

## EXAMPLES OF REGIONAL PARKS OUTSIDE THE TWIN CITIES METRO AREA

The attached list of 53 county and city parks, and five potential new parks, might be considered "regional parks" based on their size, natural resource base, or significant use by people from outside the immediate area. (See attached criteria.) DNR staff for the Outdoor Recreation Grant program, along with an ad hoc group of county and city parks staff, developed this list.<sup>1</sup> This is not intended to be an exhaustive list, but simply provides some *examples* of existing parks that have a regional significance. There are many others around the state that might also be considered regional parks.

Note: This packet contains preliminary information that is subject to change as more data is gathered.

### SUMMARY INFORMATION

Based on the attached list:

- The 53 non-metro regional parks encompass approximately 19,000 acres and average 350 acres in size. The parks range in size from 62 to 3,000 acres.<sup>2</sup>
- 79% of the parks are managed by counties and 21% are managed by cities
- The predominant activities in the parks are: picnic areas and hiking trails provided in 42 parks, camping in 29 parks, swimming (23), fishing and boating or canoeing (22).
- 31 counties are represented on the list of city- and county-operated regional parks:
  - Wright County (9 parks) and Olmsted (5 parks) have the most parks
  - Beltrami County accounts for the most park acres, with 3,000 acres or 16 percent of the total, followed by Olmsted County with 14 percent ( or 2,584 acres) and Wright County with 12 percent (or 2,258 acres)
- The regional parks also contain unique features, such as scenic valleys, gorges, waterfalls and rapids, granite quarries, natural prairie, along with lake frontage and frontage on the Mississippi and other rivers. Several parks have day-use buildings that accommodate environmental education activities. Some parks border DNR property. One park hosts a local historic pageant.

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<sup>1</sup> Source: Wayne Sames, Mn DNR, Local Grants Initiative Program.

<sup>2</sup> Information on park size is approximate because acreage data is missing for some non-metro regional parks.

Information on fees charged needs to be gathered from cities and counties operating non-metro regional parks. Preliminary conversations indicate that some parks charge fees, such as Quarry Park in St. Cloud and Fish Lake County Park in Chisago.

Attachments:

1. Examples of regional parks outside the Twin Cities metro area
2. Map showing counties with city- and county-operated regional parks
3. Criteria
4. Funding history
5. Relevant Minnesota Statutes

1. **EXAMPLES OF REGIONAL PARKS OUTSIDE THE TWIN CITIES METRO AREA**, Spring, 2003

1. Hormel Nature Center: (City of Austin): 279 acres. Interpretive center and nature/hiking trails. Potential addition of 62 acres planned. Visited by 30,000 people annually, including over 10,000 area students and families.
2. Chilton County Park (Becker County): 205 acres. Provides boat launch, fishing, swimming and picnicking.
3. Three Island Lake County Park (Beltrami County): Approximately 3,000 acres. Provides boat launch, fishing pier, camping, and hiking trails.
4. Graves Farm County Park: (Benton County): 289 acres. In the planning stages for development. Will likely include trails, educational opportunities, picnicking, etc. Over 3,300 feet of Mississippi River frontage. Borders 220 acre DNR Wildlife Management Area and across the river from a 230 acre Stearns County park.
5. Bray Park (Blue Earth County): Approximately 100 acres. Facilities include a swimming beach, campground, boating, fishing, picnicking, nature trails, and interpretive center.
6. Daly Park (Blue Earth County ): 126 acres. Provides camping, picnicking, swimming beach, fishing pier, boat launch and nature trail.
7. Blue Earth River Environmental Corridor (Blue Earth County): Approximately 140 acres in nine parcels along the Blue Earth River. Provides canoeing, fishing, rest areas, camping.
8. Lake Hanska County Park (Brown County): Acreage unknown. Over 10,000 feet of shoreline. Provides picnicking, camping, hiking/ski trails, historic/archeological site, canoeing, fishing.
9. Mound Creek Park (Brown County): 276 acres. Provides facilities for swimming, boating, fishing, picnicking and hiking. A campground is proposed. Site includes a waterfall, natural prairie, rock outcrops.
10. Bear Lake Park (Carlton County): At least 128 acres (1,100 acres proposed). Provides facilities for swimming, fishing, boating, camping, picnicking, and hiking.
11. Dennis Frandsen County Park (Chisago County): 117 acres. One mile of lake frontage. Includes picnicking, hiking trails, fishing pier.
12. Fish Lake County Park (Chisago County); 152 acres. Swimming, fishing, hiking, picnicking, boating, cross country skiing.
13. Long Lake Park and Campground (Clearwater County): 53 acres. Provides camping, picnicking, fishing, swimming, boating, canoeing, hiking and nature trails.
14. Paul Bunyan Arboretum (Crow Wing County): 200 acres. Includes an arboretum with walking trails.

