

# **Whitewater State Park**

## **Management Plan Amendment**

### **Overnight Facility Changes and State Trail Routing**



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

**June 2015**

For more information on this management plan amendment, please contact the DNR Division of Parks and Trails at (651) 259-5600.



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## Minnesota Department of Natural Resources

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### Department of Natural Resources Approval of Management Plan Amendment for Whitewater State Park

*Minnesota Statutes*, section 86A.09, subd. 1 requires that a master plan be prepared for units of Minnesota's outdoor recreation system, including state parks. The Laws of Minnesota for 1919 established Whitewater State Park as part of Minnesota's Outdoor Recreation System (*Minnesota Statutes*, section 85.012, subd. 59).

The management plan (master plan) amendment received input and comment both within the Department of Natural Resources and from the public.

Erika R. Rivers

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6/2/2015

Date

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## Introduction

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Whitewater State Park is located 26 miles east of Rochester, in Winona County (see Figure 1: State Park and Project Locations). Established in 1919, Whitewater State Park encompasses limestone bluffs, uplands and ravines along the middle fork of the Whitewater River. The state park statutory boundary includes approximately 2,452 acres, of which approximately 1,678 acres are owned by the State of Minnesota and managed by the Department of Natural Resources. Of that amount, 1,373 acres are managed by the Division of Parks and Trails as the state park. The remaining 305 acres are managed by the Division of Fish and Wildlife as part of the Whitewater Wildlife Management Area. An additional 10 acres within the park boundary are owned and managed by the Department of Transportation as part of the Trunk Highway 74 corridor.

State park facilities include two campgrounds, a group center, three rustic group camps, a swimming beach, two picnic areas, a visitor center, and trails for hiking and cross-country skiing.

Among the most popular activities for visitors are camping, swimming, and hiking. Fishing is also a significant draw for visitors – the middle fork of the Whitewater River is a designated trout stream that supports native brook trout as well as introduced brown and rainbow trout.

Whitewater State Park is one of the most visited parks in the state park system with 327,192 visitors recorded at the park in 2013, the fourth most among all parks. That same year the park campgrounds and group camps hosted 53,892 overnight visitors, second only to Itasca State Park for the number of overnight visitors.

### Flooding and State Park Facilities

Whitewater State Park and the surrounding area are prone to flood events. The un-glaciated landscape of bluffs and steep valleys create conditions that channel water. Changes in land use over time – removal of the original vegetation and conversion of the land for agriculture – have increased the frequency and severity of flooding along the Whitewater River and other areas in southeast Minnesota. Since the park's inception flooding has periodically impacted the state park, damaging park infrastructure and at times necessitating the evacuation of park visitors.

In late August 2007, over 11 inches of rain fell in the Whitewater River watershed creating a historic flood event that resulted in the evacuation of park visitors and severe damage to the roads, bridges, picnic areas, campgrounds and other facilities in the park. The park infrastructure was repaired but the threat of more flooding in the future remained. A less damaging flood occurred in



Eagle Point overlook

2010. The repeated flood events and growing need to rehabilitate some campground facilities prompted the Division to consider other possibilities for minimizing impacts to visitors and infrastructure from future flood events.

The division is proposing to close Gooseberry Glen Campground, the state park's original and most flood-prone campground, and construct a new campground in another location less susceptible to flooding. Gooseberry Glen would be converted to a day use area. A day use area carries less risk as visitors would only be there during the daytime and less park infrastructure and private property would be present (campers, tents, vehicles, etc.). The converted Gooseberry Glen day use area would also provide additional open space and new opportunities for visitors to access the Whitewater River as it would no longer be utilized by just those with campsites reservations.

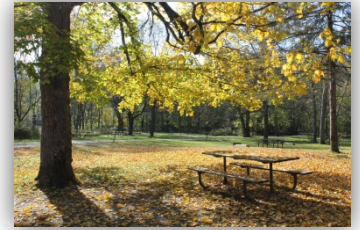
Cedar Hill Campground, although also close to the river, is higher in elevation and less prone to flooding than Gooseberry Glen. The division will continue to operate Cedar Hill as a campground and rehabilitate the facilities there – including campground roads and sanitation buildings (bathrooms and showers).

In addition to improved safety, the new campground would be an opportunity to provide more diverse camping experiences at the park by including larger sites, better spacing and additional amenities not offered in the park's current campgrounds. Development of the new campground would also involve improvements and additional amenities for the existing group camps within the state park.

### **Other Related Projects**

Another step the Division of Parks and Trails is taking that will reduce the impacts of flood events within the state park is a channel restoration project on the middle fork of the Whitewater River. The Division of Parks and Trails is working with the Division of Ecological and Water Resources on the restoration project, extending from the Trunk Highway 74 bridge downstream along the river between the Gooseberry Glen and Cedar Hill Campgrounds. The project will involve excavating a new stream channel of approximately 1,800 lineal feet, re-grading extreme slopes through the reach, and re-vegetating the adjoining riparian zone. The existing channel will be abandoned and backwater areas may be constructed for the creation of riparian wetland and nursery areas for fish, amphibians, reptiles, invertebrates, and birds.

The restoration project will use natural channel design principles, including constructed riffles, to protect the ecological function and integrity of the park resources, to correct the ongoing degradation of the river, and improve safety. Restoration will restore stability, lessen erosion, improve water quality, enhance habitat conditions, revive natural structure and function resulting in a more productive and higher quality natural system. The restoration project is expected to help protect existing infrastructure including the Trunk Highway 74



Gooseberry Glen Campground



Rip-rapped riverbank below  
Cedar Hill Campground

bridge and the park pedestrian bridge, and reduce erosion of the streambanks below the Cedar Hill Campground and Gooseberry Glen campground.

Natural resource projects like the stream restoration project are not usually addressed in management plan amendments, as they do not typically impact public use or park infrastructure. The restoration project is summarized here because of its close proximity to the campground projects and its potential for minimizing future flood damage – primarily streambank erosion. The project is not described in detail as part of the management plan amendment.

### **Additional State Park Improvements**

In addition to the campground changes, the division is planning to convert the former park manager's residence into a rental lodging unit. The residence, originally called the Custodian's Cabin, was built in 1935 by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). The building has not been used as a residence for park staff since 1999. The building was leased to the Minnesota Department of Agriculture for use as office space from 2004 to 2007. From 2007 to 2014 it was used by the state park for storage. Starting in 2015, a portion of the building has been used as office space for division staff. Converting the historic building into rental lodging would restore it to closer to its original function and provide an interesting new lodging opportunity for state park visitors.

