

St. Croix State Park

Citizen Advisory Committee – first meeting 7/13/16



Agenda

Welcome & Introductions: *(5 minutes)*

Planning Process: *(10 minutes)*

- Process overview & timeline
- Citizen advisory committee – roles & responsibilities

St. Croix State Park overview: *(10 minutes)*

- What is a state park – state statute definition
- St. Croix State Park facts & figures

St. Croix State Park as a “destination” park: *(30 minutes)*

- System plan investment groups – what is a destination park?
- Identifying St. Croix’s strengths and defining it’s niche as a destination park

Break

Natural & Cultural Resources issues and directions: *(30 minutes)*

- Natural resources – resource base
- Cultural resources – resource base
- Directions for management

Scheduling our next meeting: *(5 minutes)*

- Pick a date – week of August 8th or August 15th?
- Topics – Interpretive services & programs (themes, program directions, etc.) and recreational use in the park (overnight facilities)

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Planning process overview & timeline

The management plan is a 20-year strategic vision for the state park - it guides the development of facilities and management of state park resources. For example, a management plan will point out what activities will be offered, where new facilities may be built and what areas should be restored as prairie or forest, or what the focus for the state park's interpretive programs will be.

New management plans typically take a year to develop – from the initial information gathering, division and department coordination, through the public involvement and the development of the final plan.

The citizen advisory committee's work will be completed in September or October, with a draft plan ready for public review by the end of October. After the public review period, final edits to the plan will be made, anticipating it will be approved by the end of 2016 or early 2017.

Citizens Advisory Committee roles and responsibilities

A Citizen Advisory Committee will assist DNR as part of the management plan process. The committee will meet several times in the next couple months to provide input, help evaluate alternative courses of action, and review the draft management plan once it is written.

The CAC's role is advisory. The DNR is charged with making decisions that will guide the future course of the state park. This process must balance the needs and desires of park users with the need to protect key natural and cultural resources. There may be some areas of disagreement among various partners, users, and management, but we will strive to reach consensus or, at a minimum, informed consent.

The CAC members are asked to:

- Attend and participate in meetings
- Review draft materials; provide feedback
- Identify and share information that the planning team should be aware of
- Engage your constituencies, neighbors and stakeholders
- Respect others' viewpoints and the DNR's decision-making process

The CAC will typically not "vote," although there may be informal polling of members. DNR staff will summarize meeting discussions, but will not prepare official minutes.

CAC members are also welcome to comment as individuals or as representatives of groups on any aspect of the management plan, and all comments will be considered as part of the plan review process.

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What is a state park?

From *Minnesota Statutes*, chapter 86A.05:

Subd. 2. State park; purpose; resource and site qualifications; administration.

(a) A 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.

(b) No unit shall be authorized as a state park unless its proposed location substantially satisfies the following criteria:

- (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; and
- (2) contains natural resources, sufficiently diverse and interesting to attract people from throughout the state; and
- (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.

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

St. Croix State Park facts & figures

- 33,908 acres – the largest state park in Minnesota.
- 272,065 total visitors in 2015 – 10th most visited Minnesota state park
- 40,557 overnight visitors (campers, cabins, group camps & centers) in 2015 – 3rd most among state parks
- Interpretive center and interpretive programming focused on summer visitors
- Over 200 campsites & other lodging
- 3 group centers – out of 10 in the state park system
- 127 miles of roads and trails
- Between 800 and 2,000 acres managed with prescribed fire each year
- 250,000 trees planted since the July 2011 windstorm
- National Historic Landmark with 164 historic buildings and structures