15. Runestone County Park (Douglas County): 180 acres. Provides picnicking and hiking trails.
16. Duluth City Parks: Several parks might qualify as regional parks, including: Spirit Mountain, the Duluth Zoo, Lester Park (230+ acres, trails, picnicking), Fond du Lac Park (several hundred acres, trails, adjacent to Jay Cooke State Park).
17. Tipsinah Mound Park (City of Elbow Lake/Grant Count): 257 acres. Provides camping picnicking and swimming.
18. West Mill Recreation Area (City of Fertile): 600 acres. Provides camping, hiking, picnicking. Unique geological features (sand hills and dunes). Currently includes day use environmental education. Proposed residential ELC.
19. White Woods Nature Park (Freeborn County): 170 acres. Provides picnicking.
20. Cannon Valley Wilderness Area (Goodhue County): 780+ acres. Provides camping, hiking, canoeing, picnicking. Cannon River valley and bluffs.
21. Niemackl Park (City of Herman): Several hundred acres of lakes, marsh, prairie and woods. Provides camping, nature trails, picnicking and canoeing.
22. Carey Lake Park (City of Hibbing): 1,140 acres. Provides camping, swimming and hiking.
23. Springvale County Park (Isanti County): 172 acres. Provides picnicking and nature trails; glacial esker.
24. Bass Lake County Park/Campground: (Itasca County): 720 acres. Provides camping, boating ,swimming, fishing, hiking, cross country skiing, snowmobiling, and wildlife observation.
25. Hok-Si-La Park (Lake City): 252 acres. Located on the Mississippi River. Provides camping, picnicking, boating, fishing, swimming and hiking.
26. Wayside Park (City of Lancaster): 280 acres. Provides camping, picnicking, canoeing and hiking. Popular site for Canadian tourists.
27. Hole in the Mountain Park (Lincoln County): 330 acres. Provides camping picnicking, downhill skiing, and hiking.
28. Garvin Park (Lyon County): 500+ acres. Provides camping, picnicking and hiking.
29. Florian County Park/Recreation Area (Marshall County): 197 acres. Provides camping, swimming, fishing, canoeing and hiking.
30. Lake Koronis Park (Meeker and Stearns counties): 62 acres. Provides camping, swimming, boating, fishing, picnicking, and a nature trail.
31. Seven Mile Creek Park (Nicollet County): 600 acres. Provides hiking, picnicking. Scenic valley of Minnesota River tributary.

