

Legislative Commission on Minnesota Resources

**Greater Minnesota Park Inventory
Regional Park Criteria**

FINAL REPORT
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Project Partners

Patricia Arndt – Department of Natural Resources
Dave Fricke - Minnesota Association of Townships
Annalee Garletz – Association of Minnesota Counties
Craig Johnson - League of Minnesota Cities
Al Lieffort (Douglas County) – Minnesota County Parks Association
John Lilly - Department of Natural Resources
Wayne Sames – Department of Natural Resources
Michelle Snider - Minnesota Recreation and Park Association
Peter Skwira – Department of Natural Resources
Arne Stefferud – Metropolitan Council
John Von De Linde – Minnesota Recreation and Park Association
Jonathan Vlaming - Metropolitan Council
David Weirens - Association of Minnesota Counties
Chuck Wocken (Stearns County) - Minnesota County Parks Association

Appendices:

Appendix A – Sample Survey Letter and Sample Survey

Appendix B – List of Surveyed Jurisdictions

Appendix C – Complete list of responses

Appendix D – 2004 Inventory of Regional Parks or Parks with Regional Potential

Appendix E – 2004 Inventory of Regional Trails, or Trails with Regional Potential

Appendix F – 2004 Inventory of Large Non-Regional Parks

Overview

At this time there is no formal organization that coordinates or represents Greater Minnesota's regional parks and consequently, there is no comprehensive list of regional parks in Greater Minnesota. Inadequate information on this developing system of parks hampered the ability of the 2003 Legislative Commission on Minnesota Resources (LCMR) Parks Study Group to effectively evaluate Greater Minnesota regional parks in the same manner as State Parks and Metropolitan regional parks. The purpose of this survey project is to provide a base information source to assist in the identification of regional parks outside of the metro area. It is important to note that the information reported in this survey is a snapshot of what is currently located in the jurisdictions that were surveyed. Some of the information may be incomplete due to minimal detail provided by respondents. In addition, there are new areas currently being considered for acquisition, which could be added to the list of potential regional parks in the near future.

The park inventory project was financed by the LCMR. The original project budget allocated \$2,000 each to the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Metropolitan Council, and to outstate regional parks for work on recommendations contained in the 2003 LCMR parks report. In order to get a more comprehensive survey completed the DNR and the Metropolitan Council spoke to the importance of having a comprehensive inventory of regional parks in Greater Minnesota. Both of the agencies agreed to give the \$2,000 originally specified to Metro Regional Parks and State Parks to the Outstate Regional Parks so they could complete an inventory. The following is the LCMR Parks Study Funding Authorization language that can be found in: Minn. Laws (2004) Chap. 255, Section 46

Sec. 46. [LCMR PARKS STUDY.]

Subdivision 1. [REGIONAL PARKS.] The Legislative Commission on Minnesota Resources shall continue studying park issues, including the study of funding for operation and maintenance costs at regional parks within the seven-county metropolitan area and outside the seven-county metropolitan area. The commission may make additional recommendations on park issues to the 2005 legislature.

Subd. 2. [FUNDING AUTHORIZATION.] To begin implementing the recommendations in the Legislative Commission on Minnesota Resources February 2004 parks report, up to \$6,000 of the appropriation in Laws 2003, chapter 128, article 1, section 9, subdivision 3, paragraph (b), is for an agreement with the Association of Minnesota Counties to identify and develop a comprehensive list of regional parks outside of the seven-county metropolitan area, including an inventory of park facilities.

[EFFECTIVE DATE.] This section is effective the day following final enactment.

Methodology

For the purpose of this project, the following five criteria were used to evaluate whether parks and trails in Greater Minnesota (the area outside of the seven county Twin Cities Metropolitan Area) are "regional". The project committee reviewed, and based its criteria on, the DNR's Regional Park Grant program criteria. This resulted in the five criteria used in the inventory

process to determine the regional status of a park. They are identical to those used for the Regional Park Grant program, with the exception that the DNR's "Special Features" and "Statewide Significance" criteria were combined. A park or trail has been deemed 'regional' based on the information provided by inventory respondents, and the professional judgment of the LCMR Project Advisory Committee – Inventory of Greater Minnesota Regional Parks. The five criteria are:

Regional Park Criteria

1) Size: 100+ acres (with exceptions based on use characteristics, special features, etc.)

Discussion: Large tracts of land are often necessary to provide natural resource based recreation opportunities and protect the natural resources for long-term use for outdoor recreation. This criterion will not be exclusively used to determine that a park is not regional. Parks of less than 100 acres may still be determined to be regional in nature based on other criteria.

2) Use: Evidence that the park serves a regional clientele (as opposed to mostly local). Other factors may include evidence that the facility draws tourists from outside the local area.