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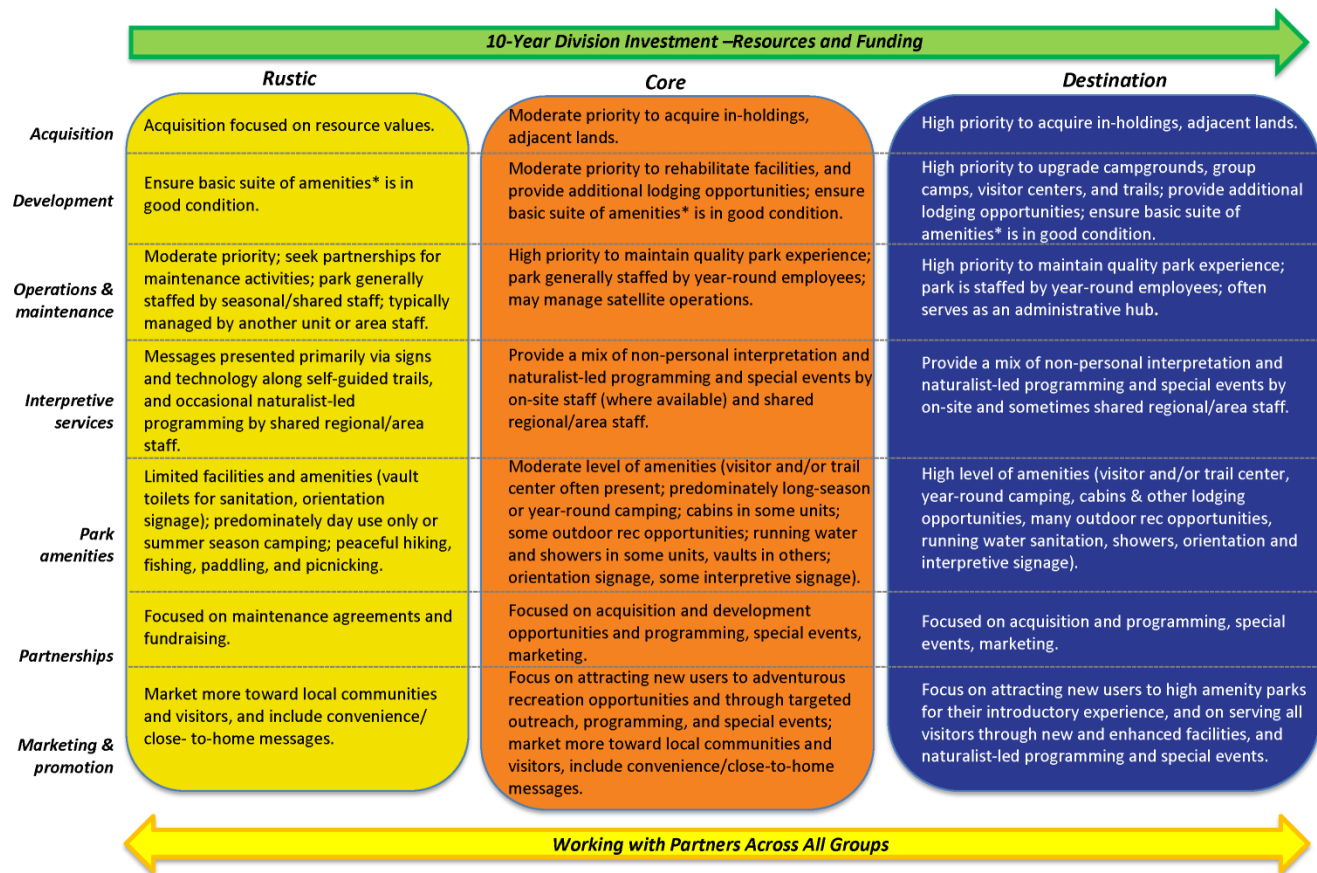
St. Croix State Park as a “Destination” park

From the Division of Parks and Trails System Plan . . . what is a Destination Park?

Destination Parks

“These state parks and state recreation areas offer a destination-quality experience, with an array of outdoor recreation and lodging opportunities, park facilities, and naturalist-led interpretive offerings. They may have year-round camping (or other lodging) and staffing. Parks in this group have high use and attract visitors from across the state.”

“The Division will invest in Destination state parks and state recreation areas at a high level over the next 10 years to enhance campgrounds and group camps, visitor centers, lodging opportunities, and other amenities.”



Rustic – Likely to have low levels of overnight visitation and revenue; offer limited recreation opportunities and facilities; and possess comparatively less significant natural and/or cultural resources.
Core – Likely to have moderate levels of overnight visitation and revenue; offer a moderate diversity of recreation opportunities and facilities; and possess significant natural and/or cultural resources.
Destination – Likely to have high levels of overnight visitation and revenue; offer a broad diversity of recreation opportunities and facilities; and possess highly significant natural and/or cultural resources.