The division has also been investigating how to connect the state park with the Whitewater Country Loop State Trail. The Whitewater Country Loop is part of the Blufflands Trail system, which includes the Root River State Trail and other state trails in southeastern Minnesota. The authorizing legislation for the trail system includes a list of communities the trail system may connect – including St. Charles to the south and Elba to the north of the state park. The state park is not mentioned in the statutory language.

The City of St. Charles has been working with the division for many years on the trail project, and in the last several years to identify and acquire a route for the trail from the city northward to the state park.

Within the state park, steep slopes, extensive high-quality native plant communities, and cultural resources have complicated finding a workable route through the entire park. The division has identified a trail route that connects the major park facilities and extends to the northern boundary of the park. Developing this trail segment would provide trail users a link into the state park from the north and provide safe connections between park facilities for trail users and park visitors.

The division has not determined a suitable trail route extending through the southern half of the park. The division has also evaluated several trail route options outside of the state park to connect the park with St. Charles, however no preferred route has been determined.



Managers Residence

## Purpose

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The purpose of this management plan amendment is to amend the current *Whitewater State Park Management Plan* (adopted December 1979) in relation to two issues:

- Changes to the campground and lodging facilities at the park:
  - Development of a new campground
  - Conversion of Gooseberry Glen campground to a day use area
  - Conversion of the former manager's residence into a lodging unit
- Identification of a route within the state park for the Whitewater County Loop portion of the Blufflands Trail system.

Management plans are required by state statute for state park units. *Minnesota Statutes*, section 86A.09, subd. 4 requires that the construction of facilities and other development conform to the management plan. *Minnesota Statutes*, section 86A.09, subd. 6 directs the managing agency to amend a management plan to address changes proposed for a unit that would vary from the approved plan. This amendment will bring the management plan in accordance with current programming and development proposals for the state park on these two issues.

## Description

There are three proposed changes to the park management plan related to overnight use and lodging and one related to the alignment of the Whitewater Country Loop State Trail.

### *New campground development*

The new campground will be located on the east side of Trunk Highway 74, across from the park visitor center and Cedar Hill Campground (see Figure 2: Overnight and Lodging Changes). The proposed campground design includes approximately 40 drive-in campsites (including a campground host site), 4 tent-only sites, and 4 camper cabins. The project also includes the redesign of the existing group camps adjacent to the new campground site. The new campground will include 2 sanitation buildings (bathrooms and showers), one of which will be located to serve the group camps. The design for the new campground, which will determine the final number of campsites and other facilities and amenities, has not been completed.

The group camps will be reconfigured and offer additional amenities including picnic shelters and electricity, as well as access to a sanitation building. Currently, the group camps are served with a hand pump for water and vault toilets. Overall capacity of the three group camps will remain 100 people, although the distribution will change slightly (50, 25 and 25 persons verses the current 50, 30 and 20 persons).

The new campground and group camps will be accessed via one road - an entrance on Trunk Highway 74 directly across from the visitor center and Cedar Hill campground entrance. The existing group camp entrance onto Trunk Highway 74 will be closed.

The division is investigating methods for reducing energy and water use as part of the campground design process. Approaches that may be considered are low energy use lighting, low flow plumbing fixtures, wastewater recycling, and onsite solar energy production to heat water or generate electricity.

The current management plan recommended developing a new campground north of the Cedar Hill campground, including rerouting Trunk Highway 74 to the east to create additional space for the campground expansion. Since the plan was adopted, the Cedar Hill campground was expanded (from 39 spurs in 1979 to the existing 75 spurs), although the trunk highway route has not changed.

### *Gooseberry Glen campground conversion*

To convert the area for day use the campground spurs, site markers and other campground infrastructure will be removed. The existing sanitation



Existing Group Camp road

building will be retained to support the day use of the site, although the showers will not be functional. A parking area will be created, as well as trails within the site to connect it with the pedestrian bridge over the Whitewater River to the Cedar Hill campground. The site may include open areas that support a range of activities such as picnicking and group gatherings, facilities to support interpretive and outdoor education programming, a nature play area, and a place for visitors to access the riverbank. A site plan for the area has not been completed.

The existing four walk-in campsites at Gooseberry Glen will be retained as campsites. The walk-in sites are at a higher elevation than the rest of the campground and are not prone to flooding. Retaining the walk-in sites will preserve rustic camping opportunities at the state park. The design for the day use area will need to accommodate a parking area reserved for the visitors using the walk-in campsites.

The current management plan recommends the closing of the Gooseberry Glen campground and converting it to a picnic area, after a new campground outside of the floodplain is created.

#### *Manager's residence conversion*

Converting the former manager's residence into visitor lodging would include upgrading the electric and sewer systems, and general repair of the building. Upgrading or replacing appliances and other fixtures would also be necessary to make the building more attractive as a lodging facility. Accessibility improvements to the building and surrounding area would also be required for it to be made available for public use. Use as office space may be a long term option if the conversion for public use is not practical.

The current management plan recommends that the manager's residence should be retained for several years until a new residence can be constructed. The management plan was adopted in 1976 and the building was last used as a residence for park staff in 1999. The management plan does not designate a long term use or disposition for the structure.

#### *Whitewater Country Loop state trail routing*

The division has identified a route within the state park to connect park facilities and link to the future state trail outside of the park (see Figure 3: State Trail Proposed Route). The trail route begins at the Meadow Trail parking lot, and follows the existing Meadow Trail to Trunk Highway 74 near the Nature Store. The trail will continue north along the west side of the highway, then crossing to the east side of the highway at the Swimming Beach/North Picnic Area parking lot. The trail route continues north along the east side of the highway following an existing gravel trail, crosses the Whitewater River and continues along the east side of the highway, past the new campground and park maintenance area to the state park boundary at Trunk Highway 74 and County Road 39.



Existing gravel trail

The division could not identify a suitable trail route extending south from the Meadow Trail parking lot through the park because of impacts to steep slopes, presence of high-quality native plant communities, and cultural features associated with the Trunk Highway 74 corridor.

