

# MINNESOTA STATEWIDE COMPREHENSIVE OUTDOOR RECREATION PLAN, 2020-2024

November 2019



A report submitted in fulfillment of requirements for Minnesota's continued eligibility for the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF).





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# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Fall landscape photo of Maplewood State Park on page 32 is by Don Del Greco.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Minnesota State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan 2020-2024 (SCORP) provides guidance and direction to the state’s outdoor recreation providers for their work in protecting, maintaining and enhancing outdoor recreation opportunities for the state’s residents and visitors. This SCORP is intended to meet the requirements for continued eligibility to receive matching Land and Water Conservation Funds.

Minnesota has a long history of preserving lands for public use and recreation, from the efforts to preserve the lands around Minnehaha Falls beginning in 1885 (eventually becoming a Minneapolis city park) and the establishment of Itasca State Park in 1891, one of the earliest state parks in the nation.

Today, Minnesota enjoys a system of outdoor recreation that provides residents and visitors opportunities for a wide array of experiences across the state. A host of public agencies provides these opportunities, including the federal and state governments, regional organizations, counties and municipalities. Non-profit organizations and the private sector also play an important role in land preservation and recreation in Minnesota. Together, these groups provide a diverse suite of outdoor recreation opportunities: hiking, biking, camping, picnicking, swimming, boating, wildlife watching, horseback riding, cross-country skiing, rock climbing, fishing, hunting, snowmobiling, ATV riding, team sports and more.

The SCORP 2020-2024 continues to build on the previous work set out in the *Parks and Trails Legacy Plan* (2011) and Minnesota’s previous State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan 2014-2018. The SCORP 2020-2024 is structured around **four Strategic Directions**, with strategies that provide guidance for outdoor recreation providers over the next five years. This SCORP process used Information from public engagement efforts and a survey of local recreation providers to develop, refine and prioritize the strategies within each Strategic Direction.

### SCORP 2020-2024 Strategic Directions

- *Connect People and the Outdoors*
- *Acquire Land, Create Opportunities*
- *Take Care of What We Have*
- *Coordinate Among Partners*

The plan also identifies several current and future trends that are expected to continue to affect outdoor recreation in Minnesota: issues around public health; addressing diversity, equity and inclusion challenges; demographic changes in Minnesota’s population; climate change impacts; and accessibility.

Taken together, these trends and the strategies within the four Strategic Directions represent both challenges and opportunities for Minnesota’s outdoor recreation providers for the next five years. The intention is that SCORP 2020-2024 will aid these agencies and organizations as they plan for, and invest in, facilities and programs to meet the outdoor recreation interests of Minnesota’s residents and visitors.



# INTRODUCTION

## FRAMEWORK FOR THE 2020 – 2024 STATE COMPREHENSIVE OUTDOOR RECREATION PLAN

Minnesota’s State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan 2020-2024 (SCORP) is based on a consistent framework to address the state’s outdoor recreation needs. This plan continues the direction set out in the *Parks and Trails Legacy Plan* and Minnesota’s previous SCORP (2014-2018).

The parks and trails “legacy” planning process was an effort initiated by the Minnesota State Legislature to provide guidance for how funds generated by the newly created Parks and Trails Legacy Fund should be used. As with the previous SCORP, the planning process for the SCORP 2020-2024 utilized additional public engagement to build on the foundation laid out in the *Parks and Trails Legacy Plan* and to identify strategies to guide the next five years of outdoor recreation efforts in Minnesota. The goals and strategies in the SCORP 2020-2024 continue to reinforce the vision and four strategic directions that comprise the *Parks and Trails Legacy Plan*.

The SCORP 2020-2024 gives outdoor recreation decision-makers and managers a set of priorities and suggested actions to guide them as they make decisions about outdoor recreation.

The National Park Service (NPS) requires completion of the SCORP to maintain Minnesota’s eligibility to participate in the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund (also known as LWCF, or “LAWCON”).

## BACKGROUND

In 2018, Minnesota marked the tenth anniversary of the passage of the Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment to enhance funding for the protection of natural resources, outdoor recreation, the arts and cultural heritage. In 2008, voters approved raising the state sales tax by 3/8 of 1 percent (from 6.5 percent to 6.875 percent) for 25 years, to contribute to a dedicated fund. Often called the Legacy Fund, this dedicated fund is divided into four parts that receive the proceeds from the sales tax increase, with 33% of the revenue going to the Outdoor Heritage Fund, 33% of the revenue going to the Clean Water Fund, 19.75% to the Arts and Culture Fund, and 14.25% to the Parks and Trails Fund.

Over these first ten years, the Parks and Trails Fund has collected approximately \$360 million in revenue. The Parks and Trails Fund is distributed among three implementing agencies: Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Metropolitan Council (Met Council), and Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission (GMRPTC). These three agencies meet regularly with the Parks and Trails Legacy Advisory Committee (PTLAC). The PTLAC was established to provide recommendations to enhance

### Parks and Trails Legacy Plan Vision Statement

*“A Parks and Trails Vision for Minnesotans: In 2035, our world-class parks and trails connect everyone to the outdoors. They create experiences that inspire a legacy of stewardship for the natural world and they provide fun outdoor recreational opportunities that strengthen friendships, families, health, and spirit, now and into the future. Minnesotans experience the full range of benefits that outdoor recreation provides, reinforcing our identity as an outdoor culture.”*

promotion, coordination, and accountability throughout the implementation of the 25-year Legacy Plan. This advisory committee is composed of private citizens appointed by the three implementing agencies involved with the distribution of Parks and Trails Legacy Funds (DNR, Met Council and GMRPTC).

To recognize the first ten-year anniversary of this 25-year constitutional amendment, the implementing agencies held a series of nine regional public events in 2018 to celebrate, educate and listen as citizens shared their perspectives on, and aspirations for, Minnesota’s comprehensive system of state and regional parks and trails. A team of PTLAC members, with leadership and staff from the Legacy agencies, planned and executed the events with volunteer assistance from a host of parks and trails friends from across the state. Over 12,500 Minnesotans participated in these events. An overview of the event locations is provided in **Public Engagement** and in **Appendix C**.

## BUILDING ON THE PARKS AND TRAILS LEGACY PLAN AND SCORP 2014-2018

With the passing of the Clean Water, Land, and Legacy Amendment, the Minnesota State Legislature mandated that the DNR commissioner develop a plan to guide the use of the Parks and Trails Fund and other traditional sources of funding. In response to this new opportunity and legislative direction, DNR developed a collaborative planning process that relied heavily on public involvement to develop and finalize the *Parks and Trails Legacy Plan*.