32. Chester Woods Park (Olmsted County): 1,330 acres. Provides camping, swimming, fishing, canoeing, picnicking, horseback riding, hiking.
33. Oxbow Park (Olmsted County): 572 acres. Includes a zoo and nature center. Also provides camping, picnicking, canoeing and hiking.
34. Maple Lake County Park (Polk County): Four separate sites located on Maple Lake. Provides Swimming, camping, picnicking, boating and fishing.
35. Plum Creek County Park (Redwood County): 210 acres. Site of Laura Ingalls Wilder pageant. Also provides camping, swimming and picnicking.
36. Alexander Ramsey Park (City of Redwood Falls): A former state park. 217 acres along a scenic gorge of the Redwood River, including two large waterfalls and rapids. Includes a small zoo and also provides camping, picnicking and hiking.
37. Quarry Hill Park (City of Rochester): 294 acres. Includes a nature center and also provides hiking and picnicking.
38. Foster Arend Park (City of Rochester): Over 200 acres. Provides swimming, boating, picnicking and hiking.
39. Fremont Park: (Sherburne County): 114 acres. Planning for future development, which may include hiking/nature trails, picnicking, environmental education opportunities.
40. High Island Park (Sibley County): 225 acres. Provides camping, picnicking and hiking.
41. Quarry Park and Nature Preserve: (Stearns County): ~600 acres (with potential to expand to 700 acres). Includes historic granite quarries and unique granite outcrops, woods, wetlands and prairie. Provides swimming, fishing, hiking, with plans to develop facilities for picnicking and historical/nature interpretation.
42. Warner Lake County Park (Stearns County): 271 acres. Includes an environmental learning center. Also provides camping, swimming, picnicking, boating, fishing and hiking.
43. Bear Cave Park (City of Stewartville): 188 acres. Provides picnicking, canoeing, skiing and hiking.
44. Old Wadena County Park (Wadena County): 232 acres. Provides boating, fishing, picnicking, canoeing and a historic site.
45. Beebe Lake Regional Park (Wright County): 70 acres. Provides picnicking, hiking, group camping, a play structure and swimming.
46. Clearwater/Pleasant County Park (Wright County): 210 acres. Provides boating, fishing, swimming, picnicking and hiking.
47. Collinwood County Park (Wright County): 308 acres. Provides camping, swimming, boating, hiking and picnicking.

48. Otsego Regional Park (Wright County): 70 acres. Provides walking paths, picnicking, cross country skiing, a canoe access and a play structure.
49. Robert Ney Memorial County Park (Wright County): ~600 acres. Includes an environmental learning center. Also provides hiking, skiing and picnicking..
50. Schroeder Regional Park (Wright County): Provides modern camping, a boat launch, picnicking, swimming and a play structure.
51. Harry Larson Park (Wright County): 170 acres. Provides ski/hike trails, picnicking.
52. Stanley Eddy Memorial Park Reserve (Wright County): Three separate units totaling 660 acres. Provides ski/hike trails, picnicking.
53. Montissippi County Park (Wright County): 170 acres. Provides picnicking, boat launch, fishing pier, and skiing/hiking trails.

**Potential/Proposed New Regional Parks:**

1. Olmsted County: Proposed acquisition of 140 acres on the upper Root River in southern Olmsted County. Additional future planned acquisition would bring the total county ownership to about 350 acres. The area is also bordered by DNR state forest land, which could bring the acreage of usable recreation land to over 600 acres. Planned activities will include picnicking, camping, hiking, fishing, cross country skiing and canoeing. Identified by the DNR County Biological Survey as one of the most biologically significant areas in the county.
2. Lyon County: Possible acquisition of 147 acres along the Redwood River southwest of Marshall. Potential development of a campground and picnic area, as well as a possible trail connection between the City of Marshall and Camden State Park.
3. Stearns County: Potential acquisition of 330 acres of woods with approx. one-half mile of lake frontage. The lake, between St. Cloud and the St. John's University campus, presently has no public access. The property includes a high quality maple/basswood forest, which is shown on the Minnesota Biological Survey map of Stearns County. Planned activities would likely include swimming, boating, hiking/nature trails, cross country skiing, and picnicking.
4. Stearns County: Potential 172 acres Plum Creek Regional park near St. Cloud. This proposed park would have significant flood plain river frontage, forests, prairie and historical areas on the Mississippi State Scenic and Recreational River. It could also be connected to a planned trail system.
5. Sherburne County: Proposed 105 acre area on Rush Lake in Sherburne County with approximately 900 feet of lake shore. Planned use includes a public beach, hiking, biking, picnicking, cross country skiing, in-line skating, environmental education and restoration of native vegetation.

