

**MINUTES**  
**LCMR Parks Study Group**  
**Thursday, December 18, 2003**  
**9:00 a.m. - Noon**  
**Location: Basement Hearing Room, State Office Building**

**Members Present:**

Rep.: Dennis Ozment (Chair), Phyllis Kahn, Jim Knoblach, Kathy Tingelstad  
Sen.: Linda Higgins, Carrie Ruud, Dallas Sams, Jim Vickerman

**Others Present:** Sen. Scott Dibble

**Staff Present:** John Velin, Susan Thornton, Susan Von Mosch, Sandy Smith

Chair Ozment called the meeting to order at 9:25 a.m.

Sen. Sams moved approval of the minutes of the Dec. 5, 2003 Parks Study Group meeting. Motion passed.

**Discussion of the Draft Parks Study Group Report:**

Ms. Von Mosch reviewed the draft report, describing the general outline, each section, and the appendices. Rep. Tingelstad complemented LCMR staff for the quality and thoroughness of the report.

Sen. Sams moved that the following be added as a conclusion / recommendation:

"We should consider state funding for all regional parks in areas of the state where a large part of the population does not have proportional access to nearby state parks. Regional parks in Greater Minnesota that are in areas of the state where a large part of the population does not have proportional access to nearby state parks should be considered equivalent to Metropolitan regional parks."

Rep. Kahn stated that she likes this motion. It encourages regional parks in rural areas and it recognizes why the state started funding metropolitan regional parks. While it is too expensive for the state to fund operations, the state can give financial support. The motion also adds criteria for rural regional parks.

Rep. Ozment asked what is proportional access? Rep. Kahn responded that GIS could be used to decide what that means. Rep. Ozment asked Sen. Sams to explain the first sentence, does this mean the state would fund regional parks in Greater Minnesota? Sen. Sams responded no, but consideration would be given to such funding.

Rep. Ozment stated that it seems to put the parks in competition with each other. It compares regional parks to state parks. If there is a state park in an area, then the regional park in that area would not get state funding.

Rep. Kahn stated that it would give people access to parks and it would relieve the property tax burden if the state provided some funding. The motion says do the same for rural regional parks. Recognize the special needs for metropolitan regional parks to receive state funding. This sets criteria for how this could be done for rural regional parks.

Rep. Knoblach said he doesn't see the motion as excluding others. The reason metropolitan regional parks get funding is because there aren't many state parks in the metro. area. He is skeptical of this argument because people drive to state parks, but if that is the rationale then areas without state parks should get state funding for regional parks.

Rep. Tingelstad moved to amend Sen. Sams motion by adding the following:  
"Encourage counties and cities in Greater Minnesota to coordinate the development and management of regional parks, such as the Stearns-Sherburne-Benton county joint powers cooperative for planning and prioritizing park operations, management, estimating attendance/visit data, and land acquisition."

Rep. Kahn supports the amendment. In 1985, the rationale for funding regional parks in the metropolitan area was because there wasn't access to state parks. The amendment more clearly states the priority for funding is to provide access to parks in rural area.

Tingelstad amendment was adopted. Discussion returned to Sen. Sams' motion.

Rep. Ozment asked about definitions for "areas of the state" and "proportional access." He stated that he doesn't understand how to accomplish this. Sen. Sams responded that he would let DNR tackle this using their GIS capabilities. Rep. Knoblach stated that DNR would have to interpret average miles to state parks based on where people live. DNR would have to use some judgements to get an estimate.

Rep. Ozment indicated that Sen. Sams' amendment would go under Conclusions / Recommendations in the executive summary and would begin with the word "consider." Sams motion as amended passed.

Rep. Tingelstad moved to amend items #1 and #3 under Conclusions / Recommendations on pages ii and iii in the executive summary:

1. As part of the Department of Natural Resources' proposed FY 2006-07 budget, the Division of Parks and Recreation should develop suggestions for increasing fees, ~~and~~ generating additional revenues, developing new revenue opportunities, and improving efficiency in order to provide for greater self-sufficiency of the state park system.
3. Encourage managers of Metropolitan Regional Parks and Trails and Greater Minnesota regional parks to develop suggestions for increasing fees, ~~and raising revenues~~ generating additional revenues, developing new revenue opportunities, and improving efficiency in order to provide for greater self-sufficiency of the metropolitan regional park

~~system and Greater Minnesota regional parks. to make their park programs more cost effective.~~

Sen. Vickerman said he is reluctant to let DNR decide about raising fees without knowing what they are going to do. Rep. Kahn supports the motion. Rep. Ozment stated that the Study Group is asking DNR to look at and study these things. It doesn't give DNR any authority they don't already have. Rep. Tingelstad said that in addition to the focus on user fees, she wants to encourage park managers to think outside the box and explore new revenues opportunities like birding and dog parks. Rep. Ozment emphasized that this doesn't mandate or authorize anything but asks park managers to be creative in their thinking.

Motion to amend Items #1 and #3 was adopted.

Rep. Tingelstad moved amend Item #2 under Conclusions / Recommendations in the executive summary by inserting the words "peak season" in line 4 after "popularity of a state park,". Motion to amend Item #2 was adopted.

Rep. Tingelstad moved to amend the Conclusions / Recommendation in the executive summary by adding the following:

"Encourage all parks and trails managers (in state parks, metropolitan regional parks, and Greater Minnesota regional parks) to develop and share information on best practices and innovative ideas for managing parks, trails, and open space using a web site, list serv, periodic meetings, or other appropriate methods."

