



Investing in Parks and Trails for Our Health, Economy and Future

Minnesota's parks and trails are part of what we do and who we are.

Our parks and trails play an important role in helping us become and stay healthy; they are also a major generator of economic activity, all year long. A majority of us take part in outdoor recreation, from walking to mountain biking to camping with the family to hunting and fishing. Communities in every part of the state depend on the money that visitors spend while enjoying parks and trails.

Explore Minnesota research shows that Minnesotans and visitors make our state a destination because of our natural scenery, historic sites and parks and trails. Travel and tourism creates jobs and generates sales in virtually every county of the state. Travelers in Minnesota spend more than \$33 million a day and support a variety

of Main Street businesses across the state. Tourism is comparable to agriculture in its contributions to the gross state product.

We have one of the oldest and most respected park and trail systems in the nation because of the investment made by previous legislatures. But in times of stress on public funding of all kinds, as we have now, there is a risk that we won't carry on that legacy.

The Parks & Trails Council of Minnesota, as part of its mission, advocates for the acquisition, development and operation of parks and trails throughout the state. This set of **more than \$84 million in bonding priorities** for the 2012 Minnesota Legislature builds on the goals for parks and trails presented to the Legislature in the last few years; many of the projects listed have gotten state funding in the past. This year's bonding should **continue the investments already made.**

The Parks & Trails Council sought input from dozens of organizations, communities and citizens across Minnesota to put together bonding initiatives that are representative of the needs across the state, in all geographical areas.

The 2012 Bonding Initiative was developed with four key goals:

- **To achieve connectivity** of Minnesota's trails, habitat and parks network—including interconnections and links to cities, towns, workplaces, schools and colleges.
- **To expand collaboration** across governments and non-profit groups.
- **To make it easier for communities to help acquire, develop and maintain state trails** partnering with the DNR.
- **To accelerate land acquisition and development of trails** and parks when land becomes available from willing sellers.

State Park Land Acquisition Priorities

The Parks & Trails Council supports investing \$5 million in state park acquisition funding from the 2012 bonding bill for land acquisition, including 10 acres at Crow Wing State Park.

The State Park Land Acquisition program enables the Department of Natural Resources to purchase lands within planned and legislatively authorized state park boundaries as they become available from willing sellers. An ongoing land acquisition program protects the integrity of our state park resources from incompatible uses such as housing developments.

Minnesota's state park system in-



cludes 66 state parks, 7 state recreation areas and 8 waysides and encompasses more than 240,000 acres of land. **Yet**

critical parcels of land within, and adjacent to, boundaries of parks remain in private ownership.

Funding is needed to assure the acquisition of these properties as they become available for sale. If these lands are sold and developed privately, they are lost to the system. Private ownership of in-holdings often means fragmenting the park resources, which can lead to increased management costs and disruption to visitors.

A commitment to providing ongoing bonding funding for state park acquisition is a wise investment in a park system that is under constant threat from both population and development pressures. **With land values at historic lows in many parts of the state, now is the time to make these investments.**

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(State Park Land, continued)

Crow Wing State Park—10 acres

When a small peninsula at the confluence of the Mississippi and Crow Wing rivers in the heart of Crow Wing State Park was being subdivided and sold for residential development, the Parks & Trails Council intervened on the state's behalf to secure options so that the land could be held in trust. Acquisition of these parcels ensures public access to a culturally rich peninsula that was once home to an Ojibwe village and a key trading post. Complements 2011–2012 LCCMR funding.

Cuyuna Country State Recreation Area—89 acres

This area of former mining pits and rock deposit stockpiles now boasts regenerated vegetation and clear lakes that draw a wide range of recreation enthusiasts. This is an 89-acre parcel with one owner, which would allow for greatly improved access as well as providing a better hiking and biking experience within the recreation area. The recreation area is also home to an internationally acclaimed 25-mile mountain bike trail system.

Frontenac State Park—40 acres

Lowland-forested wetland with a small stream flowing through it, and exposed dolomite bluff. Acquisition of this parcel would protect habitat in one of the best spots in the country to view migrating birds.

Lake Bronson State Park—439 acres

Acquisition of this park inholding would make the parks land management activities more efficient while simultaneously neutralizing an ongoing development threat.

Maplewood State Park—160 acres

There are two separate 80-acre acquisition opportunities in the park. One features rolling topography with wetlands, open grasslands and hardwoods and the other would protect high-quality hardwood forest and wetlands. Acquiring the first 80-acre

property would prevent forest fragmentation and would allow for consistent natural resource management for wildlife species that are declining worldwide. The second 80-acre property provides an open vista between the highway and forested parklands.

Mille Lacs Kathio State Park—125 acres

Two separate parcels within the park boundaries have been deemed to be of the highest cultural and historical significance. In addition to the presence of documented and undocumented burial grounds, both of these parcels are located within the Kathio National Historic Landmark District. Acquisition of these lands for the park would provide protection of adjacent wetlands.