Two pedestrian and bicycle crossing areas on Trunk Highway 74 will be marked and signed – at the Swimming Beach/North Picnic Area parking lot and at the Visitor Center/new campground entrance. Spur trails along the highway on the west side south from Gooseberry Glen and on the east side north from the Nature Store parking area will funnel trail users and park visitors to the marked crossing at the Swimming Beach/North Picnic Area parking lot. The spur trails will minimize crossings of the highway at other locations.

How the trail will cross the Whitewater River has not been finalized. The existing highway bridge deck does not have sufficient width to accommodate the state trail. The division will work with the Minnesota Department of Transportation on options for reconfiguring the bridge to accommodate bicycle and pedestrian use. Alternately, a separate trail bridge could be constructed upstream of the Trunk Highway 74 bridge. The location and configuration for a separate trail bridge have not been determined.

The Whitewater Country Loop State Trail is not mentioned in the current Whitewater State Park management plan. The state trail was not authorized by the Minnesota State Legislature until after the state park management plan was adopted in 1979.



TH 74 bridge over the Whitewater River

## **Natural and Cultural Resources Impact**

Whitewater State Park contains significant natural and cultural resources. Natural resources within the park include large areas of native plant communities (see Figure 4: Land Cover – System Level Classifications). Native plant community types include mesic hardwoods communities, fire dependent forest communities, cliff/talus communities, and upland prairie. The middle fork of the Whitewater River within the park is also a designated trout stream.

Cultural resources with the park include a historic district and several archaeological sites. The Whitewater State Park CCC/WPA/Rustic Style Historic District was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1989. The historic district encompasses 563 acres with 29 contributing buildings and structures constructed by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) and the Works Progress Administration (WPA) in the 1930s and 1940s (see Figure 5: Cultural Features).

There are multiple known archaeological sites within the state park. One site is the WPA work camp, the others are American Indian Lithic stage sites.

Additional sites likely exist within the state park but which have not been identified to date.

The division will conduct additional natural and cultural resource assessments in the project areas as the projects described in the plan amendment move forward.

#### *New campground development*

The site for the new campground was selected in part to minimize natural and cultural resource impacts. The northern portion of the site is primarily old agricultural field. The southern portion where the existing group camps are located is forested. A series of forest restoration projects have been implemented within the project area to reestablish native vegetation. A high quality native plant community (mesic hardwood forest) borders the east side of the site. Several terrestrial invasive species are present on or near the site including garlic mustard, wild parsnip, crown vetch and dame's rocket.

During the design and construction process, the division will seek to minimize opening the existing forest canopy surrounding the group camps, preserve larger trees in the northern portion of the site, and avoid or minimize impacts to the mesic hardwood forest community bordering the site. The division will follow Department Operational Order 113 and division guidelines for managing invasive species during construction and restoration efforts. Land not developed for visitor use within the project area will be restored to native vegetation.

An ephemeral stream bisects the proposed campground area. The stream is considered a tributary to the stretch of the Whitewater River designated as a trout stream. The ephemeral stream does not serve as aquatic habitat for trout. The stream may be modified to enhance stream stability and allow sustainable crossings for roads within the campground

There are minimal cultural resource impacts anticipated with the development of the proposed campground. A portion of the Whitewater State Park CCC/WPA/Rustic Style Historic District boundary extends into the campground project area, but no contributing elements (buildings or structures) are located within the project area. The historic district boundary reflects the state park boundary as it existed in 1941, not the distribution of the contributing elements. One additional WPA-constructed element is located within the project area – a culvert that allows passage of the ephemeral stream underneath Trunk Highway 74. Although constructed in the same period as the other historic district elements, it is not included in the historic district. Some modification to the culvert may be necessary as part of the stream stabilization work. The division will coordinate with the Minnesota Historical Society State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) concerning possible modifications to the culvert. There are no known



Forest restoration project area



WPA-constructed culvert in the new campground area

archaeological resources located within the project area. Additional archaeological testing will be conducted during the resource assessments prior to construction.

#### *Gooseberry Glen campground conversion*

Conversion of Gooseberry Glen to day use is anticipated to have minor natural resource impacts as the area is already open and maintained for recreational use. Design of day use facilities, including parking areas and use areas will take into account preserving the large trees on the site. The site design will also incorporate the resulting streambank and wetland areas created during the stream restoration project with the goal of maintaining stable bank conditions.

There are some cultural resource impacts anticipated with the Gooseberry Glen conversion to day use. Gooseberry Glen campground was the original campground in the state park. Two historic district contributing elements are located in the Gooseberry Glen campground. The combination building (which serves as the campground sanitation building) was constructed by the WPA in 1939. The building was renovated in 1958 and 1963. Impact to this building is expected to be minimal, with some potential changes to the interior such as removal of the shower stalls. The building will continue to be used as a sanitation building for the day use area. The division will consult with SHPO on any proposed changes to the structure. The second element is a culvert along the trail route north of the campground. This structure will not be impacted. There are no known archaeological resources in the Gooseberry Glen area. The site is largely made up of flood deposits, and frequent flood events have likely displaced or removed any archaeological resources.



Combination building exterior

#### *Manager's residence conversion*

The residence was originally constructed by the CCC in 1935 and is a contributing element to the historic district. Any changes to exterior appearance of the residence as part of the conversion are expected to be minor. Work on the interior will be more extensive, including necessary renovations of the kitchen and bathroom (although these areas have been previously renovated). Making the residence accessible may present more significant challenges: relocation of some interior walls to widen hallways and doorways may have to be considered. The division will consult with SHPO as the planning and design work for the building reuse moves forward.



Interior view of Manager's Residence

#### *Whitewater Country Loop state trail routing*

The route for the trail segment within the park largely follows existing road and trail corridors and was selected to minimize impacts to natural and cultural resources. Extensive native plant communities and steep slopes limit locations to develop a paved trail corridor, especially in the southern portion of the park. The trail segment as identified avoids impacts to native plant communities and minimizes traversing steep slopes. The trail corridor

will encounter rock outcrops in two areas: on the west side of Trunk Highway 74 across from the Nature Store and along the east side of Trunk Highway 74 north of the park maintenance area. Trail construction in these areas may require removal of some rock and the need to insure stable slope conditions above the trail alignment.