Discussion: The origination of people who use a park (residents of the jurisdiction that owns/operates the park vs. residents of other jurisdictions) is an indication of whether a park is regional or not. The exact percentage cannot be specified at this time, although the metro area regional park system has a 40% non-local visitation. Evaluation of this criteria will depend on the current methods used to collect origination data and how representative this is of all the people who use a park.

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 (e.g., a park with a beach, campground and boat launch facilities is more likely to attract a regional clientele than a park with only one of these facilities).

4) Special Features: Unique or unusual geologic features, historically significant sites, zoos, or parks containing characteristics that are of statewide significance.

Discussion: This criteria could have particular importance for a park that is smaller than 100 acres, yet includes a special feature. A park with one or more special features will be likely to draw clientele from a broader area.

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.

Discussion: This criterion provides a measure of reasonable access to outdoor recreational opportunities.

It is important to note that very little is known throughout the state regarding user groups and the scarcity of recreational resources. This information was requested in the survey, however very few parks reported user information. Information about the scarcity of recreational areas is particularly difficult to identify by survey only. A good way to determine scarcity of a natural resource would be to utilize a GIS to visually depict the location of parks. Visits to the parks in question may also be necessary to better make this determination.

The project committee also reviewed the following statements from “*The Regional Recreation Open Space Policy Plan*” of the Metropolitan Council regarding regional parks and trails:

- Regional parks (RP) should contain diverse natural resources... and the ability to provide for a wide range of natural resource related recreational opportunities. Access to water bodies suitable for recreation is particularly important. A regional park should be large enough to accommodate a variety of activities, preserve a pleasant natural aspect and buffer activity areas from each other. Regional parks are 200 to 500 acres. Occasionally, because of the quality of the resource an exception may be made and a RP may be as small as 100 acres.
- Park reserves are expected to provide a diversity of outdoor recreational activities. A reserve is also intended to provide, protect and manage representative areas of the original major landscape types in the metro area. Optimal size exceeds 2,000 acres, while the minimum size is about 1,000 acres.
- Regional trails are intended to provide recreational travel along linear pathways. They are selected to pass through, or provide access to, elements in the regional park system and to intersect with local trail systems.
- Special recreation features (SRF), which are called for in MS 473.121, are defined as regional park system opportunities not generally found in the parks, park reserves or regional trails. SRF often require a unique managing and programming effort on the part of the regional park implementing agency.

In addition to utilizing the five criteria, the project committee also referred to the following legal definition used by the Metropolitan Council to define a regional recreation open space.

“Regional recreation open space” means land and water areas, or interests therein, and facilities determined by the metropolitan council to be of regional importance in providing for a balanced system of public outdoor recreation for the metropolitan area including but not limited to park reserves, major linear parks and trails, large recreation parks, and conservatories, zoos, and other special use facilities. (Minn. Statute 473.121 Subd. 14)

The project committee reviewed each of the parks over 40 acres to determine if the park is a regional park. Some of the parks identified as regional parks are less than 100 acres. This designation is most likely due to a unique natural resource, or an exceptional recreational activity that is specifically offered at that park. In most cases parks over 100 acres that did not ‘qualify’ as a regional park did not do so because of their lack of natural open spaces. Parks containing large areas used for ball fields or other such activity areas that don’t require a natural resource base were generally considered to be large community parks. These parks do not qualify for regional status due to the fact that they do not offer natural resource based outdoor recreation

activities. These sports field based park properties are not included in the Metropolitan Regional Park System either.

Method of contacting people

Once the criteria were determined, letters and surveys were sent out in August 2004 to the selected jurisdictions (see Appendix A – Sample Survey Letter and Sample Survey, also see accompanying CD for mailing list). This list includes non-metro townships and cities with populations of over 1,000 as well as counties outside of the metro area. In September, reminder cards were mailed out to the townships, cities and counties that had not yet responded. In the months of November, December and January counties that had not previously responded received another mailing of the survey accompanied by telephone reminders. Extensive efforts were made to contact counties, which ultimately resulted in a 100 percent response rate. A total of 80 counties, 231 cities and 185 townships were surveyed. In order to ensure that as many surveys as possible could be collected, a project deadline extension was requested. The project was initially scheduled to be completed by December 31, 2004, but the extension allowed this deadline to be moved to January 31, 2005. A complete listing of the townships, cities, and counties surveyed can be found in Appendix B. Table 1 indicates the number of jurisdictions that received the survey as well as the number of those who responded to the survey.

	Total Number of Surveys	Number*	Percent Response
County	80	80	100
City	231	131	57
Township	185	105	57

*Includes areas that do not have any parks

Observations

The project committee reviewed each reported park over 40 acres to determine if the park could be considered a regional park. Many of the jurisdictions reported very small parks however, some of these smaller parks are still important to note because they may have the potential to become regional parks in the future. The complete list of inventory responses is provided in Appendix C. This listing includes all responses, even those from jurisdictions who indicated they had “no parks that qualify”. Additionally, members of the project committee provided information about parks that were not reported. Information about these parks can be found at the bottom of their corresponding park or trail type.