The *Parks and Trails Legacy Plan* was organized around four Strategic Directions that provide a framework for the strategies and actions identified in the plan. The four Strategic Directions are:

- **Connect People and the Outdoors:** develop Minnesota’s stewards of tomorrow through efforts to increase life-long participation in outdoor recreation and appreciation for our natural heritage.
- **Acquire Land, Create Opportunities:** expand and create new park and trail opportunities to satisfy current customers as well as to reach out to new ones.
- **Take Care of What We Have:** provide safe, high-quality park and trail experiences by regular re-investment in park and trail infrastructure, and natural resource management.
- **Coordinate Among Partners:** enhance coordination across the large and complex network of public, private and non-profit partners that support Minnesota’s parks and trails to ensure seamless, enjoyable park and trail experiences for Minnesotans.

The *Parks and Trails Legacy Plan* was used as the foundation for the previous SCORP, and we have retained the structure around four Strategic Direction’s structure in SCORP 2020-2024. Although the scope of the *Parks and Trails Legacy Plan* was focused primarily on parks and trails of state and regional significance, the issues and concerns raised also relate to local parks and trails and other outdoor recreation facilities and lands.

Some recreation uses and facilities, such as athletic fields and playgrounds, are important elements for local park systems but are not as common in regional or state parks. To make sure that a



broad range of recreational uses and demands are reflected in the SCORP, additional information from local park providers was sought to complement the more regional and state-focused perspectives in the *Parks and Trails Legacy Plan*.

Several sources of information were used during the planning process to evaluate the directions set out in the previous SCORP, and to determine the strategies and priorities to include in the SCORP 2020-2024.

Among the information sources used during this planning process were:

- *Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Strategic Plan* – prepared for the GMRPTC and last updated in 2015.
- Minnesota Outdoor Recreation Household Survey – conducted by the DNR in 2017.
- Local Outdoor Recreation Provider Survey – conducted by the DNR in 2019.
- Parks and Trails Legacy 10-Year Celebration Events – held throughout Minnesota in 2018.
- Parks and Trails Legacy Grant Program Requests – review of ongoing local provider grant program requests.
- Research studies – relating to recreational trends, impacts of climate change on recreation and natural lands, etc.

Several of these sources are further described in **Public Engagement** and in the **Appendices**.

## PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

An important part of developing Minnesota’s SCORP 2020-2024 is public and stakeholder input. To better understand patterns and priorities for outdoor recreation in Minnesota, several efforts were used to gather information and feedback from outdoor recreation providers and from the public.

### RESIDENTS AND USERS

#### *MINNESOTA OUTDOOR RECREATION HOUSEHOLD SURVEY 2017*

In 2017, the Minnesota DNR updated a statewide outdoor recreation household survey that had previously been conducted in 2004. The survey invited a random sample of 8,000 Minnesotans to share about their participation in outdoor activities, what motivates them to get outdoors, factors that limit participation, and preferences for communication. A total of 1,987 Minnesotans shared responses online, over the phone, and via paper surveys.

Key findings from the survey included positive news that outdoor activities are an increasingly important part of most Minnesotan’s lives. In 2004, data suggested that outdoor recreation participation was declining, causing concern for public agencies charged with providing outdoor recreation. Fortunately, the 2017 survey results indicate that from 2004 to 2017, the percentage of Minnesotans who reported that outdoor activities are very important increased from 57 to 70 percent. And, most Minnesotans reported that they participate in outdoor activities frequently: nearly two-thirds of Minnesotans reported recreating, on average, more than twice per week over the past year.

Findings also revealed that “Minnesotans see the outdoors as a place to rest and relax, connect with family and friends, and improve their health.” Favorite activities were broken up into seasonal categories, with activities such as “relaxing in the outdoors,” “walking or hiking,” “relaxing by the water,” and “picnicking outdoors” identified as highly popular year-round and three-season activities. In winter, top activities were “sledding and snow tubing,” and “ice fishing.” These findings suggest a



number of interesting possibilities: that Minnesotans prefer activities that require less equipment or advanced skills, and/or that they have not had the opportunity to develop interests and skills to participate in other activities. This is an area for additional exploration.

In terms of barriers to getting outdoors, findings were consistent with past data suggesting that pests, time, and convenience were primary reasons people are not spending more time outdoors. More information about this survey and its findings are available in **Appendix A** and at [www.mndnr.gov](http://www.mndnr.gov).

#### *PARKS AND TRAILS LEGACY 10-YEAR ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION EVENTS*

In 2018, Minnesota’s Parks and Trails Legacy Fund marked its tenth anniversary. The PTLAC hosted a series of events statewide to:

- Celebrate the anniversary
- Listen to the public about their “Legacy stories” and ideas for the future
- Educate the public about what the Parks and Trails Legacy Fund is and why it’s important

Staff representing the ten metropolitan regional park agencies, the Metropolitan Council, the Minnesota DNR, and the GMRPTC gathered ideas from the public at nine regional events – including the Minnesota State Fair. All told, 12,500 Minnesotans were engaged in events designed to learn what people know about the Legacy Amendment and what they would like to see in the future.

Staff and consultants analyzed feedback received at regional events and completed a report that presented key findings and recommended next steps. Major *priorities of interest* identified by attendees included:

- Acquire land for parks, trails, and conservation
- Maintain and improve natural resources
- Maintain parks and trails facilities
- Provide more programming and events
- Provide more and improved features (e.g., equipment and accessible infrastructure)
- Create greater awareness and marketing of parks, trails, and programming



Overall *learnings and recommendations* from these public engagement activities were as follows:

- Many people take great pride in Minnesota’s quality parks, trails, and natural resources.
- Minnesotans place high value on taking care of facilities and preserving the natural resources already found within existing parks and trails.
- Many Minnesotans see the health and wellness benefits offered by nearby parks and trails as part of their daily lives.
- Parks and trails must become more accessible and welcoming to people of varying abilities.
- More public awareness of these outdoor recreation resources, and marketing of specific parks and trails, is necessary.
- Older participants are concerned about preserving natural resources for younger generations and about teaching them about nature and outdoor activities.

More information about the celebration events can be found in **Appendix C**.

## OUTDOOR RECREATION PROVIDERS

### LOCAL RECREATION PROVIDER SURVEY

While Parks and Trails Legacy partners represent a large number of outdoor recreation systems statewide, they do not administer local systems. In order to ensure Minnesota’s SCORP is effectively comprehensive in its scope, a local recreation provider questionnaire was distributed to city and county recreation departments. The responses received from 56 entities, 22 cities and 34 counties, were analyzed to help inform this SCORP.