The trail route will pass through a portion of the Whitewater State Park CCC/WPA/Rustic Style Historic District boundary. The route follows existing road and trails within the area where most of the contributing elements are located, which will minimize its impact. Any trailhead-related improvements at the Meadow Trail parking area will be designed to protect the WPA-built stone curb and garage building, both historic district contributing elements. There are two WPA-era culverts associated with Trunk Highway 74 along the proposed trail route. The culverts were constructed by the WPA but are not identified as contributing elements to the historic district. The division will work with the SHPO and MnDOT during the design and construction of the trail to protect these structures. Additional archaeological testing will also be conducted as part of the resource assessments prior to the trail design and construction.

### **Interpretive Services Impact**

Whitewater State Park's interpretive program includes guided and self-guided opportunities around several themes including watersheds and land use, geology, and cultural history – specifically the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) and Works Progress Administration (WPA) era and the German POW work camp. The projects addressed in the plan amendment will create new opportunities to provide interpretive experiences to park visitors. These developments will facilitate introducing new interpretive themes as well as provide places for additional interpretation of the park's current themes.

#### *New campground development*

Overnight visitors are a key audience for interpretive services and programs. Signage and trail connections will be developed to link the new campground with the visitor center and other locations that have interpretive resources to encourage campground guests to take advantage of those opportunities. In addition to the park's overall themes, interpretive themes related to the new campground may include forest restoration efforts and design features for energy and water conservation. Self-guided interpretive materials – signs or brochures – could be used to share these themes with campground guests.

#### *Gooseberry Glen campground conversion*

Conversion of Gooseberry Glen to day use will provide a range of new interpretive opportunities for park visitors. Facilities at the site will support guided and self-guided interpretive opportunities. The day use area will include open space that can accommodate guided programs. Self-guided



Rock outcrop along trail route



Stone curb at Meadow Trail parking lot

opportunities including signage will be integrated with site developments such as the nature play area, parking area and trails. In addition to the park's overall themes, themes for the Gooseberry Glen area may include CCC and WPA history/role in park development, the stream restoration project, and nature play.

#### *Manager's residence conversion*

Conversion of the residence into visitor lodging will provide an opportunity to educate park visitors staying in the residence about its history and the broader history of the CCC's and WPA's work at Whitewater State Park and the state park system as a whole. Possible self-guided approaches for interpreting the residence's history include signs installed outside or within the residence, or a brochure given to park visitors reserving the residence.

#### *Whitewater Country Loop state trail routing*

A main function of the trail route within the park is to move trail users and park visitors safely between park facilities. Although some additional interpretive signage may be developed along the trail route, the majority of interpretive experiences for trail users will be found at existing facilities and use areas that the trail connects – e.g. Gooseberry Glen, Visitor Center, Meadow Trail parking area.

### **Recreational Use and Visitor Services Impact**

Overall, the projects outlined in the plan amendment will create new recreational opportunities and offer additional amenities to existing visitor experiences at the state park.

#### *New campground development*

The new campground will provide additional overnight opportunities, new amenities, and a greater variety of camping experiences for visitors to the state park. Development of the new campground will offset the number of campsites lost with the conversion of Gooseberry Glen campground to day use. Gooseberry Glen campground includes 29 drive-in and 2 walk-in campsites. The new campground's proposed 40 drive-in sites, plus 4 tent-only sites and 4 camper cabins will result in a net increase of about 15 camping opportunities.

The design of the new campground will also create more variety in the camping experiences at the park – more spacing between sites, larger use areas, additional accessibility, and more pull-through campsites than are currently available in the Cedar Hill and Gooseberry Glen campgrounds. The new campground will be able to fit larger RVs and other camping units that could not be easily accommodated in the other campgrounds. Five campsites are proposed to be accessible, including several pull-through sites.



Whitewater River channel at  
Gooseberry Glen

The tent-only sites and camper cabins also present additional options for park visitors. Three of the new camper cabins will be cart-in sites – two of which will also include a tent pad with the cabin. Of the four cabins, two will be accessible. Of the four tent-only sites, two sites are walk-in sites and one will be accessible.

Better accommodation for larger RVs and camping units in the new campground is expected to result in fewer large units in the Cedar Hill Campground. Developing the new campground should create more opportunities and a less crowded experience for tent campers and those with smaller camping units in Cedar Hill.

Although the overall capacity will not change, the reconfigured group camps will provide significant new amenities for group camp users. All three group camps will have picnic shelters with electric service. All three camps will have access to a sanitation building, with vault toilets also provided at two of the camps. One group camp will have four camping spurs that can accommodate RVs as part of its use area. Accessibility improvements include accessible parking, use areas, picnic shelters, and sanitation facilities (both the sanitation building and vaults). The existing group camps are considered rustic facilities (no running water sanitation or electric service) and are not accessible.

The new campground's location across TH 74 from the visitor center means park visitors will be moving across the highway to get to the visitor center and other park facilities. The division will work with MnDOT to install appropriate signage and striping at the TH 74/campground and visitor center road intersection to identify the crossing location for pedestrians and to alert motorists. The division will also develop trails that connect the campground with the park's trail network to provide safer alternatives for visitors than walking along the highway.

#### *Gooseberry Glen campground conversion*

Converting Gooseberry Glen to day use will create new recreational opportunities for park visitors. It will provide a large open space along the river that can be used by all park visitors. Currently the area is available only to those visitors with campsite reservations. The space will be available for picnicking, nature observation, and other unstructured activities. Creation of a nature play area will introduce other experiences to younger visitors not typically encouraged elsewhere in the park (i.e. fort building, digging). The site will also be utilized for interpretive programs. Although there are other day use sites in the park such as the South Picnic Area and the North Picnic Area and Swimming Beach, the site is expected to be heavily used because of its close proximity to the Cedar Hill campground and new campground.

Closing Gooseberry Glen will not result in a loss of opportunities to camp in the park. The conversion of Gooseberry Glen campground and creation of



Existing rustic group camp use area

the new campground will result in a net increase of over 10 campsites (Gooseberry Glen has 30 campsites, with the new campground proposed for 40 campsites, plus 4 tent-only sites and 4 camper cabins). However, there will be a loss of campsites located close to the river. Gooseberry Glen campground is popular because of its location on the river. Campsites in the new campground, although offering additional amenities and greater safety from flooding, may be less desirable to some visitors because of the distance from the river.