### **3. CRITERIA**

The following factors are part of the general criteria used to evaluate and rank Outdoor Recreation Grant application. These criteria were used to identify examples of non-metro regional parks.

1. Size: 100 or more acres (with exceptions based on use characteristics, special features, etc.).
2. Use: Evidence that the park serves at least a regional clientele (as opposed to mostly local). Other related factors may include evidence that the facility draws tourists from outside the local area.
3. Recreation Activities Offered: The park should provide outdoor recreation facilities and activities that are primarily natural resource based (camping, picnicking, hiking, swimming, boating, canoeing, fishing, nature study). A related measure is the range of these activities accommodated within the park. For example, a park with a beach, campground and boat launch facilities are more likely to attract a regional clientele than a park with only a fishing pier.
4. Special Features: Unique or unusual geologic features or historical significance of the site; zoos; etc.
5. Scarcity of Recreational Resources: The park provides public natural resource based recreational opportunities that are not otherwise available within a reasonable distance. These might include water-based activities, such as swimming, fishing and boating; interpretive nature trails; public campgrounds, etc.
6. Statewide Significance: Characteristics of the park are of statewide significance, such as site of a major state historical event, unique resource of statewide significance, etc.
7. Minimum Grant Request: The grant request must be at least \$20,000.

#### **4. RECENT FUNDING HISTORY**

Regional parks outside the Twin Cities metro area have received the following funding from the state.

Minn. Laws 2000, Chap. 492, sec. 7, subd. 11 -- Capital Bonding

Regional Parks: Greater Minnesota \$500,000

For grants to public regional parks organizations located outside the metropolitan area as defined in Minnesota Statutes, section 473.121, subdivision 2, to acquire land, design, and construct and redevelop regional parks and trails, open space, and recreational facilities. The improvements must be of a capital nature. Each \$3 of state grants must be matched by \$2 of nonstate funds.

Minn. Laws 2001, Chap. 2, Sec. 14, Subd. 5(b) -- LCMR Funding

(b) Local Grants Initiative: Program Outdoor Recreation Grants

\$1,614,000 the first year and \$1,765,000 the second year are from the trust fund and \$1,701,000 is from the future resources fund to the commissioner of natural resources for matching grants:

- (1) for regional parks outside the metropolitan area as defined in Minnesota Statutes, section 473.121; *(see list below)*
- (2) for local parks, outdoor recreation areas, and natural and scenic areas under Minnesota Statutes, section 85.019;
- (3) for statewide conservation partners grants of up to \$20,000 each to encourage private organizations and local governments to cost-share improvements of fish, wildlife, and native plant habitats and research and surveys of fish and wildlife; and
- (4) for environmental partnerships program grants of up to \$20,000 each for environmental service projects and related education activities through public and private partnerships.

Grants under clause (1) may provide up to 60 percent of the nonfederal share of the project cost. Grants under clauses (2) to (4) may provide up to 50 percent of the nonfederal share of the project cost. This appropriation includes money for the Ramsey-Washington county Lake Links trail, Westwood Hills nature center, and the Chanhassen trail. The commission will monitor the grants for approximate balance over extended periods of time between the metropolitan area, under Minnesota Statutes, section 473.121, subdivision 2, and the nonmetropolitan area through work program oversight and periodic allocation decisions. For the purposes of this paragraph, the match must be a nonstate contribution, but may be either cash or qualifying in kind. Recipients may receive funding for more than one project in any given grant period. This appropriation is available until June 30, 2004, at which time the project must be completed and final products delivered.

Minn. Laws 2003, Chap. 128, Art. 1, Sec. 9, Subd. 6(c)

Local Initiative Grants-Parks and Natural Areas

\$1,290,000 the first year and \$1,289,000 the second year are from the trust fund to the commissioner of natural resources for matching grants to local governments for acquisition and development of natural and scenic areas and local parks as provided in Minnesota Statutes, section 85.019, subdivisions 2 and 4a, and regional parks outside of



the metropolitan area. Grants may provide up to 50 percent of the nonfederal share of the project cost, except nonmetropolitan regional park grants may provide up to 60 percent of the nonfederal share of the project cost. The commission will monitor the grants for approximate balance over extended periods of time between the metropolitan area, under Minnesota Statutes, section 473.121, subdivision 2, and the nonmetropolitan area through work program oversight and periodic allocation decisions. For the purposes of this paragraph, the match must be a nonstate contribution, but may be either cash or qualifying in-kind. Recipients may receive funding for more than one project in any given grant period. This appropriation is available until June 30, 2006, at which time the project must be completed and final products delivered.