The most relevant feedback received from the responses is as follows:

- The large majority of providers reported increased visitation to their parks and facilities in the past five years (77%).
- Amongst local providers, there is not consistent direction around acquiring land for the next five years. However, some common needs identified were trail development (predominantly non-motorized), open space (e.g., athletic fields), and expanded parking and dog parks.
- Lack of funding, lack of capacity to manage more land, and a sense that their system is already developed were the main reasons some departments were not planning to acquire new land.
- Most respondents plan to develop new infrastructure in the next five years. Priorities for new development are trails, playgrounds (including nature play), athletic fields, and trailhead amenities (e.g., restrooms).
- Respondents ranked natural resource management-related activities as the highest priority for the next five years.
- Local providers are taking actions to respond to climate change impacts, such as relocating or rerouting trails to avoid flooding, making energy-efficiency improvements, and modifying how they provide winter activities.
- Other priorities local providers would like to see addressed in the SCORP include:
  - o Focusing on trails
  - o Funding to take care of what we have
  - o Health connections of recreation, such as fitness programs
  - o Inclusion and diversity efforts
  - o Flexibility that allows for different needs and interests across the state



More information about the local recreation providers survey can be found in **Appendix B**.

## SCORP STEERING COMMITTEE

### PURPOSE AND MEMBERSHIP

The Minnesota DNR convened a Steering Committee to help guide the development of the SCORP 2020-2024. The twelve members of the committee were selected to represent a broad array of interests in outdoor recreation in Minnesota. The Steering Committee included local and regional park agency staff, members of outdoor recreation advocacy groups, and community leaders involved with health, youth, and accessibility issues. The Steering Committee met several times with the DNR Planning Team during the SCORP planning process.

### ROLE AND TASKS

The Steering Committee played several important roles during the planning process:

- Ensuring that the diverse perspectives on outdoor recreation are represented in the plan
- Reviewing information and data to be included in the plan, and suggesting additional information sources
- Reviewing the draft plan and providing feedback on its structure and content

An important task for the Steering Committee was to review the strategies to be included in the plan. This involved recommending revisions to existing strategies and the development of new strategies to address emerging issues. The Steering Committee provided recommendations for prioritizing the strategies to be included in each of the four Strategic Directions in the SCORP.



## OVERVIEW OF MINNESOTA'S OUTDOOR RECREATION SYSTEM

Minnesota's outdoor recreation system includes lands owned or managed by local, regional, state and federal governments, as well as some owned by nonprofit and for-profit entities. All play different roles in managing and maintaining Minnesota's outdoor recreation system. The system includes everything from neighborhood playgrounds, to regional parks, to state parks, to national forests. About one-fourth of the land in Minnesota is in some form of public ownership, and the vast majority is administered by federal, state or county governments. Almost all of this land provides conservation benefits as well as some kind of outdoor recreation opportunity. Managing this land for public benefits is an important responsibility and requires significant resources.

### FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

Federal lands providing outdoor recreation in Minnesota include two national forests, the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness, five units managed by the National Park Service (Voyageurs National Park, Mississippi National River and Recreation Area, St. Croix National Scenic Riverway, Pipestone National Monument, and Grand Portage National Monument), and 13 national wildlife refuges.

The Chippewa National Forest, established in 1908, was the first national forest east of the Mississippi River. The Superior National Forest, established in 1909, contains the largest wilderness area east of the Rocky Mountains and north of the Everglades. The Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness is the most heavily used of all federal wilderness areas.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service manages nine national wildlife refuges and nine wetland management districts. These units provide hunting, fishing, bird watching and photography opportunities.

For more than 50 years, the federal government has had a funding partnership with the state and local governments in Minnesota through the Land and Water Conservation Fund program. The impact of this program on the outdoor recreation system in Minnesota has been significant. This program is further described in **The Land and Water Conservation Fund** section of this report.

### STATE GOVERNMENT

Itasca State Park, established in 1891, is one of the earliest state parks in the country. Many other state parks in Minnesota were established during the 1930s with help from the federal government through the Civilian Conservation Corps, Works Progress Administration, and other federal Depression-era programs. There are currently 75 state parks and recreation areas, over 1,300 miles of state trails, more than 1,500 DNR-managed water access sites, and over 4,500 miles of waterways designated as state water trails. Minnesota's first state forest was created in 1900. Today there are 58 state forests totaling nearly 4 million acres. These lands provide many opportunities for camping, fishing, hunting, bird watching, canoeing, boating and other natural resource-based outdoor recreation. State trails and other trails in these units support a wide variety of recreational uses. Some support multiple uses while others cater to a specific use, such as single-track mountain bike or all-terrain vehicle (ATV) riding trails. Other state-owned lands and



managed areas that provide opportunities for some types of outdoor recreation include wildlife management areas, aquatic management areas, and scientific and natural areas.

In 1963, the Minnesota Outdoor Recreation Resources Commission was created to help determine state outdoor recreation needs and guide state investments to meet those needs. A cigarette tax was enacted to help fund outdoor recreation investments through the state Future Resources Fund. The commission later became the Legislative Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources (LCCMR), and now allocates some of the proceeds from the Minnesota State Lottery (the state’s Environmental and Natural Resources Trust Fund) to natural resource-related initiatives and projects. The commission has recommended projects and programs for funding to the legislature for the past five decades, resulting in hundreds of millions of dollars of investment in both state and local outdoor recreation lands and facilities. The outdoor recreation system in Minnesota owes much of its existence to this multi-decade effort. Other major state investments in outdoor recreation acquisition and facilities have come through state capital bonding and the Clean Water Land and Legacy Act funds (the “Legacy Amendment”), described on pages 4-5 here.

## METROPOLITAN COUNCIL REGIONAL GOVERNMENT

The Minneapolis-St. Paul seven-county area’s Metropolitan Council coordinates and plans for the Twin Cities’ regional outdoor recreation system in the form of regional parks, trails and park reserves. The Metropolitan Council provides state and regional funding for acquisition and development of the system through grants to ten county and city implementing agencies, which are responsible for operating and maintaining the park and trail facilities. The system, begun in 1974, now includes 56 regional parks and park reserves, eight special recreation areas, over 400 miles of interconnected trails, and more than 54,000 acres of land throughout the seven-county area.

## GREATER MINNESOTA REGIONAL PARKS AND TRAILS COMMISSION (GMRPTC)

The Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission was established in 2013 to carry out system planning and provide recommendations to the state legislature for grants funded by the Legacy Parks and Trails Fund to counties and cities outside the seven-county metropolitan area for parks and trails of regional significance. Previously, recreation providers in greater Minnesota had not been formally organized like the metropolitan area regional providers and state park and trail organizations have been.