When reviewing the tables and the information about regional parks it should be noted that the data entered is entirely from the jurisdiction that responded unless it is noted otherwise. It should also be mentioned that many counties in the northeastern region of the state contain

significant amounts of state tax forfeited land that is administered by counties. Cass County, for example, contains approximately 250,000 acres of County Administered State land. These acres offer significant recreational opportunities for residents and generally these lands are managed as county forestlands. Unless the county has actually designated a specific area of this land as county parkland, the group determined that the area could not be considered as a regional park.

Regional Parks or Parks with Regional Potential

A complete listing of regional parks can be found in Appendix D – Regional Parks, or Parks with Regional Potential. Generally, parks in this category are over 100 acres. In a few cases the project committee determined that based on the high quality of natural resources or recreational activities an area offered a few parks under 100 acres are listed as regional parks.

Township Maintained Regional Parks

Based on the responses received there is one township park consisting of 440 acres. The property tax levy and user fees from facility usage fund park operations. A summary of township park information can be found in Table 2.

City Maintained Regional Parks

Based on the responses received there are 46 city maintained regional parks located in 27 different cities. Some of the cities included in this list responded to the survey, the project group identified others and provided as much information about each park as possible. Regional city park acreage is 16,368 acres. These parks range in size from 78 to 2,775 acres with most of the reporting parks averaging 355 acres (see Table 2).

The following is a summary of information regarding city parks:

- 15 parks have fishing piers or shore fishing
- 10 parks have a boat launch within their boundary
- 5 parks have swimming pools or beaches
- 26 parks have a picnic shelter or picnicking grounds
- 26 parks have some type of non-motorized trail facility within their boundary
- 4 parks have motorized trails within their boundaries
- 10 parks have camping facilities
- 11 parks have either an interpretive center or area for nature study
- 13 parks have been identified as having special features of some kind

County Maintained Regional Parks

Based on the responses received, there are 68 county maintained parks in 38 different counties. Some of the responses included here are from collected surveys and other information was provided by project group members. Regional county park acreage totaled nearly 31,000 acres. These parks range in size from 35 to 6,103 acres with most of the reporting park acreage averaging 455 acres (see Table 3 for more information).

The following is a summary of information regarding county parks:

- 37 parks have fishing piers or shore fishing
- 29 parks have a boat launch within their boundary
- 18 parks have swimming pools or beaches

- 48 parks have a picnic shelter or picnicking grounds
- 42 parks have some type of non-motorized trail facility within their boundary
- 11 parks have motorized trails within their boundaries
- 33 parks have camping facilities
- 23 parks have either an interpretive center or area for nature study
- 22 parks have been identified as having special features of some kind

Table 2: 2004 Inventory of Township and City Regional Parks or Parks with Regional Potential

Jurisdiction	Data Source ¹	Park Name	Size (acres)	Recreation Facilities ²	Special Features
Townships					
Stanford	Local	Lyndon Cedarglade Township Park	440	P, NMT, N	Yes
Cities					
Austin	Local	JC Hormel Nature Center	497	B, NMT, N	Yes
Cambridge	Local	City Park	165	F, B, P, NMT, MT, C	Yes
Chisholm	Local	Long Year Lake Walking Trail & Park	450	F, B, P, NMT, N	Yes
Cross Lake	Local	Community Center Park	152	P, NMT, N	
Duluth	Local	Bayview Forest Park	353	not provided	
Duluth	Local	Franklin Park	196	not provided	
Duluth	Local	Hartley Park	975	not provided	
Duluth	Local	Hawk	975	not provided	
Duluth	Local	Kitchi Gammi Park	153	not provided	
Duluth	Local	Lester Park	306	not provided	
Duluth	Local	Magney/Snively Park	2,775	not provided	
Duluth	Local	Memorial Forest Park	163	not provided	
Duluth	Local	Oneota Forest Park	966	not provided	
Duluth	Local	Park Point	342	not provided	
Elk River	Local	Woodland Trails	164	NMT	
Fairmont	Local	Cedar Creek Park	260	F, P, NMT, C, N	
Faribault	Local	River Bend Nature Center	661	P, NMT, MT, N	Yes
Fergus Falls	Local	Pebble Lake	152	F, B, P, NMT, MT, C	
Fergus Falls	DNR	Prairie Wetlands	325		
Fertile	DNR	West Mill Recreation Area	640		
Glenwood	Local	Barsness Park	450	F, B, S, P, NMT, C	Yes
Herman	DNR	Niemacki Park	200	B	
Hibbing	DNR	Carey Lake Park	1,140		
Lake City	Local	Hok-Si-La Municipal Park & Campground	252	F, B, S, P, NMT, C, N	Yes
Lancaster	DNR	Wayside Park	280	P, NMT	
Mankato	Local	Land of Memories	125	F, P, NMT, C, N	
Mankato	Local	Rasmussen Woods	152	P, NMT, N	
Mankato	Local	Kiwanis	107	F, B, P, NMT, N	
Moorhead	DNR	M.B. Johnson Park	100		
Morris	Local	Pomme De Terre Park	363	F, S, P, NMT, C	
Perham	Local	Arvig Park	160	P, NMT, C	
Red Wing	DNR	Barn Bluff Park	43		Yes
Redwood Falls	Local	Ramsey Park	220	F, P, NMT, C	Yes
Rochester	Local	Eastwood	188	P, NMT, N	
Rochester	Local	Essex	160	P, NMT	
Rochester	DNR	Foster Arend Park	200	S, P, NMT	
Rochester	Local	Gamehaven Reservoir	230	F, P, NMT	
Rochester	Local	Quarry Hill	302	B, P, NMT, N	Yes
Rochester	Local	Willow Creek Reservoir	195	F, P, NMT	
Sandstone	Local	Robinson	57	F, B, P, NMT, N	Yes
St. Cloud	Local	Neenah Creek Regional	213		
St. Cloud	Local	Plum Creek Regional Park	139		Yes
St. Cloud	Local	Riverside Regional Park	56	F, P	Yes
Stewartville	Local	Bear Cave Park	188	P, NMT	
Wadena	Local	Sunnybrook Park & Campgrounds	78	F, P, NMT, MT, C	Yes
Wells	Local	Thompson Park	100	S, P	