Nerstrand Big Woods State Park—193 acres

Three separate landowners are currently marketing land within the park. The largest parcel is 143 acres of rolling hills, Big Woods and Oak Savannah that during the end of the housing boom was purchased by a developer. Another 20-acre parcel offers Big Woods protection while the remaining 30-acre parcel would enable the park to consolidate its land management while simultaneously holding off a development threat.

Sibley State Park—16 acres

This 16-acre parcel, owned by one individual, would complete park ownership of Lake 21 and provide extremely high-quality recreational trail opportunities.

Tettegouche State Park—48 acres

Four privately owned Lake Superior shoreline properties adjacent to Tettegouche State Park on Minnesota's spectacular North Shore. Combined, these four properties on the Palisade Head Coast would make an ideal expansion of the existing park by adding 1/2 mile of shoreline and approximately 87 acres to the park. Acquisition of the 48-acre parcel would preserve an intact historic North Shore fish camp that includes

many artifacts and that has been determined to be National Register Quality by state archeologists.

State Trail Priorities

The Parks & Trails Council of Minnesota 2012 Trails Bonding Initiative calls for \$26.565 million for acquisition and development of state trails, with projects that can be undertaken quickly.

These trails bonding priorities reflect the continued demand for trail acquisition and development as an economic development tool. The 2012 Trails Bonding Initiative will provide many benefits to Minnesotans:

- Trail rehabilitation and development projects result in local job retention and creation.
- Trails contribute to sustainable economies by creating business opportunities and supporting other tourism activities.
- Trails offer a safe transportation alternative, complementing roads and commuter routes.
- Trails contribute to healthy citizens.

Blazing Star State Trail—\$500,000

To acquire and develop 5.2 miles connecting the village of Moscow to Austin. This segment extends the Blazing Star trail east from Myre-Big Island State Park toward Austin, where it will connect with the western end of the Shooting Star State Trail.

Brown's Creek State Trail—\$1.5 million

To complete development of 6-mile Brown's Creek Trail, which will connect the Gateway State Trail in Grant to the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway in Stillwater. Funding complements previous LCCMR and 2011 bonding appropriations and Washington County funding.



Camp Ripley/Veterans State Trail—\$2 million

Initial acquisition and development for the recently authorized Camp Ripley/Veterans State Trail. The trail starts at the Paul Bunyan State Trail in Crow Wing State Park, goes south along the Mississippi River through Little Falls and ends at the Soo Line South ATV Trail near Royalton.

Casey Jones State Trail—\$2 million

Development of 7 miles of multipurpose trail in Pipestone County and acquisition of 4 miles of trail in Murray County. Complements past state funding.

Cuyuna Lakes State Trail—\$2.365 million

Continued development of the Cuyuna Lakes State Trail with segments from Crosby to Deerwood, Paul Bunyan Trail to Lum Park and a segment connecting to the Sagamore Unit of the Cuyuna Country State Recreation Area. Complements past state funding.

Gateway State Trail—\$2 million

Continuation of land acquisition and trail development of 7-mile trail from Pine Point Park in May Township to William O'Brien State Park near Marine on St. Croix. Complements past state funding.

Gitchi Gami State Trail—\$1.935 million

Development of 7.5 miles on the Gitchi Gami State Trail from Grand Marais to the Cascade River. This funding request is necessary to match federal funding. Complements past state funding.

Glacial Lakes State Trail—\$2 million

Acquisition and development of 5 miles of trail extending the Glacial Lakes State Trail and connecting Sibley State Park to New London. Project includes a bridge over Hwy. 71.

Goodhue Pioneer State Trail—\$1.227 million

Land acquisition and development

of 5 miles of trail from White Willow to Goodhue. The state already owns 3 miles of the trail, and the remaining 2 miles have seven willing sellers. Complements past state funding extending the trail from Zumbrota to White Willow and from Red Wing to Hay Creek.

Heartland State Trail—\$2 million

Land acquisition and development to complete 9-mile trail segment from Detroit Lakes to Frazee. Complements funding from 2006 and 2008.

Luce Line State Trail—\$2.5 million

Paving of 24 miles of existing limestone trail west from Winsted through Silver Lake and Hutchinson to Cedar Mills. Adds 1 new mile of trail, closing the gap in the trail west of Winsted.

Mill Towns State Trail—\$2 million

The Mill Towns Trail will provide a permanent trail linking the Cannon Valley Trail at Cannon Falls and the Sakatah Singing Hills State Trail at Faribault. Funding is required now for three critical segments: purchase of 6.5 miles of undeveloped rail bed from Faribault to Dundas; construction of a bridge over the Cannon River Cannon River connecting the Sakatah Singing Hills trail to the Mill Towns Trail at a trail head in Faribault; and purchase of 40 acres of Cannon River shoreline east of Lake Byllesby to connect Lake Byllesby County Park to the Cannon Valley Trail in Cannon Falls.

Minnesota River Trail, Mankato to St. Peter—\$500,000

Pre-design and preliminary acquisition connecting Mankato and St. Peter. This trail will also provide connections to the Sakatah Singing Hills State Trail and the Red Jacket Trail. The local communities have built trail connections and trailheads to accommodate the state trail.