The Commission is now legislatively established and includes 61 facilities across several categories, including natural resource-based parks, special recreation feature parks, non-motorized trails, motorized trails and mixed-use trails.





## LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

Minneapolis and St. Paul have extensive park systems dating back to the 1800s, as do many of the older and larger cities throughout the state. As suburbs arose in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area, they acquired and developed increasingly extensive park and trail systems. Several counties throughout the state also began to acquire and develop county parks in the last half of the Twentieth Century.

These facilities primarily provide close-to-home outdoor recreation opportunities and often focus more attention on youth-related outdoor recreation, such as playgrounds, athletic fields, community centers, swimming pools and beaches. While most of these facilities have been acquired and developed with locally generated funds, a significant number have been assisted by state and federal grants through the years.

## PRIVATE SECTOR AND NON-GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATIONS

The private resort industry has been particularly important in Minnesota for water-related recreation such as fishing, canoeing, boating and swimming. Larger resorts also have added golf courses, tennis courts, and other facilities. A few resorts offer downhill and cross-country skiing. Apart from the resort industry, the private sector is also a major provider of golfing and downhill skiing opportunities. There are some privately operated hunting reserves, horse riding stables, and similar facilities in the state. Businesses also support outdoor recreation by renting bicycles, canoes, snowmobiles, ATVs and other equipment. These private businesses are an important part of the larger tourism industry, one of the most important economic engines of the state.

Private landowners also play an important role in helping support outdoor recreation in Minnesota. Several types of facilities – including some state trails and large portions of the grant-in-aid snowmobile trail system, as examples – rely on access to private lands via easements or other agreements. These trail opportunities would not be possible without use of these private lands.

Non-profit organizations also support outdoor recreation in the state. The Parks and Trails Council of Minnesota, a non-profit organization dedicated to supporting the state's park and state trail systems, dates back to 1954. It has helped the state acquire about \$10 million of state park and trail land. Organizations such as the Trust for Public Land, Pheasants Forever, Ducks Unlimited, and the Nature Conservancy have also played key roles in supporting funding for state, regional and local outdoor recreation land; protection and restoration of natural areas; wetland protection; water quality and other natural resource and outdoor recreation-related purposes. Other non-profit organizations play an important role as partners for building and maintaining trails through volunteers, such as local equestrian, horse-riding, ATV and snowmobile clubs.



## CURRENT AND FUTURE TRENDS

This section provides an overview of the most pressing current and future trends and issues that impact how we plan for, manage, and enjoy the outdoor recreation system in Minnesota. These trends include recognition of 1) the public health benefits of outdoor recreation; 2) the need to serve all Minnesotan's equitably in outdoor recreation spaces; 3) Minnesota's changing population demographics; 4) climate change impacts on our natural world and recreational facilities; and 5) continued accessibility challenges at our outdoor recreation facilities.

## PUBLIC HEALTH

### WHAT DO WE KNOW?

Although many people can speak to the health benefits of nature from personal experience, the scientific community had not spent much energy investigating those connections until relatively recently. As of 2019, there are now more than 400 studies that demonstrate the numerous health benefits that nature provides.

#### *Physiological Health*

Most of the research on health and nature has focused on physical health benefits. Many of the benefits discovered are helpful in preventing leading causes of chronic disease, including stress reduction; reduced blood pressure; faster healing; addiction recovery; and reduced cardiovascular, respiratory and long-term illness.

#### *Cognitive Development*

Benefits of nature exposure for cognitive development is increasingly recognized in the fields of education and human development, among others. Studies illustrate nature's positive effects on attentional restoration, reduced mental fatigue, improved academic performance, improved cognitive function in children and improved productivity.

#### *Psychological Well-being*

Studies detailing the positive effects of nature on mental processing have no doubt inspired practices such as forest bathing and other newly popular wellness-based outdoor programs in recent years. Increased self-esteem, improved mood, reduced anger/frustration and reduced anxiety are some of the key examples of the improvements documented by research on nature interactions for mental health.

#### *Social Effects*

Finally, a less well-known, but critically important benefit of time outdoors is the positive social effects at an individual or community public health scale. Several articles have found that nature facilitates social interaction, enables social empowerment, reduces crime rates and violence, and enables interracial interaction, among other positive social behaviors.

## WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Research shows that spending time outdoors is good for us. However, do Minnesotans view nature as an “alternative” healthcare system? The 2017 Minnesota Outdoor Activities Survey found that top motivations for spending time outdoors were to feel healthier (69%), rest mentally (65%) and be physically fit (64%).

The research supports, and the public is seemingly ready to embrace, a healthier outdoor lifestyle. Public agencies and healthcare systems just have to catch-up. Outdoor recreation providers have only recently begun to formalize partnerships and programs focused on the “healthy” aspects of being outside. Park prescriptions, wellness-inspired outdoor programs, and nature-based therapy are just some of the initiatives that have taken off because of new data on this subject. There is an international movement underway to better understand how we can promote being outside as a way to live longer, be happier and spend less on healthcare costs. Several national leaders of the movement, have envisioned a future where health insurance companies will fund park entry fees and equipment needed to recreate outdoors.

Moving forward, outdoor recreation providers should consider how to enhance their operations in ways that promote visitor health and well-being. Leveraging this connection is important for outdoor organizations of all scales, because it has potential for innovative programs, new funding, fresh marketing and improved infrastructure. The end goal of all these efforts is better, healthier lives for all people.

## DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION

### WHAT DO WE KNOW?

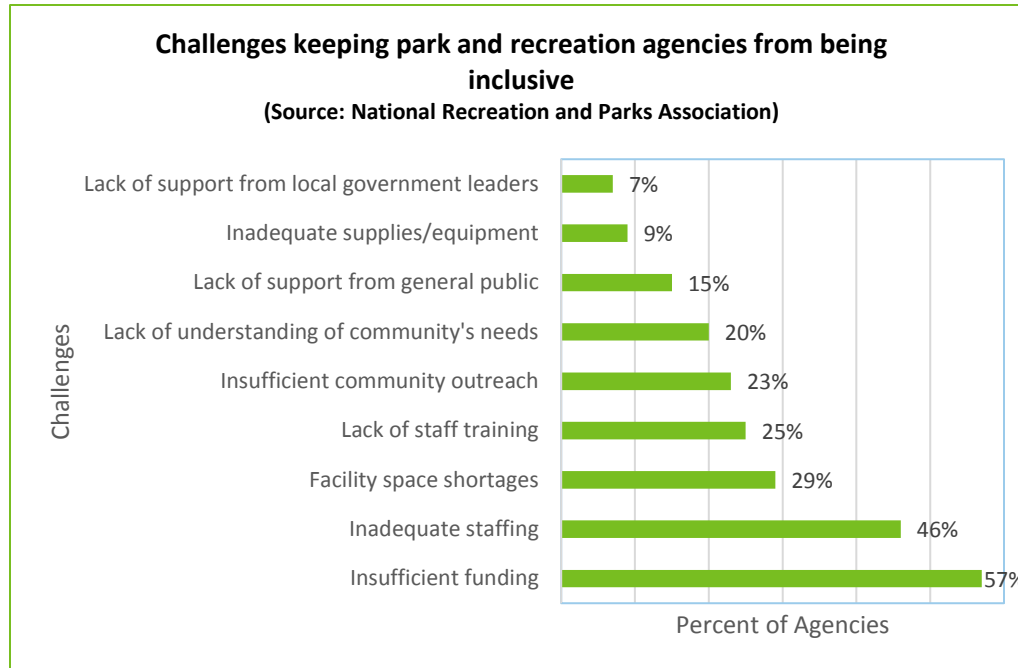
As evidenced by the current and projected demographic trends in the United States, including Minnesota, outdoor recreation providers will need to enhance programs, services, and opportunities to embrace and advance the principles of diversity, equity and inclusion.