¹ Information was provided by local jurisdiction or by DNR/work group members

² Recreation facilities Key: F = Fishing; B = Boating; S - Swimming; P = Picnicking; NMT = non-motorized trails; MT = Motorized trails; C = Camping; N = Nature study

Table 3: 2004 Inventory of County Regional Parks or those with Regional Potential

Jurisdiction	Data Source ¹	Park Name	Size (acres)	Recreation Facilities ²	Special Features
Counties					
Aitkin	Local	Jacobson Campground & Wayside Rest	762	F, B, P, NMT, MT, C, N	Yes
Aitkin	Local	Snake River Campground	1,753	F, B, P, NMT, MT, C, N	Yes
Aitkin	DNR	Long Lake ELC	760		
Becker	DNR	Chilton County Park	205		
Beltrami	DNR	Three Island Lake County Park	3,000		
Benton	Local	Bend in the River Regional Park	289		P
Blue Earth	Local	Bray Park	98	F, B, S, P, NMT, C, N	Yes
Blue Earth	Local	Daly Park	126	F, B, S, P, NMT, MT, C, N	Yes
Blue Earth	DNR	Rapidan County Park	35		
Brown	Local	Lake Hanska County Park	140	F, B, S, P, NMT, C, N	Yes
Brown	Local	Mound Creek County Park	318	F, B, S, P, NMT	Yes
Carlton	DNR	Bear Lake Park	128		
Cass	DNR	Deep Portage ELC	6,103		
Chisago	Local	Dennis Frandsen Park	117	F, P, NMT, N	
Chisago	Local	Fish Lake Park	150	F, B, S, P, NMT, N	
Clearwater	Local	Long Lake Park	53	F, B, S, P, NMT, C	Yes
Crow Wing	DNR	Paul Bunyan Arboretum	200		N
Douglas	Local	Kensington Runestone Park	193		P, NMT, N
Freeborn	Local	Whites Woods Park	176		P, NMT, MT, N
Grant	Local	Pine Ridge Park	196		F, P
Isanti	Local	Becklin Homestead Park/WMA	140		F
Isanti	Local	Springvale	205		F, NMT
Itasca	Local	Bass Lake County Park	720	F, B, S, P, NMT, MT, C	
Jackson	Local	Loon Lake Parks	86	F, B, S, P, NMT, C, N	Yes
Kandiyohi	DNR	Prairie Woods ELC	400		
Lac qui Parle	Local	Lac qui Parle County Park	226		NMT
Le Sueur	Local	Lake Washington Park	162	F, P, NMT, MT, C, N	Yes
Le Sueur	Local	Ney Environmental Learning Center	340		P, NMT, MT, C, N
Lincoln	Local	Hole-in-the-Mountain	800		
Lincoln	Local	Norwegian Creek	145		
Lincoln	Local	Picnic Point	140		
Lyon	Local	Garvin Park	700		P, NMT, MT, C, N
Marshall	Local	Marshall County Park (Florian Park)	180		F, B, S, P, C
McLeod	Local	Lake Marion Regional	86		F, B, S, P, NMT
McLeod	Local	Pioopenburg Regional	156		F, B, S, P, NMT, C
McLeod	Local	Stalhs Lake Park	127		B, S, P, NMT
Meeker	Local	Darwin-Dassel Park	160		P, NMT, C
Meeker/Stearns	Local	Lake Koronis Regional Park	62		S, P, NMT, C
Morrison	Local	Belle Prairie	132		F, B, P, NMT
Murray	Local	Lake Shetek County Park	1,109		
Nicollet	Local	Seven Mile Creek Park	628		F, B, P, NMT, N
Olmsted	Local	Chester Woods Park	1380		F, B, S, P, NMT, C, N
Olmsted	Local	Oxbow Park	624		F, P, NMT, C, N
Redwood	Local	Plum Creek Park	210		
Renville	Local	Beaver Falls Park	302		P, C
Renville	Local	Mack Lake & Anderson Lake Parks	372		F, P, C
Renville	Local	Skalbekken Park	403		F, P, NMT, C
Renville	Local	Vicksburg	241		F, B, P, MT, C
Rice	Local	Cannon River Wilderness Area	850		B, P, NMT, C, N
Sherburne	Local	Grams Regional Park	108		
Sherburne	Local	Oak Savanna Land Preserve	140		
Sibley	Local	High Island Creek Park	220		F, P, C
Sibley	Local	Rush River Park	285		F, P, NMT, C
Sibley	DNR	High Island Park	225		P, NMT, C
Sibley	DNR	Rush River County	291		
Stearns	Local	Mississippi River County Park	230		F, NMT, P, B, C