Rep. Ozment asked if a statewide organization representing all these groups exists. Indications from the audience were no. The motion passed.

Rep. Tingelstad moved to amend Finding f. in the executive summary by deleting the words "may be" and inserting the word "are." The motion passed.

Rep. Tingelstad moved to insert the words "Parks Study Group" on page ii of the executive summary before the section title Conclusions / Recommendations. The motion was withdrawn.

Rep. Tingelstad moved to amend Finding a. by insert the words "physical fitness opportunities" in line 6 after "historical resources,". The motion passed.

Rep. Tingelstad moved to amend the Conclusions / Recommendations in the executive summary by adding the following:

"The Department of Natural Resources should assign a high priority to correcting existing septic system problems in Minnesota's state parks and recreation areas."

A memorandum from Larry Peterson, DNR Parks Development and Real Estate Manager, detailing current and recently completed water and wastewater treatment

projects for 2000-2004 (which total over \$4.4 million) and current needs for the 2004 bonding and future (which total over \$1.1 million). Rep. Ozment noted that septic and wastewater treatment are already a high priority for DNR and he asked DNR to speak to this issue. Pete Skwira, Acting Parks Director for DNR, said that the department is currently working on many projects in order to clean up problems.

Rep. Ozment offered the following amendment to Rep. Tingelstad's motion: –

"~~Encourage and support T~~he Department of Natural Resources' ~~should assign a~~ high priority ~~of resolving to correcting~~ existing septic system problems in Minnesota's state parks and recreation areas."

Rep. Kahn asked Mr. Skwira if all the 2004 projects were bondable. Mr. Skwira responded that funding would either be from bonding or LCMR appropriations. Rep. Kahn stated that \$1 million for wastewater treatment projects should be taken care of with bonding.

Sen. Higgins stated that the "unknown" dollar amount for Lake Shetek to hook up to the county sewer district is troubling. Rep. Kahn offered an amendment to the motion:

"In addition, attention should be given to addressing problems with septic systems located outside state parks but that affect state parks."

Rep. Knoblach stated that it is important to clean up Lake Shetek and Lake Shetek is high on the WIF list to get money this year.

Sen. Ruud stated that she understands the importance of this issue but she questioned whether it belonged in the report. It is not in the Study Group's charge and has not been discussed in meetings. Rep. Tingelstad suggested that instead of including this language in the executive summary it be placed on page 28 of the report under Item 7.b.

The Tingelstad motion as amended passed:

"Encourage and support the Department of Natural Resources' high priority of resolving existing septic system problems in Minnesota's state parks and recreation areas. In addition, attention should be given to addressing problems with septic systems located outside state parks but that affect state parks."

Rep. Knoblach said the draft report is excellent and he complimented Chair Ozment and LCMR staff on their work.

Sen. Higgins moved that the Study Group adopt the report with the changes to be recommended to the full LCMR. The motion passed.

#### **Discussion of the LCMR Parks Study Group appropriation language:**

Rep. Ozment asked Ms. Von Mosch where the Study Group is financially. Ms. Von Mosch responded that the appropriation was for \$26,000, the Group has had six

meetings and its activities have been coordinated with LCMR activities, such as the LCMR summer tours, staff estimate that between \$19,000 and \$20,000 remains unspent.

Rep. Ozment stated that the Study Groups appropriation doesn't stop with the report. He would like to see the Study Group continue in order to provide follow through on the recommendations made to the LCMR. In addition, the report contains recommendations to different park systems for things to happen. Many of the park agencies are strapped for funds. He would like to use some of the appropriation to help the different park agencies come back with follow up information; to provide an incentive to move on the recommendations. Specifically, he wants to earmark up to \$2,000 each for state parks, metropolitan regional parks, and Greater Minnesota regional parks for a total of \$6,000. To do this, we would need to modify the Study Group work program to include funding for the park agencies and get LCMR approval. This is on the table for discussion.

Rep. Kahn thinks this is an excellent idea and she suggested the Chair do what needs to be done to achieve this.

Rep Tingelstad said she hoped the three park systems could take more of a partnership approach and support each other.

Rep. Knobloch stated that there is no entity for Greater Minnesota regional parks. How would this be handled? Rep. Ozment suggested that LCMR staff talk with Chuck Wocken, Stearns County, about the role of the Minnesota County Park Directors Association. Mr. Velin said that there isn't a particular approach in place, but we would need agreements to convey the funds.

Rep. Ozment stated that the Study Group would use the work program to see how the various park entities propose to spend the money. They may decide to work together, but leave it up to them to determine how to use the funds. This would remain an LCMR-controlled activity managed through the work program.

Sen. Higgins made the motion to recommend to LCMR that the LCMR authorize up to \$2,000 each from the Parks Study Group appropriation for state parks, Metropolitan Regional Parks, and Greater Minnesota regional parks to facilitate work on the recommendations in the Park Study Group report. Further, to authorize LCMR staff to work with the parks staff to identify specific activities and develop an amendment for the Parks Study Group work program and appropriate agreements. Motion passed.

Sen. Sams made the motion to recommend to LCMR to continue the Parks Study Group through the biennium to provide follow through on the recommendations made in the Study Group report. Motion passed.

The meeting adjourned at 11:05 a.m.