#### *Programming and Facilities*

A National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) survey found that park and recreation agencies across America provide programming and activities for many community members. This included 74% that provided programs and activities specifically designed for individuals with physical disabilities; 71% for members of multicultural, racial and ethnic communities; 62% for individuals with cognitive disabilities; 30% for members of LGBTQ communities; and 27% for members of refugee/immigrant communities.

The NRPA survey identified insufficient funding, inadequate staffing, facility space shortages, and lack of staff training as among the most common challenges that park and recreation agencies face when trying to build more inclusive environments for all members of their communities. Findings also suggest that agencies also need to be aware how well these groups are represented, or not represented, by stakeholder organizations or through traditional public input processes.





*Policy Integration*

To be effective, social equity must be integrated into policy and structure, so accountability for making improvements that address equity can be shared across all levels of an organization. Yet, only two in five park and recreation agencies in the United States have a formal inclusion policy.

*Partnerships*

Schools, non-profit organizations, agencies on aging and disabilities, and local law enforcement are some of the most likely organizations that park and recreation agencies partner with to develop and enhance inclusion in programming and activities to better serve all members of their communities.

*Outcomes*

Creating equal, equitable and inclusive outdoor recreation spaces for individuals of all abilities, backgrounds and identities can enhance outcomes in neighborhood development, health and education across all groups.

**WHAT DOES IT MEAN?**

Minnesota’s nature-based recreation providers must continue to develop more programs and facilities that serve everyone, including individuals with disabilities; members of multicultural, racial and ethnic communities; individuals identifying as LGBTQ; and refugees and new immigrants. There are many challenges and obstacles to overcome when establishing equal, equitable and inclusive outdoor recreation opportunities. However, providers can find and develop new ways of mitigating these challenges through policy integration, accountability and partnerships, where solutions and positive outcomes are comprehensive, long lasting and sustainable. Agencies should seek out opportunities to connect with under-served and under-represented communities, and enhance outreach efforts to better address their needs and ideas.

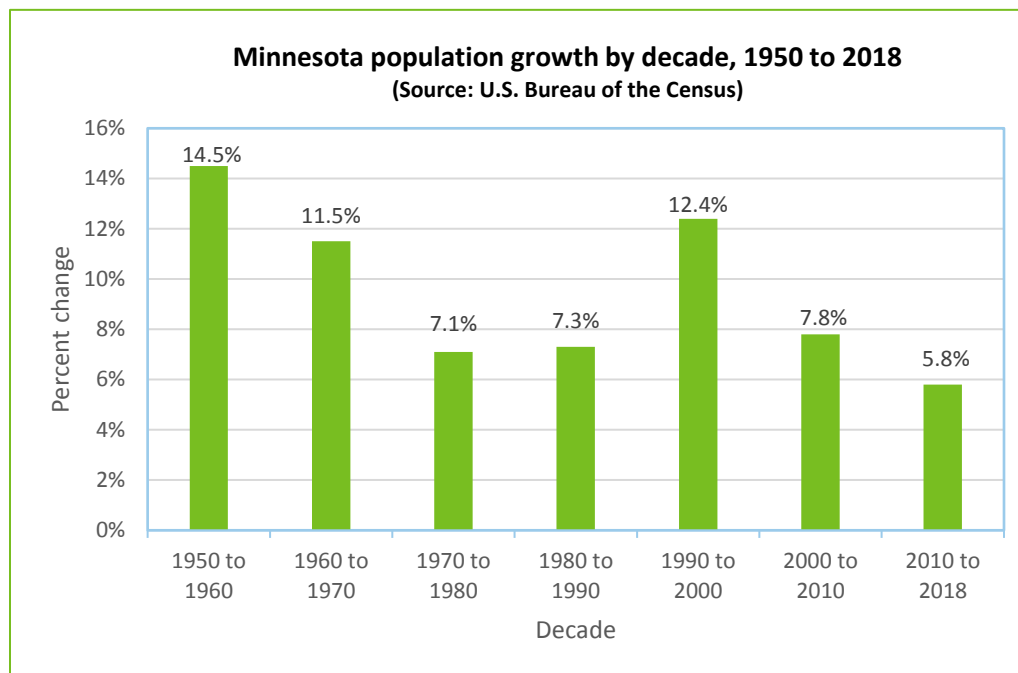
## MINNESOTA'S CHANGING POPULATION

### WHAT DO WE KNOW?

Declining population growth rates, increasing numbers of older people, and expanding communities of color are all evidence of Minnesota's changing population. These changes will play an important role in the demand for, and value placed on, outdoor recreation opportunities, and how nature-based recreation providers choose to serve their communities over the next five years and beyond.

#### *Declining Population Growth*

Minnesota added nearly 310,000 residents between 2010 and 2018, a 5.8% increase over 8 years, contributing to an estimated total population of more than 5.5 million. However, the growth rate in Minnesota's population has declined overall in the post-war period, with the exception of the 1990s when there was a 12.4% increase in population over 10 years. These rates are projected to decline further through the decades of the 2020s, 2030s and 2040s.



