

June 17, 2013

Legislative Citizens Commission on Minnesota Resources
c/o Susan Thornton, Director
Room 65 State Office Building
100 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
St. Paul, MN 55155

Re: Background information regarding approval to use Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund appropriation to partially finance acquisition of proposed Kingswood Special Recreation Feature

Dear Commissioners:

This letter provides background information regarding the Metropolitan Council's request to amend its existing 2011 appropriation work program for regional park land acquisition to be used to acquire fee title of land for Kingswood Special Recreation Feature that currently has a conservation easement on it.

Background on ENRTF appropriation for "Metropolitan Regional Park System Land Acquisition"

Since 2007, the LCCMR has recommended and the Legislature has appropriated a total of \$7.54 million of Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund (ENRTF) appropriations authorized in 2007, 2008, 2009 and 2011 session laws to the Metropolitan Council to help finance acquisition of land for the Metropolitan Regional Park System.

The Metropolitan Council provides a \$2 match to every \$3 of the ENRTF appropriations and makes grants to 10 regional park implementing agencies to finance 75% of the acquisition cost of the land and related expenses. Three Rivers Park District is one of those implementing agencies.

Grants are awarded only for land that is within a Metropolitan Council-approved master plan for the applicable regional park or trail unit and only for parcels that contain high quality natural resources and do not include residential structures. Work programs for these appropriations include a list of parcels that meet this condition. The Metropolitan Council is requesting LCCMR to approve an amendment to the 2011 appropriation work program to add the 45 acre Northern Lot at Kingswood Special Recreation Feature to that list of parcels.

The Northern Lot parcel currently has a conservation easement on it that was financed with an ENRTF appropriation to the Minnesota Land Trust. New law enacted in the 2011 session states:

"Money appropriated from the [Environment and Natural Resources] trust fund must not be used to purchase any land in fee title or a permanent conservation easement if the land in question is fully or partially owned by the state or a political subdivision of the state or was acquired fully or partially with state money, unless:

- (1) the purchase creates additional direct benefit to the protection, conservation, preservation, and enhancement of the state's air, water, land, fish, wildlife, and other natural resources; and
- (2) The purchase is approved by an affirmative vote of at least 12 members of the commission [LCCMR]."

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June 17, 2013
Legislative Citizens Commission on Minnesota Resources
Page 2

At the June 11 LCCMR meeting, this request was reviewed where Metropolitan Council and Three Rivers Park District staff described the benefits that fee title acquisition of this land would provide consistent with the new law. Although the LCCMR members present at the June 11 concurred that this land should be acquired in fee title with ENRTF funding, the item was tabled to the June 25 meeting because there were not 12 members of the LCCMR present.

We would sincerely appreciate LCCMR approval of this request and a second request to release a portion of a DNR conservation easement on other land for Kingswood SRF to permit regional trail development at its meeting on June 25. This would allow the Metropolitan Council to award acquisition grants for the land on June 26. A purchase agreement regarding this acquisition expires on June 30.

Enclosed is a letter from Three Rivers Park District that provides additional details on this acquisition.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me at 651-602-1360.

Sincerely,



Arne Stefferud
Manager—Regional Parks and Natural Resources Unit
Metropolitan Council

CC: Cris Gears, Three Rivers Park District

Enclosure:
June 17, 2013 letter from Cris Gears, Three Rivers Park District



June 17, 2013

Three Rivers
Park District
Board of
Commissioners

Penny Steele
District 1

Legislative Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources
c/o Susan Thornton, Executive Director
Rm. 65 State Office Building
100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Commissioners:

Jennifer DeJournett
District 2

At your June 11 meeting, Commissioners were presented with two agenda items that support the pending Three Rivers Park District's acquisition of the former 106 acre Camp Kingswood property in Minnetrista, MN. This property has been recognized by the state, county and city as an important natural area. It encompasses 70 percent of the shoreline of Little Long Lake, a 65-acre, 70-foot deep lake renowned as one of the cleanest lakes in Hennepin County. This property unexpectedly and recently became available for public stewardship; it had been operated as a camp since 1947. A full description is included in your June 11 Commission Meeting packet.

Daniel Freeman,
Vice Chair
District 3

John Gunyou,
Chair
District 4

Metropolitan Council and Three Rivers Park District staff appreciated the opportunity to share the story and case for partial ENRTF funding at the June 11 Commission meeting ; however, due to the desire of the Commission to abide by the spirit of a pending new law that requires the approval 12 out of the 17 Commissioners, a vote on this item and a related Department of Natural Resources request to release 2.467 acres of conservation easement for a future regional trail was deferred to the LCCMR meeting on June 25. **Three Rivers Park District's Board of Commissioners encourages your support of both of these actions on June 25.**

John Gibbs
District 5

Larry Blackstad
Appointed
At Large

The funding request is consistent with the annually approved ENRTF allocation committed to the Metropolitan Council for park acquisition. No new funding is being requested and no other projects are being diverted because of this request. The request is to add the property to the ENRTF acquisition list and work plan that was previously submitted to the LCCMR, prior to known availability of the Kingswood property. The partial easement release request being presented by the MnDNR follows required state procedures, including appropriate compensation.

Steve Antolak
Appointed
At Large

Cris Gears
Superintendent

As part of the land purchase negotiation process, the Park District entered into a purchase agreement with the Minnesota Annual Council of the United Methodist Church which contains certain contingencies including these items requiring your authorization. Due to the timing of various public meetings, the purchase agreement has already been revised to extend the closing date to June 30. We are hopeful that you will act favorably on these requests on June 25, so we can meet the extended closing date.

Administrative Center, 3000 Xenium Lane North, Plymouth, MN 55441-1299

Information 763.559.9000 • TTY 763.559.6719 • Fax 763.559.3287 • www.ThreeRiversParks.org

Three Rivers Park District, as a special park district enabled under MN State Statutes, Chapter 398, is charged with "..... *the acquisition, development, and maintenance of large parks, wildlife sanctuaries, forests and other reservations, and means for public access to historic sites, and to lakes, rivers, and streams and to other natural phenomena.*" We believe this public acquisition of the Kingswood property is consistent with our legislative mandate and wholeheartedly meets the intent of the LCCMR in the partial use of ENTRF funds, in partnership with other funding sources, to secure the property for public stewardship and access in perpetuity.

If you have any questions of Three Rivers Park District, please contact Associate Superintendent, Margie Dahlof at 612.599.2101 or mdahlof@threeriversparkdistrict.org.

Sincerely,



Cris Gears, Superintendent

c: Three Rivers Park District Commissioners
Arne Stefferud, Metropolitan Council
Susan Damon, MnDNR