#### *Manager's residence conversion*

Conversion of the residence into visitor lodging would create a new overnight stay option within the state park. The other lodging options in the park are camper cabins (one existing in the Cedar Hill campground and four proposed as part of the new campground) and bunkhouses in the group center. Unlike those facilities, the residence would include its own kitchen and bathroom facilities that guests would not have to share with other park visitors.

#### *Whitewater Country Loop state trail routing*

Developing the state trail route will improve access to park facilities for state park visitors and state trail users. The trail links the main park use areas, providing a safe and accessible route for people to move from one location to another without driving a vehicle. The paved route and marked crossings of Trunk Highway 74 will make pedestrian and bicycle movements safer and more appealing.

Linking the trail within the park to the future state trail route outside the park will provide access for trail users to park facilities and create a new recreational opportunity for park visitors. Linking the state park and state trail is anticipated to increase visitation to both over the long term.

However, the current trail route within the park does not provide a connection from south to north through entire state park. Steep slopes and significant natural and cultural resource features severely limit potential trail routes south of the Meadow Trail parking lot.

Outside the state park, the division has evaluated multiple routes for the state trail to connect into the state park from south. The division has worked with the City of St. Charles on evaluating route options. No preferred alternative has been identified at this time. All of the options evaluated have significant natural and cultural resource concerns, design challenges, or experiential limitations for trail users.

### **Management Plan Text Revisions**

The plan amendment affects the Proposed Development objectives and action statements in the Recreation Management chapter of the current *Whitewater*



Trail corridor along TH 74 and new campground area

*State Park management plan* (December 1979). The plan amendment text supersedes the action statements in several sections of the chapter: the **Campgrounds** section related to new campground development and the Gooseberry Glen campground (p. 86-89), the **Primitive Group Camp** section (p. 92), and the **Service Center and Manager's Residence** and **Assistant Manager's Residence** sections (p. 94-96). The plan amendment text concerning the routing of the Whitewater Country Loop State Trail supplements the descriptions of new trail development in the **Trails** section of the chapter (p. 97-101).

## **Public Review**

In accordance with Minnesota Statutes 86A.09 Subd. 3 and Subd. 6, the plan amendment was released for a 30 day public review period beginning on March 9, 2015. As part of the review process, an open house was held at the Whitewater State Park visitor center on March 31, 2015. Comments received during public review were largely supportive of the proposed projects.

Comments supporting the development of the new campground and group camp improvements favored the addition of new amenities, larger use areas, and more spacing between campsites. Comments in support of the conversion of Gooseberry Glen to a day use area were interested in the addition of open space available to all visitors near the Cedar Hill Campground and the improved access to the river for fishing. Comments received that were not in favor of the Gooseberry Glen conversion were concerned about the loss of non-electric camping opportunities in the park and the loss of that specific area for camping. Several comments were received in support of retaining the walk-in campsites after Gooseberry Glen becomes a day use area.

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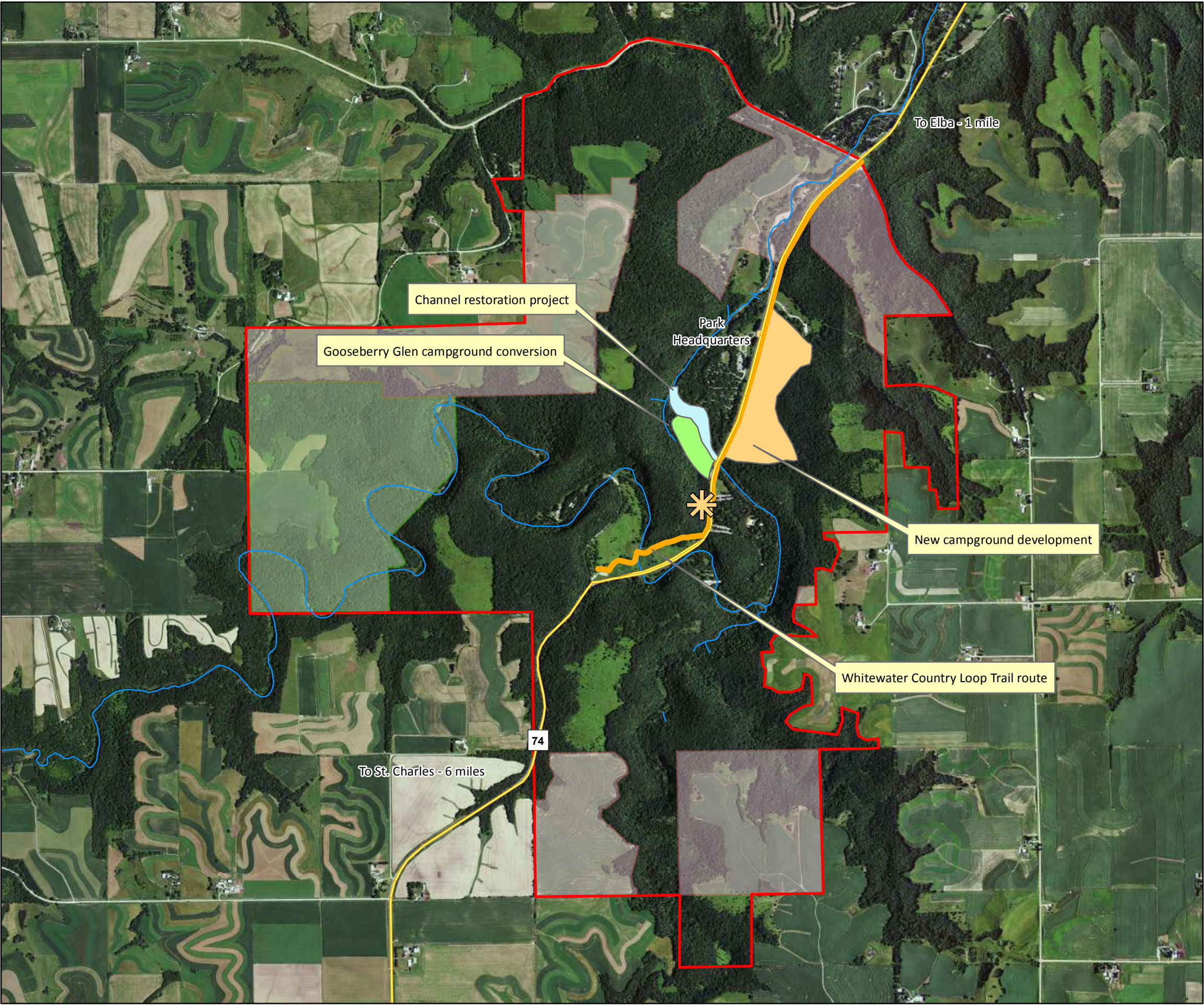
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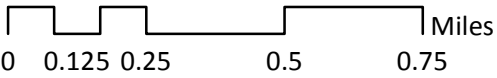