#### *Aging Minnesotans*

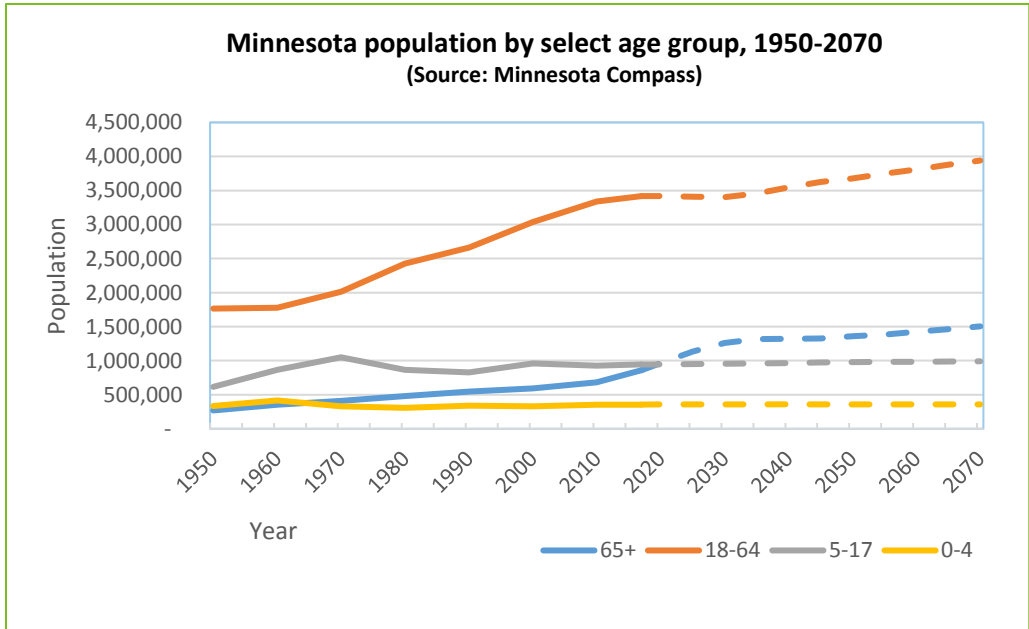
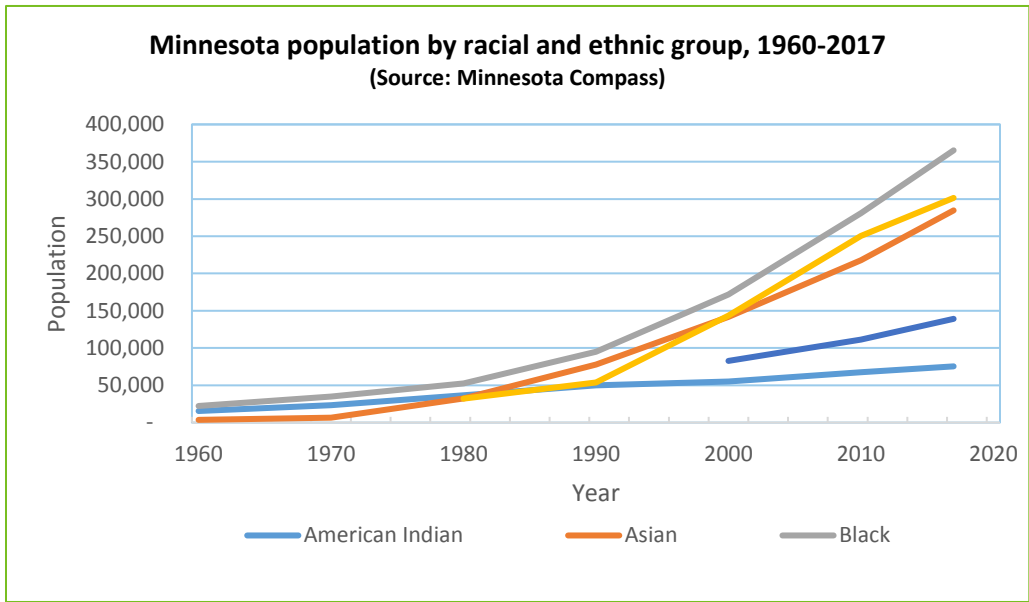
About 285,000 Minnesotans will have turned 65 years old between 2010 and 2020, which will be more than in the last four decades combined. "Empty nesters" are now the most common household type in Minnesota, followed by households consisting of older adults living alone. Projections indicate that the total number of adults 65 and older living in Minnesota will double between 2010 and 2030, and most of this growth will take place in metropolitan areas, specifically suburban communities in and around Minneapolis and St. Paul.

#### *Growing Multicultural, Racial, and Ethnic Groups*

Between 2010 and 2017, the populations of Black or African American and Asian Minnesotans grew by 29%, and the population of Hispanic Minnesotans grew by 20%, helping contribute to five times more



people of color being added to the total state population than non-Hispanic, white residents. Additionally, in 2017, the largest group of foreign-born Minnesotans were born in Mexico, followed by those born in Somalia, India, Laos (including Hmong), Vietnam, China (excluding Hong Kong and Taiwan), Ethiopia and Thailand (including Hmong). Growing multicultural, racial and ethnic groups will continue to diversify Minnesota into the future. One report suggests that 24.8% of Minnesota’s population will be nonwhite or Latino by 2035, making for a 121% increase in this portion of the state’s population between 2005 and 2035.



**WHAT DOES IT MEAN?**

Although the population in Minnesota is growing, the rate of growth has slowed since the 1950s and is projected to continue to decline. This translates into lower outlooks for population-driven increases in recreation outcomes, including urban expansion-driven park and trail development; near-home parks and

trails demand; and potential participants in nature-based outdoor recreation. Because Minnesota’s demographics are skewing older, outdoor recreation providers should consider how their services will need to adapt in order to reach and provide for an older audience in the upcoming decades. Although the overall trend is that older adults participate less in outdoor recreation as they age, this growing age cohort also represents an opportunity for providers – a group that may have more free time and interest in programming and activities that promote the health and wellness benefits of outdoor recreation.

Additionally, the growth in populations of color presents an opportunity for outdoor recreation providers to connect to a new, more diverse audience. Providers should seek ways to better serve a more diverse suite of communities by increasing access to, and seeking a greater understanding of, the recreation opportunities desired by a wide spectrum of communities. Recreational providers will also need to consider what changes they could make in the type of activities they support that may be more attractive to a more diverse, next generation of users. For example, programs such as the DNR Parks and Trail’s “I Can!” series teach outdoor skills for activities like camping, paddling, and fishing. These kinds of programs can help with outreach to groups that are infrequent participants in outdoor recreation and build interest and awareness among new audiences.



## CLIMATE CHANGE

### WHAT DO WE KNOW?

Climate change is already occurring in Minnesota, affecting natural landscapes and outdoor recreation resources across the state. Increasing precipitation, more frequent extreme rain events, and substantially warmer winter temperatures are among the most well documented climate change impacts.

