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## Construction begins at Minnesota's newest state park

*(Released August 3, 2012)*

A 70-site campground, tree houses, and an "adventure trail" with a ropes course are part of the first phase of construction that started Aug. 3 at Lake Vermilion State Park near Ely in northeastern Minnesota, the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) announced. It's the first major state park being built in Minnesota in more than 30 years.

DNR Commissioner Tom Landwehr and Parks and Trails Division Director Courtland Nelson participated in a ceremonial groundbreaking of the "next generation" state park. They were joined by elected officials and local and regional partners who have contributed ideas and support for the park.

Boat docks, fishing platforms, picnic shelters, roads, parking areas and a paved bike route that will connect to the Mesabi Trail will be among the features developed in the next two years. Plans also call for four camper cabins to be built as early as this fall in the adjacent Soudan Underground Mine State Park.

Future phases of construction, pending funding, will include a visitor center, trail system and group camp, as well as hike-in and boat-in campsites. A Heritage Center, featuring the history of mining in the area, is planned at Soudan Underground Mine State Park.



In 2008, the Minnesota Legislature authorized Lake Vermilion State Park and set aside \$20 million in bonding to purchase, plan and develop it. The purchase agreement for the 3,000-acre property was signed in May 2010, and a master plan for the park was developed with much public input.

Some funding for the new park facilities will come from the Parks and Trails Fund, created after voters approved the Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment in November 2008. The Parks and Trails Fund receives 14.25 percent of the sales tax revenue and may only be spent to support parks and trails of regional or statewide significance.

Additional funding sources will include the Legislative–Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources (LCCMR), the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund and the State Park Road Account or State Highway funding. Dedicated snowmobile funding will also be used to establish and maintain the current

snowmobile trail through the park.

The park has been open since 2010 for recreation opportunities such as hiking, snowshoeing, snowmobiling and geocaching. Interpretive staff at Soudan Underground Mine State Park have offered occasional programs at Lake Vermilion State Park, including a BioBlitz that involved citizens in the identification of plants, animals and insects at the park.

For more information about the park, or to see a copy of the master plan, visit **DNR website** or call the DNR Information Center, 651-296-6157  or toll-free 888-646-6367  between 8 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday.