u>Maintenance and Operations</u>	
4 seasonal laborers	17
2 seasonal park workers	12.5
In 1979 this staff was supplemented with the following funded work programs.	
2 Greenview funded staff	12
2 YACC funded staff	12
16 CETA funded staff	32
<u>Naturalist Staff</u>	
1 naturalist	9
1 seasonal park worker	
2 part time student workers	22

#### Future Staffing Needs

Staff time will be saved and better service will be provided to park visitors, by combining the contact station and park office in one building. When the new picnic ground is developed additional staff time will be needed to maintain it. If the campground is expanded, this will require more staff time. The trail expansions, particularly winter trails, where grooming is desirable, also increase the need for staff.





Costs and  
Phasing  
Summary



The following cost estimates were generated in January 1979. These cost estimates are based on current prices and available information. As new information is made available and as new or modified programs are initiated, revised cost estimates will be prepared to more realistically represent costs at the time. This plan is intended to be implemented in ten years. The phases noted suggest the level of funding to be requested each biennium. However, there is no guarantee that this amount of funding would be received from the Legislature. Therefore, some change to these phases can be expected.

Action	Phases					Total	Conditional
	1	2	3	4	5		
<u>RESOURCE MANAGEMENT</u>							
VEGETATION MANAGEMENT							
Action #1	Reestablish prairie-planting and burning.	\$ 4,000	\$ 8,000	\$ 4,000	\$ 6,000	\$ 6,000	\$ 28,000
Action #2	Reestablish oak savanna-plant prairie grasses burning.	2,500	3,500	1,000	1,000	20,000	28,000
Action #3	Reestablish northern hardwoods.		9,000		9,000		18,000
Action #4	Establish prairie edge vegetation.	4,000		4,000			8,000
Action #5	Manage White Fox Campground vegetation.	10,000					10,000
Action #6	Manage group picnic area vegetation.		8,000				8,000
Action #7	Manage Big Island Campground vegetation.		5,000				5,000
Action #8	Manage Big Island Picnic Ground vegetation.	5,000		5,000			10,000
Action #9	Reestablish marsh.			Cost covered in Proposed Development, Trails			2,000
Action #10	Blend fence rows.		2,000				
Subtotal		\$ 25,500	\$ 35,500	\$ 14,000	\$ 16,000	\$ 26,000	\$ 117,000



Action	Phase					Total	Conditional
	1	2	3	4	5		
<b>WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT</b>							
Action #1	Provide wildlife food plots.						
							Operational Budget
Action #2	Reduce the size of the deer herd.						Operational budget
Action #3	Reduce the size of wildlife food plots.						None
Action #4	Block tiling systems.					\$ 1,000	\$ 1,000
Action #5	Reestablish Franklin's ground squirrel.						
							Operational Budget
Action #6	Develop four wildlife exclosures.					2,000	2,000
Action #7	Reestablish natural wildlife habitat.						Cost covered in Vegetation Management
Action #8	Exclude visitors from areas during winter.						Operational Budget
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Subtotal		\$ 3,000				\$ 3,000	
<hr/>							
<b>HISTORY/ARCHAEOLOGY</b>							
Action #1	Check for archaeological sites before construction.	\$ 5,000	\$ 2,000	\$ 1,000	\$ 3,000	\$ 11,000	
Action #2	Support archaeological studies.						None
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Subtotal		\$ 5,000	\$ 2,000	\$ 1,000	\$ 3,000	\$ 11,000	
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<b>TOTAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT COSTS</b>		\$ 25,500	\$ 43,500	\$ 16,000	\$ 17,000	\$ 29,000	\$ 131,000







Action	Phase					Total	Conditional
	1	2	3	4	5		
Action #2	Connect Big Island picnic and campgrounds to the central sewage system.				\$ 75,000	\$ 75,000	
<u>Trails</u>							
Action #1	Develop a hiking trail.			\$ 5,000		5,000	
Action #2	\$ 2,000	Water bar/steps.				2,000	
Action #3	Develop a hiking trail.		\$ 4,000			4,000	
Action #4	Construct surfaced hiking trail from Big Island Campground to the interpretive center.			7,500		7,500	
Action #5	Develop ski touring trails.		2,500			2,500	
Action #6	Use Big Island picnic shelter for skiers.		None				
Action #7	Develop snowmobile trails.		2,500			2,500	
Action #8	Construct bridge.		5,000			5,000	
Action #8	Provide bike access to the park.		City or County funding (Mn/DOT funds may be available)				
Action #9	Develop off-road bike trails.			92,000		92,000	
<u>Water Activities</u>							
Action #1	Remove boat launch.			1,500		1,500	
<u>Administrative and Support Facilities</u>							
Action #1	Construct contact station/park office.		170,000			170,000	
	Parking lot.		6,000			6,000	
Action #2	Construct a shop building.			100,000		100,000	



Action	Phase					Total	Conditional	
	1	2	3	4	5			
<u>Utilities</u>								
Action #1	Put all overhead lines underground.		\$ 15,000			\$ 15,000	30,000	
Action #2	Remove electrical lines over esker.	Contingent on negotiations with the landowner and the power companies						
Subtotal		\$ 460,500	\$ 326,500	\$ 128,000	\$ 77,000	\$ 70,000	\$ 1,062,000	
<u>VISITOR SERVICES</u>								
Action #1	Complete interpretive center displays.	\$ 20,000	\$ 2,000	\$ 2,000	\$ 2,000	\$ 2,000	\$ 28,000	
Action #2	Remodel west wing of the interpretive center.	10,000					10,000	
Action #3	Install an alarm system.	3,500					3,500	
Action #4	Construct a council ring.		5,000				5,000	
Action #5	Develop the esker trail.		2,500				2,500	
Action #6	Develop scenic overlooks.			10,000			10,000	
Subtotal		\$ 33,500	\$ 9,500	\$ 12,000	\$ 2,000	\$ 2,000	\$ 59,000	
<u>TOTAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AND RECREATION DEVELOPMENT COSTS</u>								
		\$ 519,500	\$ 379,500	\$ 156,000	\$ 96,000	\$ 101,000	\$ 1,252,000	





Implementation



## AUTHORITY

### Division of Parks and Recreation

Once a management plan has been completed and approved, it will become the responsibility of the director of the Division of Parks and Recreation (hereafter referred to as the director) to ensure proper implementation of the recommendations of the plan. As such, the director will act as the coordinator and liaison between the planning staff, regional staff, local officials, and the general public to ensure that the plan is implemented correctly.

In order to ensure the accomplishment of this cooperative planning and implementation effort, the following responsibilities have been established.

The director and staff will:

- 1) Coordinate and administer field operations as delegated by the deputy commissioner.
- 2) Develop and administer programs necessary to accomplish plan goals and objectives. Programs include those necessary to implement management plans and to maintain and operate parks and other programs assigned to the Division of Parks and Recreation (hereafter referred to as the division). Specific program responsibilities at this time are: acquisition, development, resource management, maintenance and service operations, interpretive services, and accessibility.
- 3) Prepare policies, guidelines, procedures, and standards necessary to implement programs established in this plan (e.g., responsibilities related to letting contracts and initiating force account projects).
- 4) Prepare legislation necessary to provide program funding, boundary changes, and operational authorities.
- 5) Review and approve all detailed plans, specifications, and project proposals prepared by the DNR, Bureau of Engineering (BOE) or field staff. Coordinate on-site field staking and site layouts with BOE and regional staff.



- 6) Coordinate divisional administrative functions with other DNR administrative offices.
- 7) Work with the DNR's federal grant specialists to obtain maximum federal funding (e.g., LAWCON) for all division programs.
- 8) Recommend modifications and provide information necessary to update the management plan. All major modifications to the recommendations of an approved plan will be processed through the Office of Planning. The director will submit requests for modifications in writing, stating justification for change and what impact the change would have on the overall management plan. If comments and rationale for opposing a proposed change are not received within 25 working days, agreement is implied. In the event that significant change in the direction of the plan is proposed (e.g., altering goals and/or objectives of the plan), it will be necessary to follow the same procedures established in developing the original plan. If the director and the Office of Planning cannot come to an agreement on the requested change, the director will then submit the request to the commissioner's Planning and Environmental Review Team (PERT) which will formulate the final recommendation to be submitted to the commissioner's executive council. If a recommended modification is minor and follows the intent of the plan, the director has the discretion to make the change without following these procedures, provided informal written agreement is reached with the Park Planning section.
- 9) Assign responsibilities and funding for implementation of the development program to BOE for letting contracts and to the regional staff for initiating force account projects. In addition, the director shall coordinate the implementation of resource management programs.
- 10) Make recommendations which will expedite the park planning process and evaluate progress toward the achievement of goals and objectives stated in the plan.
- 11) Forward BOE requisitions and field project proposals in summary form to the Office of Planning so that the progress of implementation can be monitored.



### Regional Office

The regional park supervisor will supervise the physical implementation programs as recommended in this plan.

The regional park supervisor will:

- 1) Coordinate with the regional administrator and other discipline supervisors to obtain qualified staff to implement this management plan. The district forester, wildlife managers, and other specialists should be consulted on specific aspects of the resource management of the plan.
- 2) Supervise and direct the park manager to ensure that the management plan is implemented correctly.
- 3) Regularly field inspect all development in the park.
- 4) Submit written reports on the progress of development programs to the director with copies to the regional administrator.
- 5) Submit information to facilitate plan updates and changes. All recommendations for change will be submitted in writing to the director. Rationale and analyses of the impact a requested change might have on the plan must be included in this request.
- 6) Submit project proposals to the director for review and approval. The director and staff will review all project proposals verifying compliance with the intent of the plan.

The region may implement approved project proposals after detailed specifications have been prepared and funding has been provided.

### Park Manager

It will be the responsibility of the park manager, under the direct supervision of the regional park supervisor, to coordinate the physical implementation of assigned sections of the management plan. The manager will inform the regional supervisor concerning the progress of the implementation through project proposals and written progress reports.



The park manager will:

- 1) Seek the assistance of the regional park supervisor in the resolution of any major implementation problems.
- 2) Consult with the regional park supervisor if there is uncertainty, concern, or opposition to a recommendation of this plan.
- 3) Assist and give direction to park field personnel.
- 4) Maintain records on the progress of development projects to ensure continuity and reference for future updating and revision.
- 5) Work with the regional park supervisor in initiating project proposals to be submitted to the director for review and approval.
- 6) Submit to the regional park supervisor information to aid in the updating and revision of the plan.

#### Office of Planning

The Office of Planning and Research will evaluate implementation of the management plan and make recommendations to the director if it appears revisions are necessary.

The Office of Planning will:

- 1) Review BOE requisitions.
- 2) Process all modifications to the approved management plan.
- 3) Provide additional information and justification for specific recommendations of this plan when requested by the division.
- 4) Maintain contact with the public, local officials, legislators, and DNR staff regarding the updating of the plan.



## IMPLEMENTATION OF RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PROJECTS

There are two procedures for the division to follow in the implementation of resource management projects: contract and force account.

### Contract

Director initiates a project by preparing the management program, in compliance with this plan.

Director distributes copies of the preliminary program and drawings to the regional staff for review.

Director approves project and initiates bidding process through the Department of Administration, Division of Procurement.

Director supervises and monitors the program.

Consultant or contractor, in coordination with divisional and regional staff, completes this project.

Director approves the completed project.

### Force Account

Director initiates a project by preparing the management program, in compliance with this plan.

Director distributes copies of the preliminary program and drawings to regional staff for review.

Director assigns funds to the regional park supervisor.

Regional park supervisor and resource staff prepare a detailed resource management program.

Detailed resource management program is submitted to the director for approval.

Once approved, the regional park supervisor and resource manager may:

Assign the park manager and field personnel to implement the program

Prepare contracts to be let to local contractors or consultants



Regional staff supervises project.

Director and staff monitor the overall progress of the resource management program.

Regional park supervisor notifies the division that the project has been completed as planned.

## IMPLEMENTATION OF DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

There are two procedures for the division to follow in the implementation of development projects: contract and force accounts.

### Contract

Director initiates project by preparing a development program which complies with this plan.

Director distributes copies of preliminary program and drawings to the regional staff for review.

Director requests BOE to prepare detailed drawings and specifications in accordance with the approved program.

BOE submits drawings and specifications to the director.

Director approves drawings and specifications, ensuring compliance with the objectives and goals of this plan.

### Force Account

Director initiates a project by preparing a development program which complies with this management plan.

Director distributes copies of the preliminary program and drawings to regional staff for review.

Director assigns funds to the regional park supervisor.

Regional park supervisor may:

Request that BOE prepare detailed drawings and specifications for review by the director



BOE processes contract documents through the Department of Administration, Division of Procurement for bidding and contract award procedures.

BOE provides direction to the contractor and establishes site location and field staking.

BOE supervises construction and approves completed work according to contract documents.

Director and staff monitor the progress, funding, and necessary coordination between other state agencies and funding sources.

Assign the park manager to complete the project with field personnel

Assign park manager, in cooperation with the regional staff, to let bids to local contractors

Regional, divisional, or BOE staff will supervise the project depending on the complexity of the specific project.

Regional park supervisor will certify the director that the project has been completed as planned.

Director and staff will monitor the progress of the development program.



## MAINTENANCE AND OPERATIONS

The division will provide the regional staff with necessary direction to maintain and operate state parks in a statewide system. Training courses and policy manuals will be prepared by the division on park operations, maintenance, enforcement, signing, and construction standards. If necessary, special operational orders will be prepared by the commissioner for specific problem areas.

### General Procedures

The director, in cooperation with the deputy commissioner, will establish policies, guidelines, and statewide procedures for maintenance and operations of all state park facilities.

The regional park supervisors will follow the policies, guidelines, and statewide procedures of the division, as well as commissioner's orders.

The regional park supervisor will supervise and direct the park managers to ensure that park maintenance and operation policies, guidelines, and procedures are followed.

The park manager, under the supervision of the regional park supervisor, will maintain and operate all park facilities.

The director and staff will inspect and review operations of state parks on a regular basis to ensure that statewide procedures are being implemented and followed correctly.