#### *Warmer and Wetter*

Between 1895 and 2017, Minnesota has warmed by 2.9 degrees Fahrenheit and has received an annual average of 3.4 inches of additional precipitation. The most dramatic changes have happened in the past several decades. Each of the top-10 combined warmest and wettest years on record have occurred within the last 20 years.

#### *More Damaging Rainfalls*

Heavy rainfall events are more common and more intense now than any time on record. The frequency of heavy rainfall events has increased 42% in the last 50 years. Mega rain events are also increasing – these are storms that deliver more than 6 inches of rain over a 1,000 square mile area.

#### *Warming Winter Temperatures*

The most significant impacts of warming related to climate change in Minnesota are happening in the winter. Although Minnesota will always see periodic severe cold spells, the overall trend is for warmer winter temperatures. Minnesota’s winter temperatures have warmed 13 times faster than summer temperatures since 1970.

These trends are expected to continue and likely intensify in the decades ahead.

### **WHAT DOES IT MEAN?**

Climate change will continue to have profound impacts on how agencies manage natural landscapes and provide outdoor recreation opportunities to Minnesotans and visitors. Recreation providers will need to adjust their programs and facilities to adapt to these climate change impacts. Some examples of impacts to outdoor recreation from climate change that have already been documented include:

- Shorter winter seasons - shorter and more inconsistent conditions for winter activities such as cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, ice fishing, and snowmobiling.
- Longer shoulder seasons - some recreational activities may benefit as temperatures warm more quickly in the spring and stay warm longer in the fall.
- More storm event impacts to recreation facilities – wind and flooding damages trails, beaches and other facilities.
- Greater damage to natural communities and cultural resource sites – erosion along rivers and destabilizing slopes are causing loss of historic sites and impacts to rare natural communities.
- Higher prevalence of invasive species - increasing spread of invasive species that are suited to changing conditions and the arrival of new invasive species.
- Additional ecological impacts affecting other activities – changes to fish and animal populations affect fishing, hunting and wildlife watching.

Recreation providers will need to adapt to these changing conditions and seek to mitigate climate change impacts. Visitors and the public increasingly expect park and recreation agencies to communicate and demonstrate how they are addressing climate change. Some possible actions may include practices like adopting non-carbon-based energy sources (e.g., solar and wind power); using electric vehicles for facility operations; reducing energy and water use at facilities; and providing charging stations for privately owned electric vehicles. Agencies can take actions that reduce their climate impacts, and in some cases reduce long-term costs, in concert with promoting environmental stewardship messages to their visitors.

## **ACCESSIBILITY**

### **WHAT DO WE KNOW?**

With the enactment of various state and federal laws and guidelines, and the recognition of barriers to all Minnesotans benefiting from nature-based recreation, many public agencies - including those providing nature-based recreation services - are now offering more opportunities to Minnesotans with disabilities.

#### *Prevalence*

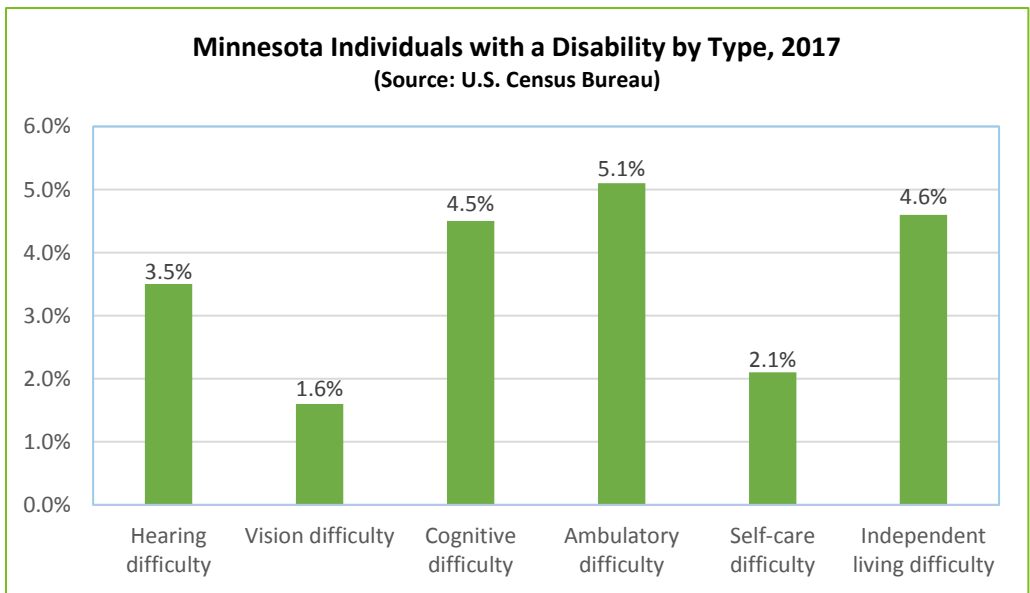
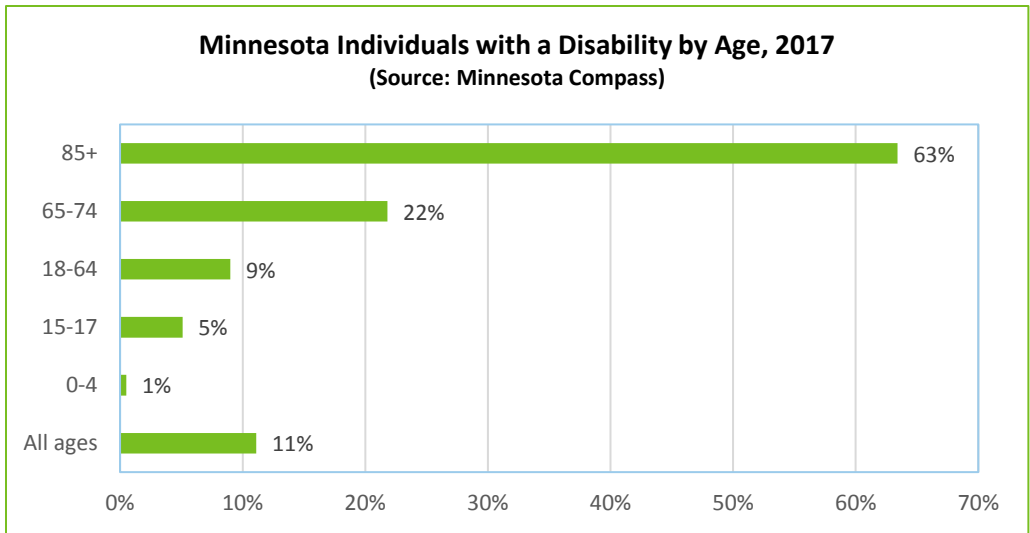
In 2017, a reported 584,974 Minnesotans had a disability, which is an estimated 10.8% of the total civilian non-institutionalized population for that year. The most common type of disability among Minnesotans is ambulatory difficulty, with 5.1% of people having this type of disability. The second most common type of disability is independent living difficulty, at 4.6%, followed by cognitive difficulty, at 4.5%. The percentage of those with a disability who are American Indian and Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander, and Black or African American is higher than other racial groups. The percentage of those with a disability increases significantly with age, an important factor in light of Minnesota's aging population.