Paul Bunyan State Trail—\$200,000

Final development of the Paul Bunyan Trail within the city of Bemidji. Complements past state funding, local contributions and federal funding.

Shooting Star State Trail—\$2,326,250

For property acquisition and trail development (Rose Creek to Austin segment) and to develop existing 5.6 miles of trail. Complements past state funding.

Stagecoach State Trail—\$500,000

Acquisition of initial land for the Stagecoach State Trail, a 40-mile trail that will connect the proposed Prairie Wildflower State Trail in Steele County to the existing Douglas State Trail in Olmsted County.

Whitewater Country Trail Loop—\$1.012 million.

Development of the 6-mile bike and walking trail known as the St. Charles to the Whitewater State Park segment of the Whitewater Country Trail Loop. Complements past state funding.

Connect People to the Outdoors

The Parks & Trails Council supports \$276 million in bonding requested by the DNR for several projects that are part of the DNR's Connect People to the Outdoors Initiative.

Renew Parks and Trails—\$15 million

Renewal, modification or replacement of buildings and recreational infrastructure in state parks, state recreation areas, state trails, small craft harbors/marinas, fishing pier sites and state forests. Parks with priority projects include Soudan Underground Mine, William O'Brien and Sibley. Priority trail project locations include: Munger, Root River, Sakatah and Glacial Lakes state trails and Itasca State Park bike trail.

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Develop Camping Opportunities—\$6.1 million

Development of up to 24 camper cabins that offer reasonably priced rustic lodging to meet the needs of key target markets for state park use, such as young families and single parents with children; the development of 48 new state-of-the-art campsites at Split Rock Lighthouse State Park grouped to accommodate tents, trailers and RV units comfortably with adequate screening and vegetative buffers; and to rehabilitate and redesign aging camping facilities and group sites. These funds also would be used for the development of self-registration plazas and energy conservation projects.

Develop New Recreational Opportunities—\$1 million

Development of new natural resource-based outdoor recreation facilities that provide easier access to the outdoors. Specific projects include development of two to three family friendly archery ranges, two to three nature play and skill development areas and 10 or more new fishing piers or shore fishing access sites.

Reconstruct Native Prairie and Forest—\$500,000

Restoration of approximately 1,000 acres of native prairie and forest communities in Minnesota state parks. Approximately 13,700 acres of the division of Parks and Trails-administered lands have been identified for reconstruction to native prairie and more than 5,000 acres to be restored to native forest communities.

Lake Vermilion State Park Development—\$5 million

Construction of new recreational facilities at Lake Vermilion State Park and Soudan Underground Mine State Park. This appropriation, which would supplement the \$8 million appropriated in the 2011 bonding bill, provides for the construction of the contact station and two campgrounds, including the utilities and pre-design for future facilities.

Regional Priorities

Parks and trails in the Metropolitan area provide outdoor recreation opportunities for many Minnesotans “close to home.” The Parks & Trails Council supports \$25.1 million in bonding for projects in both the Metro and Greater Minnesota, including \$10.5 million to go to Metro park agencies and \$5 million for the DNR Parks and Trails Local and Regional Grant Program.

Metropolitan Council Regional Parks and Trails

General obligation bond proceeds—\$10.5 million

The Parks & Trails Council supports the request of the Metropolitan Council of \$10.5 million in state general obligation bond proceeds to be disbursed to the specific park agencies within the metropolitan area for the acquisition, construction and rehabilitation of parks and trails within the metropolitan area. These would match \$7 million of Metropolitan Council bonds to improve and expand the Metropolitan Regional Park System.

Dakota County Cannon River Trail Bridge & acquisition—\$1.5 million

Fund design and construction of 380-foot x 12-foot pedestrian bridge over the Cannon River and acquisition funds for land necessary to land the bridge on the southern side of the Cannon River and connect Lake Byllesby Regional Park, Lake Byllesby County Park and the Cannon Valley Trail.

Regional Parks and Trails

Regional Grant Program—\$5 million

The Parks & Trails Council supports the Greater Minnesota Parks and Trails Coalition’s appropriation request



of \$5 million in bond proceeds for the DNR Parks and Trails Local and Regional Grant Program. This program provides a competitive grant process to local governments for acquisition and development of local and regional parks and trails across the state.

Redwood County: Chief Sleepy Eye Loop—\$2 million

Acquire 26 miles of the Chief Sleepy Eye loop, connecting Redwood Falls, Morgan and Sleepy Eye from a single landowner and willing seller. Project complements Renville County’s Minnesota River Valley National Scenic Byway project.

Bertram Chain of Lakes Regional Park—\$6.1 million

Complete acquisition of 551 acres of the 1,200-acre park in Monticello Township of Wright County. This park includes four undeveloped lakes and has received funding from a variety of sources. Wright County and the City of Monticello are asking the state to match Wright County dollar for dollar with a \$6.1-million bonding appropriation to finish the park. This regional park is vital to an area of the state experiencing rapid population growth and increased demand for outdoor recreation opportunities.