

Carley State Park Management Plan Amendment

Resource Management Timber Harvesting



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

August 2010

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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**Department of Natural Resources
Approval of Management Plan Amendment for
Carley 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 1949 established Carley State Park as part of Minnesota's Outdoor Recreation System (*Minnesota Statutes*, section 85.012, subd. 11).

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

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Courtland Nelson". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a horizontal line.

Courtland Nelson, Director
MNDNR Division of Parks and Trails

1 Aug 10
Date

BACKGROUND

Minnesota Statutes section 85.011 describes the legislative intent at the foundation of creating state parks, state recreation areas, and state waysides:

The legislature of this state has provided for the creation and establishment of state parks, designated state recreation areas, and waysides of the purpose of conserving the scenery, natural and historic objects and wildlife and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in a manner that will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations.

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources Division of Parks and Trails undertakes many different efforts to meet this statutory obligation to conserve the natural resources within these units. The types of projects and techniques used vary depending on the type and quality of plant or animal community. Different efforts are needed, for example, to manage largely intact native communities such as remnant prairies or old growth forests than to conduct restorations on properties that have been disturbed by logging, agriculture or other impacts. Different types of communities – prairies, pinelands, savannas, wetlands, hardwood forests – also require different approaches to successfully preserve and perpetuate the plant and animal resources they contain.

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

PURPOSE

The purpose of this plan amendment is to amend the Carley State Park Management Plan (1985) to clarify the use of timber harvesting as a resource management tool in the state park. Master plans (management plans) are required for units of Minnesota's outdoor recreation system, including state parks and state recreation areas, under *Minnesota Statutes*, section 86A.09, subd. 1.

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

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

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

The Division of Parks and Trails may contract with a commercial operator to conduct timber harvest activities. It is often more efficient and effective for a commercial operator to use their specialized equipment for this purpose.

DESCRIPTION

At Carley State Park, timber harvest will be utilized to remove areas of non-native vegetation, such as red pine plantations, and to restore or manage native plant communities like fire-dependent and mesic hardwood forests. Older planted stands of native species may be thinned to promote better growth and a more natural appearance. Timber harvest may also be employed to remove encroaching trees from overgrown savannas or prairies.

The initial harvest area identified within the park involves the red pine plantation extending along the southern boundary of the park, north and south of the park road.

NATURAL & CULTURAL RESOURCES IMPACT

The intent of conducting a timber harvest is to aid in the restoration and preservation of natural communities within the state park. Timber harvest is one tool among a set of resource management activities the division will use to pursue its statutory obligations for resource protection and restoration.

There is a recorded occurrence of Milk Snake (*Lampropeltis triangulum*) within the boundaries of the initial harvest area. Milk Snake is a Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) as identified in *Tomorrow's Habitat for the Wild and Rare – An Action Plan for Minnesota Wildlife*, Minnesota's Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy. Because the harvest will occur during the winter, no negative impact is anticipated. Increased sunlight and slash piles intentional left behind from the timber harvest will improve habitat for snake populations.

Prior to the timber harvest, the division will conduct a resource assessment to identify any potential impacts to other natural or cultural resources in the timber harvest project area.

INTERPRETIVE SERVICES IMPACT

The timber harvest activity, like other resource management activities, presents an opportunity to educate park visitors about Minnesota's native plant communities, the impacts of invasive/non-native plants, and the division's resource management responsibilities and efforts. Interpretive signs, naturalist-led programs, or other methods may be used to describe the project's purpose and intended benefits for the state park or state recreation area's natural resources.

RECREATIONAL USE AND VISITOR SERVICES IMPACT

Several segments of park trail and park road are within the initial harvest area. There may be short term impacts on visitors during a timber harvest activity – these trails and other nearby facilities may be closed during the harvest or parking areas being used for staging equipment may not be available for public use. Long term impacts for visitors of the timber harvest will be positive – timber removed will improve access and safety for visitors along trails and other facilities, and restored native communities will enhance visitor experiences.

MANAGEMENT PLAN TEXT REVISIONS

The plan amendment text supplements portions of the *Park Resources* section in the current management plan: *Vegetation* (p. 51-57) including the objectives under *Vegetation Management* (p. 57), as well as *Actions* in the *Implementation* section (p.95).

PUBLIC REVIEW

In accordance with *Minnesota Statutes*, section 86A.09, subd. 3, the plan amendment was released for a 30 day public review period beginning on June 21, 2010 with an open house held at Whitewater State Park on June 25, 2010. Operations at Carley State Park are managed from Whitewater State Park.