**Whitewater State Park**

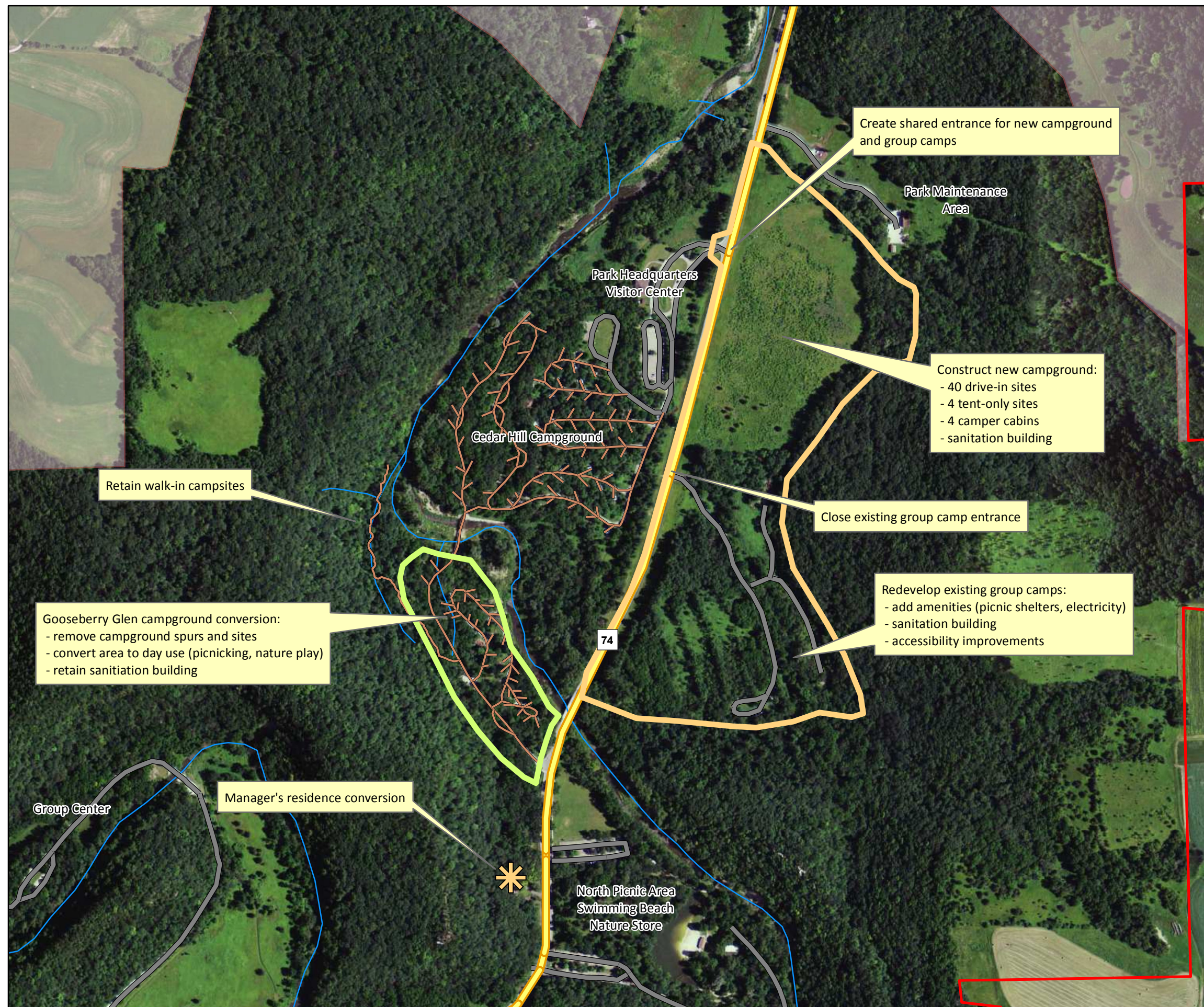
Figure 1:  
State Park and Project Locations

**Legend**

- New campground development
- Gooseberry Glen campground conversion
- Whitewater River channel restoration project
- Manager's residence conversion
- Whitewater Country Loop Trail route
- Whitewater River
- State park statutory boundary
- Private land within park boundary
- WMA land within park boundary



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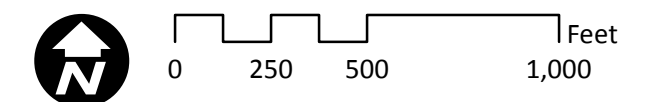