Stearns	Local	Quarry Park & Nature Preserve	643	F, P, MT, S	Yes
Stearns	Local	Warner Lake County Park	241	F, B, S, C	
Stearns/Meeker	Local	Lake Koronis Regional Park	62	F, B, S, C	
Wadena	Local	Anderson's Crossing	113	B, P, C, N, NMT	
Wadena	Local	Old Wadena	229	B, P, NMT, C, N	
Waseca	Local	Courthouse Park	175	P, NMT, MT, C, N	Yes

Table 3: 2004 Inventory of Regional Parks or those with Regional Potential - *continued*

Jurisdiction	Data Source ¹	Park Name	Size (acres)	Recreation Facilities ²	Special Features
Wright	Local	Beebe Lake Regional Park	67	F, S, P, NMT	
Wright	Local	Clearwater/Pleasant Regional Park	210	F, B, S, P, NMT	
Wright	Local	Collinwood Regional Park	308	F, B, S, P, NMT, C	
Wright	Local	Harry Larson Park	170	F, B, P, NMT, N	
Wright	Local	Montissippi Regional Park	170	F, B, P, NMT	
Wright	Local	Robert Ney Regional Park	600	F, P, NMT, N	Yes
Wright	Local	Stanley Eddy Park Reserve	658	B, P, NMT, C	

¹ Information was provided by local jurisdiction or by DNR/work group members

² Recreation facilities Key: F = Fishing; B = Boating; S = Swimming; P = Picnicking; NMT = non-motorized trails; MT = Motorized trails; C = Camping; N = Nature study

Non-Qualifying Parks

The project committee received many responses from jurisdictions reporting parks that are not thought to be large enough to be considered as a regional park. However, the committee felt that it would be important to recognize these parks and the opportunities they offer to residents.

While the parks found in Appendix F are not regional parks now, they may have the potential to be considered a regional park in the future. Most of the parks in this category contain anywhere from 40 to 100 acres. There are a few parks on this list that are over 100 acres. The reason the project committee did not feel that these currently were regional parks is based on the information the jurisdiction reported indicating the park didn't currently meet the criteria used for this survey.

In this category there is one township park, 38 city parks in 27 cities, and 45 county maintained parks in 24 different counties. The total acreages of these large recreation areas are as follows:

- Township: 40 acres
- City: 2,512 acres
- County: 2,678 acres

For a summary of the facilities and recreational opportunities these non-qualifying parks provide please refer to Table 4 (also refer to Appendix F to see full survey responses).

The following is a summary of information regarding non-qualifying city parks:

- 16 parks have fishing piers or shore fishing
- 10 parks have a boat launch within their boundary
- 23 parks have swimming pools or beaches
- 20 parks have a picnic shelter or picnicking grounds
- 11 parks have some type of non-motorized trail facility within their boundary
- 8 parks have motorized trails within their boundaries
- 7 parks have camping facilities
- 17 parks have either an interpretive center or area for nature study
- 11 parks have been identified as having special features of some kind

The following is a summary of information regarding non-qualifying county parks:

- 23 parks have fishing piers or shore fishing

- 13 parks have a boat launch within their boundary
- 15 parks have swimming pools or beaches
- 25 parks have a picnic shelter or picnicking grounds
- 19 parks have some type of non-motorized trail facility within their boundary
- 6 parks have motorized trails within their boundaries
- 11 parks have camping facilities
- 11 parks have either an interpretive center or area for nature study
- 12 parks have been identified as having special features of some kind

Table 4: 2004 of Non-Qualifying Parks				
Jurisdiction	Park Name	Size (acres)	Recreation Facilities¹	Special Features
Township				
Livonia	Sugarbush Park Reserve	40		
City				
Austin	Eastside Lake	40	F, S, P, N	
Brainerd	Lum Park	55	F, B, S, P, MT, N	
Breckenridge	Welles Memorial Park	37	F, S, P, MT, C	
Chatfield	Mill Creek Park	35	S, P, N	Yes
Cohasset	Portage Park	70	F, S, P, NMT, MT, N	
Cohasset	Tioga	40	B, S, NMT	
Cross Lake	Nature Trails	30	NMT	
Elk River	Top of the World	80	N	
Elk River	Hillside	80	NMT	
Elk River	Great Northern Trail	73	P, N	
Faribault	N. Alexander Park	54	F, B, S	
Fergus Falls	Kennedy Park	52	B	
Fergus Falls	DeLagoon Recreation Area	192		
Gaylord	Gaylord City Park	55	F, B, P, C	
Grand Marais	Grand Marais RV Park, Camp, Rec.	60	F, B, S, NMT, MT, C, N	Yes
Grand Rapids	American Legion Memorial Park	60	NMT, N	
Janesville	Lakeview Park	40	F, S, P	
Le Sueur	River	30	F, S, NMT	
Lester Prairie	Sunrise Park	44	P	
Mankato	Sibley	73	B, S, P, C, N	
Mankato	Hiniker Pond	54	S, P	
Perham	Paul Miller Park	80	F, B, S, N	
Rochester	Zumbro South	166	P	
Rushford	Magelssen Bluff Park	30	S, P, NMT, N	Yes
Sartell	Northside Park	36	S, C, N	
St. Cloud	Beaver Island Park/Trail	41	F, S, P, N	Yes
St. Cloud	Heritage Regional Park	93	NMT, N	Yes
St. Cloud	Municipal Athletic Complex/VA golf	45		
St. Cloud	Pine View Regional Park	35	F, P	Yes
St. Cloud	Whitney Memorial Regional Park	142	F, P	Yes
St. Cloud	Wilson Regional Park	30	F, S, P	Yes
Staples	Dower Lake Recreation Area	55	F, B, S, MT	Yes
Stewartville	Bear Cave Park	188	P	
Wadena	Blacks Grove Park	66	S, P, NMT, C	
Wadena	Sunnybrook Park & Campgrounds	78	S, P, NMT, MT, C, N	Yes
Wells	Half Moon	50	S, P	
Worthington	Olson Park & Campground	58	F, B, S, P, MT, N	
Zumbrota	Covered Bridge Park	65	S, MT, N	Yes
County				
Becker	Dunton Locks County Park	54	S, MT, N	Yes
Benton	Benton Beach Campground	30	F, B, P, MT	
Carlton	Bear Lake Park	85	F, B, P	
Chisago	Ki Chi Saga Park	98	S, P, N	Yes

Cottonwood	Talcot Lake County Park	40	F, B, S, MT	
Cottonwood	Pats Grove	80		
Freeborn	Arrowhead Park	60	F, S	
Isanti	Wayside Prairie	80	S, NMT, N	
Isanti	Vegsund Family Park	80	NMT, N	Yes
Isanti	Dalbo Memorial Forest	40	P	Yes

Table 4: 2004 Inventory of Non-Qualifying Parks (Continued)				
Jurisdiction	Park Name	Size (acres)	Recreation Facilities¹	Special Features
County (Cont)				
Le Sueur	Richter Woods Park	80	S, NMT, C, N	Yes
Le Sueur	Bradshaw Woods	54	NMT, N	Yes
Le Sueur	Kasota River Access	55	F, S, NMT	Yes
Le Sueur	Henderson Station River Access	55	F, S, P, NMT	Yes
Marshall	Marshall County Park (Florian Park)	180	F, B, S, P, NMT, MT	
Martin	Cedar-Hanson Park	80	F, S	
Martin	Bright Lake Park	60		
Martin	Timberlane Park	50	F	
Meeker	Woodland Park	80	P, NMT, N	
Nobles	Maka-Oieu County Park	46	F, B, S, P, MT, C	
Pennington	Oakland Park	12	F, S	
Red Lake	Huot Park	42	F, S, P, NMT	Yes
Rock	Schoeneman Park	34	F, P	
Sibley	Clear Lake County Park	42	F, P, C	
Swift	Appleton Area Recreation Park	102	F, NMT, MT	
Todd	Lake Osakis	12	S, P	
Wadena	Cottingham Park	56	B, P, C	
Wadena	Little White Dog	65	B, C	
Waseca	Goose Lake Park	51	P, NMT	
Waseca	Eustice Park	50	P, NMT	
Waseca	Blowers Park	50	P, NMT	Yes
Watonwan	Eagle's Nest Park	80	NMT, C, N	
Winona	Apple Blossom Overlook Park	55	P, NMT, N	Yes
Winona	Farmer's Community Park "The Arches"	47	F, P	Yes
Wright	William Anderson County Park	90	F, B, P	
Wright	Humphrey - Arends County Park	80	F, B, C	
Wright	Wildlife County Park	80	F, P, C	
Wright	Marcus Zumbrennen County Park	80	B, P, NMT, C, N	
Wright	Otsego Regional Park	70	F, P, NMT, N	
Wright	Carl Johnson County Park	41	B, P, NMT, C	
Wright	Albright's Mill County Park	40	F, P, NMT	
Wright	Schroeder Regional Park	40	F, B, S, C	
Wright	Mud Lake County Park	40	F, B, P	
Yellow Medicine	Oaars Park	32	C	