In addition, *Minn. Stat. §116P.14* Federal land and water conservation funds, provides that 50 percent of Federal LAWCON funds shall be for local projects:

Subd. 3. Local share. Fifty percent of all money made available to the state from funds granted under subdivision 1 shall be distributed for projects to be acquired, developed, and maintained by local units of government, providing that any project approved is consistent with a statewide or a county or regional recreational plan and compatible with the statewide recreational plan. All money received by the commissioner for local units of government is appropriated annually to carry out the purposes for which the funds are received.

**Non-metro Regional Park Funding with  
2000 Bonding and 2001 LCMR Local Grants Initiative**

City	Park / Project	Acres	County	Grant Award
Rochester	Quarry Hill Nature Area  Acquire 18.6 acres adjacent to existing 275 acre Quarry Hill Park. Contains a mature oak forest and open fields.	18.6	Olmsted	\$200,000
Wright County	Ney Park  Acquire 238 acres adjacent to existing 360 acre Robert Ney Memorial Park Reserve. Current park includes picnic area, lake access, trails and education facility. Future plans include expanding year-round trail systems and environmental education opportunities.	238	Wright	\$450,000
Sherburne County	Fremont Park  Acquire 49.9 acres for use as a regional park adjacent to a 63.8 acre proposed Natural and Scenic area. Proposed development of year round trails, picnicking, canoe access, and fishing pier. Future plans include trail linkages to existing and proposed regional facilities, and an educational center.	49.9	Sherburne	\$300,000
Redwood County	Plum Creek Park  Acquire 2.96 acres of land adjacent to the existing 207 acres Plum Creek Park and develop an additional 16 campsites, bathhouse and playground, and install landscaping	2.96	Redwood	\$ 77,000
Benton County	Regional Park Acquisition  Acquire 235 acres in Benton County, known as Graves farm, to be developed into a regional park. Adjoins a 54 acre proposed Natural and Scenic area on the Mississippi River. Future plans include development of a regional park master plan to include year-round trails, educational opportunities, picnicking and more.	235	Benton	\$173,000
<b>Total</b>		<b>544.46</b>		<b>\$1,200,000</b>

**Non-metro Regional Park Grant Awards with  
2003 LCMR Local Initiative Grants**

Applicant	Park / Project	Acres	County	Grant Award
Olmsted County	Fritz land acquisition  Acquisition of 140 acres along the Root River. This parcel will connect to 263 acres of DNR forestry land. Future land acquisition will bring the total acreage of the park to 350 acres, combined with the DNR lands the total recreational us	140	Olmsted	\$480,000
Austin	Hormel Nature Center  Acquisition of 62 acres of land adjacent to the Hormel Nature Center and development of 1 mile trail.	62	Mower	\$170,000
Meeker County	Koronis Regional Park  Playground, restrooms and accessible campsite.		Meeker	\$34,000
Olmsted County	Oxbow Park  Campground redevelopment including restroom building/emergency shelter and campground site improvements.		Olmsted	\$87,000
Wright County	Ney Park  Trails and native species landscaping project.		Wright	\$30,000
Chisago County	Dennis Frandsen Park  Develop recreational facilities to include volleyball, horseshoe, restrooms, roads, parking, water supply.		Chisago	\$90,000
Morris	Pomme de Terre Trail  Develop new trail 1.3 mi. along the east side of Pomme de Terre River.		Stevens	\$57,000
Redwood Falls	Alexander Ramsey Park  Campground renovations including restrooms, septic system, site pad expansion, electrical and water upgrades, accessibility improvements, road and parking improvements and new site amenities.		Redwood	\$100,000
Mankato	Kiwanis Park  Acquire 54 acres. Develop canoe access, boat access, trails, picnic shelter, restrooms, parking, access road, signage and dog exercise area.	54	Blue Earth	\$202,000
Total		256		\$1,250,000