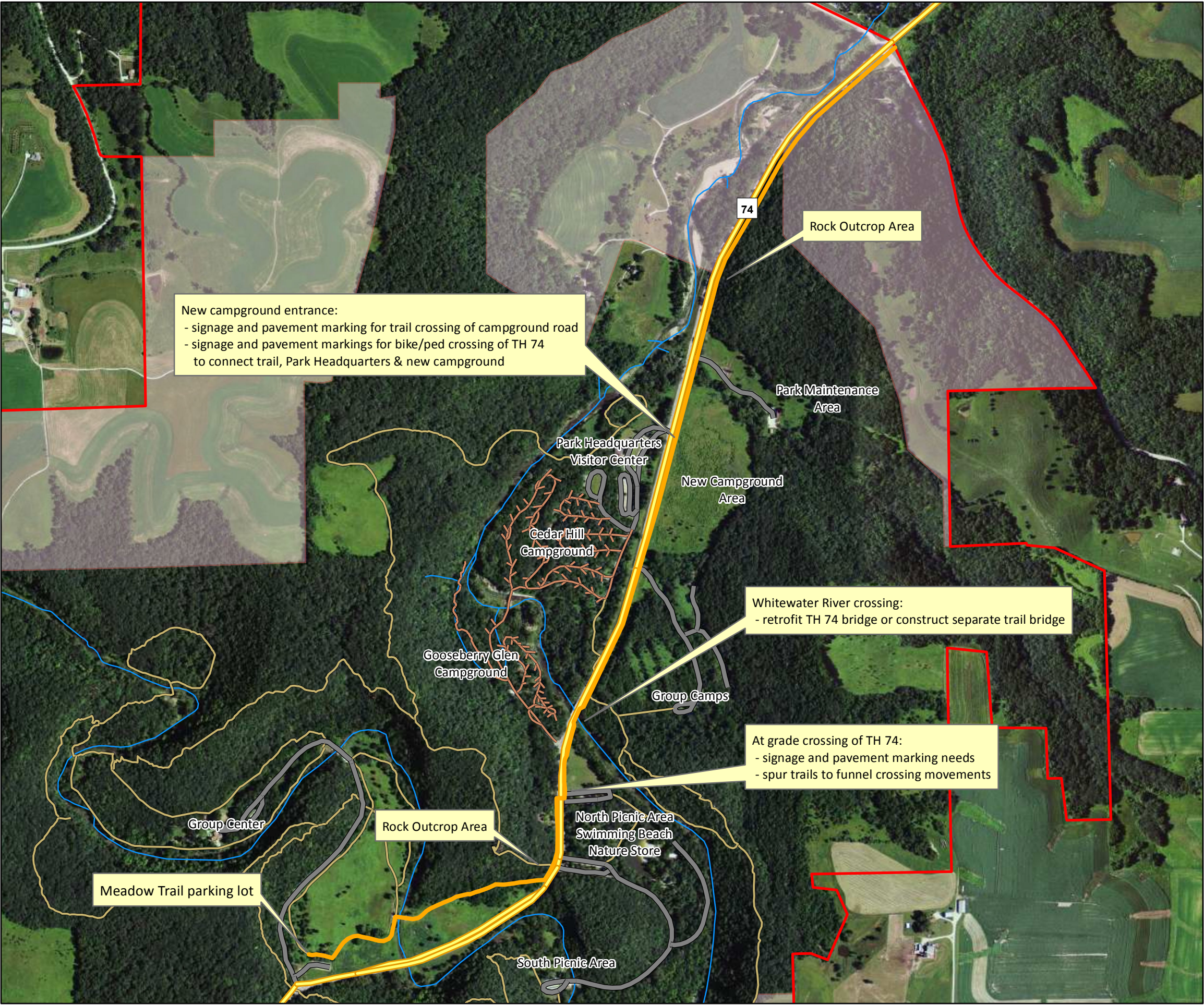
## Whitewater State Park

Figure 2:  
Overnight and Lodging Changes

### Legend

-  New campground development
-  Gooseberry Glen campground conversion
-  Manager's residence conversion
-  Campground roads & spurs
-  State Park Roads
-  Whitewater River
-  State park statutory boundary
-  Private land within park boundary
-  WMA land within park boundary



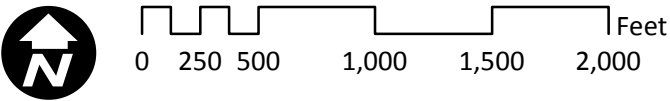
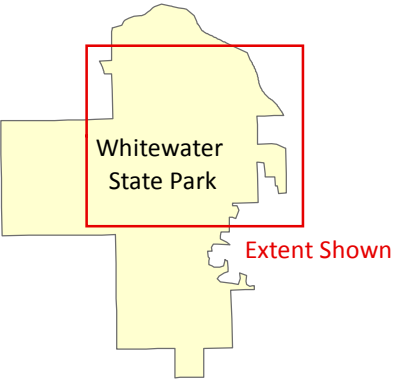