* Note: Basic suite of amenities includes picnic tables, fire rings, orientation signage, and waste removal.

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Identifying St. Croix’s strengths and defining it’s niche as a destination park

What does “destination” mean at St. Croix State Park?

One approach to starting this process is to consider several questions about St. Croix State Park.

- Is there anything “missing” at St. Croix state Park – experiences for visitors, types of facilities, amenities, etc. that are found elsewhere in the system?
- What can we enhance or improve – what facilities or visitor experiences?
- How can we make better use of what we already have?
- Are there new opportunities we could develop at the state park?

What does St. Croix State Park do well? What opportunities can be improved or enhanced?

Looking at strengths . . .

Looking at opportunities . . .

Overall themes to consider for St. Croix as a “destination” park?

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Natural Resources – resource base

Water resources

- Nearly 11,500 acres of wetlands, rivers and streams in the park
- St. Croix River – federally-designated National Scenic Riverway
- Kettle River – state-designated Wild and Scenic River, first in Minnesota
- Six designated trout streams plus one protected tributary

Vegetation

- Ten ecological systems and 32 native plant community classes in the state park
- Most active management is for pine barrens (UPs14a1) and oak savanna (UPs14a2) – post-blowdown restoration focus
- Park includes 1,807 acres of designated old growth forest – black ash, lowland hardwoods, northern hardwoods, red pine
- Rare plants – 13 species
- Invasive plants – 21 species, use a combination of mechanical and chemical treatments
- Timber harvest as a resource management tool – used on 5,300 acres post-blowdown, may need to use again as part of restoration efforts, naturalize older plantations, or cleanup of future blowdowns

Wildlife

- Park supports many species (large area, minimal fragmentation, wide range of habitats)
- deer and beaver are actively managed within the park

Fisheries

- 2 of designated trout streams have naturally reproducing brook trout populations
- work with Division of Fish and Wildlife on habitat improvements including beaver and dam removal

Endangered, Threatened and Special Concern Species

- 37 species on federal & state lists in various categories: endangered, threatened, special concern, “watch listed”

Cultural Resources – resource base

Archaeologic and historic resources within the park

- Precontact sites – habitation sites, cemetery sites
- Historic sites - Ojibwe sites, fur trade, logging, mining, farming

St. Croix State Park as a National Historic Landmark (NHL)

- Designed as a Recreation Demonstration Area by the National Park Service and constructed by the Civilian Conservation Corps and Works Progress Administration in the 1930s and 40s.
- 164 buildings and structures that are contributing elements to the NHL
- The second largest RDA development (after Custer State Park, SD) and most intact (functioning as originally designed) in the United States.
- One of 25 NHL in Minnesota, one of 9 in the state park system – highest level of historic designation, “nationally significant”

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Natural and Cultural Resource directions for management

General

- Utilize unit resource plan and addendum to guide resource management efforts
- Conduct resource assessments prior to any development or project
- Follow direction in climate change op order
- Adjust resource management efforts and other park activities to protect rare plants and animals.

Vegetation management

- Continue native plant community restoration efforts – pine barrens & oak savanna focus
- Plantings – continue where needed
- Monitor barrens & savanna – inventory community to show success
- Follow old growth guideline
- Manage invasive plant species
- Wet meadows – more research, field work on status and how changing
- Naturalize plantations
- Timber harvest as a resource management tool
- Insect and disease management – oak wilt & EAB

Wildlife and fisheries management

- Work with fisheries on trout – including beaver trapping and dam removal
- Work with fisheries on fish rearing pond - muskies
- Manage white tail deer to reduce impacts on native plant communities – special hunts
- Research needs – Turtle (Blandings & Wood), Karner Blue butterflies, sharptail grouse, (any snakes?)

Cultural resources management

- Manage vegetation in NHL resource areas to protect historic structures and maintain cultural landscapes
- Identify CCC-era forest plantations
- St. John's Landing repairs – 2 bunkhouses
- Lake Clayton spillway repairs
- Head of the Rapids repairs - sanitation building rehab
- Pursue a programmatic agreement with SHPO for routine maintenance & repair of historic structures