¹Recreation facilities Key: F = Fishing; B = Boating; S = Swimming; P = Picnicking; NMT = non-motorized trails; MT = Motorized trails; C = Camping; N = Nature study

Regional Trails, or Trails with Regional Potential

The project committee also reviewed the category of “Trails Outside of Parks”. There were several jurisdictions that reported trails they do not maintain, state trails, or trails that were very small. These responses are not included in this document. For a full listing of information please refer to Appendix E – *2004 Inventory of Regional Trails, or Trails with Regional Potential*. The following information provides a summary of regional trails (see also Table 5).

Regional Township Trails

Based on the information received there are no regional township trails.

Regional City Trails

There are eight cities that either reported trails, or that the project group contributed information about. One of these city trails is a canoe route and the remaining trails are for walking, biking and in-line skating. Some of the city trails appear to be sections of larger trails, but most are located only within the reporting jurisdiction. There were four cities that reported receiving funding in the form of donations or grants to maintain or create the trail (see Table 5).

Regional County Trails

Within counties there were 22 reported county maintained trails located outside of parks. Three of these trails are canoe routes, five are known to be utilized for ATV or snowmobiling activities, and the remainder appear to be paved to allow for activities such as biking, walking and in-line skating.

Only one of the trails is reported to have an entry or user fee that funds the trail. Several others reported receiving grants or donations to fund their trails. The information that jurisdictions reported regarding trails outside of parks is not complete enough to determine how they are funded (see Table 5).

Table 5: 2004 Inventory of Regional Trails or those with Regional Potential

Jurisdiction	Trail Name	Miles	Type	Trail Use
City Trails				
City of New Ulm*	name unknown	6	Paved	Bike/walk/in-line skating/cross-county skiing
Grand Rapids/ St. Louis County Regional Rail Authority	Mesabi	132	Unknown	Bike/walk/in-line skating/snowmobile in designated sections
Rochester	Rochester Trail System	7	Paved	bike/walk/in-line skating
Rochester	Zumbro N. & Kings Run	8	Unknown	
St. Cloud/Stearns County	Beaver Island	11	Paved	bike/walk/in-line skating
Wadena	B.N. Trail	5	Unknown	
Waseca	Janesville Trail	3	Unknown	
County Trails				
Aitkin, Carlton, Cass*	North Soo Line	148	Unknown	ATV, Snowmobiling
Aitkin/Morrison/Pine/Carlton/Mille Lacs*	South Soo Line	114	Mostly unpaved	ATV, Snowmobiling, Biking (10-miles)
Aitkin	Rabey Line	24	Unknown	ATV
Blue Earth	Red Jacket Trail	6	Paved	bike/walk/in-line skating/cross-county skiing
Blue Earth	S. Route Trail	8	Paved	bike/walk/in-line skating
Chisago	Sunrise Prairie Trail	26	Paved/Unpaved	bike/walk/in-line skating. Un-paved – snowmobiling & horseback riding
Beltrami	Soo Line Grade	16	Unknown	
Morrison/Aitkin/Pine/Carlton/Mille Lacs*	South Soo Line Trail	30	Unknown	
Rock	Blue Mound Trail	5	Paved	bike/walk/in-line skating
Stearns	Lake Wobegon Trail	49	Paved	bike/walk/in-line skating
Stearns/City of St. Cloud	Beaver Island	3	Unknown	
Watsonwan	Hammond Highway	13	Unknown	
Goodhue County	Cannon Valley Trail	20	Paved	Bike/walk/in-line skating/skateboarding/cross-county skiing
Wabasha County*	Great River Ridge Trail	15	Paved/Unpaved	Bike/walk/in-line skating
Faribault County*	Unity Trail	5	Paved	Bike/walk/in-line skating/cross-county skiing
Renville County*	Fair Ridge Trail	8	Paved	Bike/walk/in-line skating/cross-county skiing
Clay/Norman/Polk*	Agassiz Trail	32	Mostly Unpaved	ATV, Snowmobiling, Biking, Horseback Riding
Swift*	Appleton Trail	?	Unknown	
USDA Forest Service	Mi-Ge-Zi Trail	8	Paved	Bike/walk/in-line skating
Water (canoe) Trails				
Breckenridge	Red River Canoe Trail	250	Canoe	Canoe
Pennington	Red Lake River Canoe Trail	40	Canoe	
Stearns	Sauk River Canoe Route	90	Canoe	Canoe
Blue Earth County	Blue Earth River Env. Corridor	?	Canoe	Canoe

Note:
*Indicates information from source other than survey.