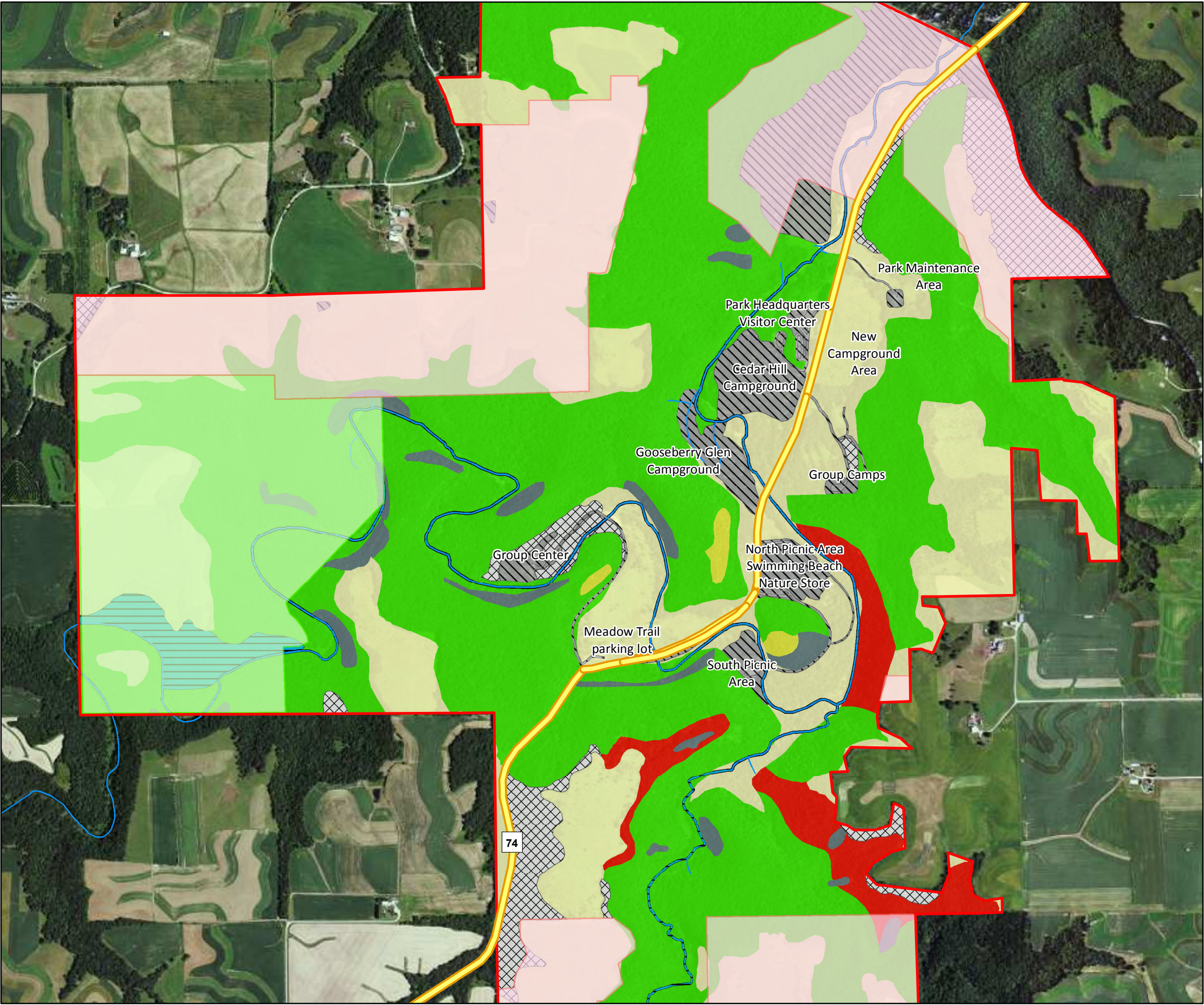
**Whitewater State Park**

Figure 3:  
State Trail Proposed Route

**Legend**

- State trail proposed route
- Campground roads & spurs
- State Park Trails
- State Park Roads
- Whitewater River
- State park statutory boundary
- Private land within park boundary
- WMA land within park boundary





# Whitewater State Park

Figure 4:  
Land Cover - System Level Classifications

## Legend

- Cliff/Talus System
- Fire-Dependent Forest/Woodland System
- Mesic Hardwood Forest System
- Upland Prairie System
- Other Natural System
- Non-Natural System
- Facilities System
- Unclassified
- Whitewater River
- State park statutory boundary
- Private land within park boundary
- WMA land within park boundary



Extent Shown

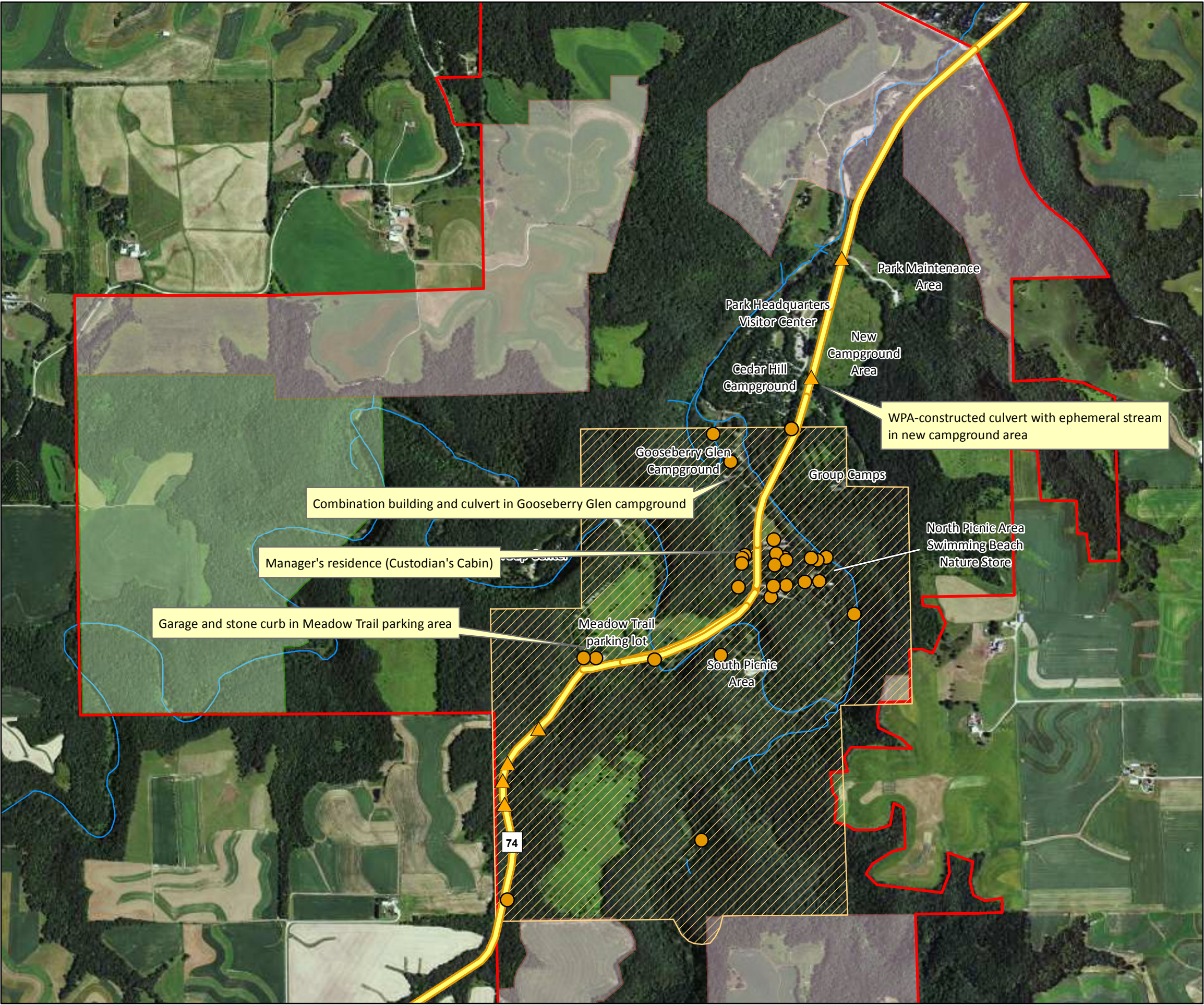


0 500 1,000 1,500 2,000 2,500 3,000 Feet



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
MNDNR June 2015



# Whitewater State Park

Figure 5:  
Cultural Features

## Legend

-  CCC/WPA/Rustic Style Historic District
-  Contributing element to historic district
-  Cultural feature not part of historic district
-  Whitewater River
-  State park statutory boundary
-  Private land within park boundary
-  WMA land within park boundary