## 5. RELEVANT MINNESOTA STATUTES

Minn. Stat. Chap. 85 - Recreation: Division of Parks and Recreation

### **Minn. Stat. §85.019 Local recreation grants.**

Subdivision 1. Definition. For purposes of this section, "unit of government" means a county, statutory or home rule charter city, or town.

Subd. 2. Parks and outdoor recreation areas. The commissioner shall administer a program to provide grants to units of government for up to 50 percent of the costs of acquisition and betterment of public land and improvements needed for parks and other outdoor recreation areas and facilities.

Subd. 3. Repealed by amendment, 1995 c 220 s 68

Subd. 4. Repealed by amendment, 1995 c 220 s 68

Subd. 4a. Natural and scenic areas. The commissioner shall administer a program to provide grants to units of government and school districts for the acquisition and betterment of natural and scenic areas such as blufflands, prairies, shorelands, wetlands, and wooded areas. A grant may not exceed 50 percent or \$500,000, whichever is less, of the costs of acquisition and betterment of land acquired under this subdivision. The commissioner shall make payment to a unit of government upon receiving documentation of reimbursable expenditures.

Subd. 4b. Regional trails. The commissioner shall administer a program to provide grants to units of government for acquisition and betterment of public land and improvements needed for trails outside the metropolitan area deemed to be of regional significance according to criteria published by the commissioner. Recipients must provide a nonstate cash match of at least one-half of total eligible project costs. If land used for the trails is not in full public ownership, then the recipients must prove it is dedicated to the purposes of the grants for at least 20 years. The commissioner shall make payment to a unit of government upon receiving documentation of reimbursable expenditures. A unit of government may enter into a lease or management agreement for the trail, subject to section [16A.695](#).

Subd. 4c. Trail connections. The commissioner shall administer a program to provide grants to units of government for acquisition and betterment of public land and improvements needed for trails that connect communities, trails, and parks and thereby increase the effective length of trail experiences. Recipients must provide a nonstate cash match of at least one-half of total eligible project costs. If land used for the trails is not in full public ownership, then the recipients must prove it is dedicated to the purposes of the grants for at least 20 years. The commissioner shall make payment to a unit of government upon receiving

documentation of reimbursable expenditures. A unit of government may enter into a lease or management agreement for the trail, subject to section [16A.695](#).

Subd. 5. Powers; rules. The commissioner has all powers necessary and convenient to implement this section, including the authority to adopt rules for the program under chapter 14.

*Minn. Stat. §85.50 Definition.*

For purposes of sections 85.50 to 85.52, "central Minnesota regional parks and trails plan" or "plan" means a recreational park and trail plan in the counties of Stearns, Benton, and Sherburne that includes, at a minimum, existing regionally significant parks and trails that are identified in the plan under a local unit of government jurisdiction and includes newly developed parks and trails or trail connections to communities, parks, or public open space.

HIST: 1999 c 65 s 1

*Minn. Stat. §85.51 Planning; coordination.*

Plan development, adoption, and amendments shall be coordinated with the counties of Stearns, Benton, and Sherburne by an appropriate regional parks and trail coordination board that is created under a joint powers agreement.

HIST: 1999 c 65 s 2

*Minn. Stat. §85.52 Grants; priorities.*

The regional parks and trail coordination board under section 85.51 may administer grants from the United States, the state, or other sources to develop, enhance, or maintain the central Minnesota regional parks and trails plan, and must dispose of grant money in accordance with the acceptance of any agreement or contract.

In developing, enhancing, and maintaining the plan, the parks and trails coordination board must develop priorities for expenditure of grant money.

HIST: 1999 c 65 s 3