Financial

Several reporting jurisdictions indicated their methods of funding, but often this survey category was left unanswered. Approximately 35 parks reported receiving grant funding. There were also several parks that reported receiving funding from local organizations or other similar groups. The project committee noted that few jurisdictions reported they collect any fees for park use. Fees are one of the main ways that other user information can be determined. Parks that did collect fees for campgrounds, trail use, or picnic shelter use were better able to report what their annual user counts were. Park financial information can be found in each of the appendices. A summary of this funding information can be found in Table 6.

Table 6. Type of Park Funding

Type of Funding	Township	City	County
User Fee	1	13	36
Bonding	0	1	17
Grants	0	15	35
Other	0	10	7

Note: These numbers reflect what was reported on surveys.

Visitor Information

Not enough information was reported about visitor information to provide any conclusive data. For a complete listing of parks that did provide visitor information refer to Appendix C – Complete List of Responses.

Summary

The purpose of this project was to inventory jurisdictions in non-metro areas of the state to get a better idea about what kind of recreational opportunities are available to residents in greater Minnesota and to identify potential regional parks in those areas. A comprehensive list of information about the identified regional parks can be found in Appendix D. This assessment of parks in greater Minnesota is based only on the responses that were received from the survey recipients although in some instances the project group was able to provide additional information about certain parks. As a result of this survey, several parks that were previously unknown to the DNR were identified. The DNR was aware of about 50 regional parks prior to this survey and after the data was reviewed, an additional 40 to 50 parks were identified as regional, or potentially regional parks. A database of park information has been compiled and a listing of city, township and county park contacts has been completed using information taken from the surveys.

Possibilities for Future Steps

After reviewing the survey responses the project group considered what information would be useful in the future in order to expand on the information that was gathered for the park inventory database. Some possibilities for future identification of regional parks in greater Minnesota are discussed below.

Now that the parks have been identified the database should to be kept up to date and the responses kept consistent. A possible way to keep this data current may be to send this inventory survey out when the State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) survey goes out.

Additional feed back from counties and cities could potentially be sought at annual or mid-year conferences.

Spatial data could be developed in the future to assist in the analysis of natural resource scarcity. Also, in order to truly determine if park users are traveling from outside of their jurisdictions to use park facilities, consistent user information may need to be gathered. Many of these regional parks appear to be developing as a response to being near a population center, or by being in close proximity to a special natural resource. It will be important to identify which areas of the state are lacking in parkland in relation to Federal and State projected growth rates. Utilization of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) would be a key component of this analysis, allowing for a more comprehensive outdoor recreational opportunity analysis. GIS could also be useful to assist in making determinations about natural resource scarcity and to visually depict regional significance and general scarcity of the recreational opportunity within its boundaries.

Additional research on recreational areas may be needed, especially when parks are borderline in terms of size or facilities. This may require field checks of the parks or possibly follow-up interviews with local park officials.

The survey revealed that many jurisdictions are lacking in visitor origination data. It is clear that more data is necessary for further analysis of a park's regional status. In order to do this, additional work would need to be done to assist parks in determining if they serve a significant percentage of people who reside outside of the park agency's jurisdiction. There are many different ways that jurisdictions could keep track of their visitors. However, if proper data was collected it would be expensive and a basic model for keeping track of visitors may need to be developed. In many cases, the resources needed to gather such information on a regular basis is simply not available.

Another potential step in the identification and development of regional parks could be to provide greater encouragement, or assistance to interested groups for the formation of regional park systems. There are currently a few of these systems existing in the state that could be used as guides or examples. Some of the systems currently developing in the state are the:

- Central Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Coordination Board – consisting of Stearns, Benton and Sherburne Counties
- Joint County Planning Commission – consisting of Douglas, Pope, Stevens, Grant, and Todd Counties
- Upper Minnesota River Valley Rural Development Commission – involved with trail planning in the upper Minnesota River valley
- Duluth Area Park Commission
- Minnesota Parks and Recreation Association – working on trail linkages

Note: A mailing list for the parks survey (townships, cities, and counties) can be found on the CD submitted to the LCMR. This list will be helpful for future reference when seeking out park information.