*Law*

Federal and state law prohibits discrimination by state and local government services against persons with disabilities. These laws are applied to federal- and state-funded outdoor recreation and education programs, services and activities. Recreation providers must make reasonable modifications to ensure equal opportunities for access and participation.

*Development and Redevelopment*

State and local outdoor recreation providers are developing and updating public spaces, programs and services to improve access for all and meet state and federal accessibility standards. Public outdoor spaces include forests, parks, trails, and wildlife areas. Programs include camping, fishing and hunting, while services include technology and access to trip planning information and resources.



### WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Minnesota’s outdoor recreation providers will need to continue developing and updating their programming, facilities and services to facilitate more and better access to opportunities for people with disabilities. Since being enacted, the Americans with Disabilities Act and other similar laws and guidelines have been an important part of planning and development of publicly funded outdoor recreation programs and services in Minnesota. With a wide range of disabilities, providing accessible facilities and opportunities will be an important consideration for nature-based recreation providers.

The percentage of Minnesotans with a disability will increase over the next few decades as the average age of Minnesota’s population continues to get older. The prevalence of disabilities will be much higher among older age groups. Agencies will need to significantly increase their investments for accessibility improvements to keep pace with Minnesota’s growing need for facilities and opportunities that accommodate, and are welcoming for, people with disabilities.





# THE LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION FUND

## LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION FUND STATE GRANT PROGRAM

The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), created by Congress in 1964, has an important place in the history of the United States' outdoor recreation and conservation funding efforts. The program has provided \$3.9 billion for the LWCF State Grants program nationwide through 42,000 matching grants. The states have matched this amount with another \$3.9 billion, for a total of at least \$7.8 billion, to acquire and improve parks and natural areas in every county in the nation.

Revenue for the LWCF comes primarily from offshore oil and gas lease receipts received by the federal government. Since offshore drilling for oil and gas depletes a valuable natural resource, Congress determined that it was appropriate to invest the proceeds from offshore leases to protect America's natural resources and provide land and facilities for outdoor recreation experiences.

In 2019, Congress voted to reauthorize the LWCF permanently in the John D. Dingell, Jr. Conservation, Management and Recreation Act (S.47). This was a definitive statement in support of the LWCF as a unique program dedicated to the protection of our recreation lands and outdoor places.

The LWCF State Grants Program has had a large impact on the outdoor recreation infrastructure of Minnesota, with investments of more than \$81 million, most of it during the late 1960s to mid-1980s, in the state's outdoor recreation system for close-to-home recreational opportunities. The federal dollars have leveraged more than \$81 million in matching state and local dollars. Adjusted for inflation, the total investment is in the hundreds of millions of dollars, funding projects in 157 DNR-managed outdoor recreation units; three Minnesota Historical Society recreation sites; three University of Minnesota recreation sites; and over 800 hundred local government park and trail projects throughout the state. This investment has created a permanent legacy of parks and trails throughout Minnesota.

The LWCF in Minnesota supports a state program and a local program, each getting 50 percent of the federal appropriation. The state program supports the acquisition and development of the State Outdoor Recreation System as defined in Minnesota Statutes, Chapter 86A. The local program, funded through the Outdoor Recreation and Natural and Scenic Area Grant Programs, provides matching grants to local units of government for acquisition, development and/or redevelopment of outdoor recreation and natural areas.



## MINNESOTA'S FINANCIAL NEEDS

Minnesota's estimated annual financial needs for the acquisition, development and redevelopment of outdoor recreation facilities are shown below, grouped by the four different types of Minnesota providers:

1. Local governments (cities, counties and townships)
2. State (state parks, state trails, water access sites and natural areas)
3. Metropolitan Council (regional parks and trails in the seven county Minneapolis-St. Paul metropolitan area)
4. Greater Minnesota Regional Park and Trail Commission (regional parks outside of the seven county Minneapolis-St. Paul metropolitan area)

Annual Financial Needs by Outdoor Recreation Provider	Requested Funding (\$)
Local governments (cities, counties, townships) <a href="#">Local parks and trails 2019 Application Requests through DNR grant programs</a>	19,000,000
State agencies (state parks, state trails, water access sites and natural areas) <a href="#">Department of Natural Resources 2019 10-Year Capital Asset Need Document - annual need for recreational areas, water accesses, trails, bridges and roads</a>	90,000,000
Metropolitan Council (regional parks and trails in the seven county Minneapolis-St. Paul metropolitan area) <a href="#">Metropolitan Council 2019 Regional Park and Trails Capital Improvement Plan</a>	30,000,000
Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission (regional parks outside of the seven county Minneapolis-St. Paul metropolitan area ); <a href="#">Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails 2019 Application Requests</a>	20,000,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$159,000,000</b>

These figures only represent an approximate annual request/need for funding. Minnesota has a **backlog of financial needs in the billions of dollars** to take care of the existing facilities and expand the system to meet current and future demand. We are seeing an increasing demand from communities to renovate or replace their existing facilities to meet current safety and accessibility standards. Demand for the limited available funding is significant. Additional funding is needed so that outdoor recreation facilities can fulfill their vital role in connecting people to the outdoors and creating the next generation of natural resource stewards. Both destination and close-to-home experiences are essential if the vision is to be achieved.

## STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

Four strategic directions organize the strategies included in SCORP 2020-2024. These strategic directions are the same as those articulated in the *Parks and Trails Legacy Plan* and SCORP 2014-2018. This structure is well known by outdoor recreational providers in Minnesota and provides a consistent framework for understanding the priorities and activities of groups involved in these efforts throughout the state.

Within each strategic direction, strategies are grouped together to provide further structure. Strategies from the previous SCORP were reviewed and edited or discarded, and new strategies were developed during the planning process to reflect priorities for outdoor recreation for the next five years.

### STRATEGIC DIRECTION: CONNECT PEOPLE AND THE OUTDOORS

#### WELCOMING ENVIRONMENT

1. Mentor, recruit, and hire employees and volunteers who reflect the population of the users they serve.
2. Provide ongoing diversity, equity and inclusion training to employees.
3. Build relationships with groups that are underrepresented as users of public lands to increase their awareness of opportunities and comfort in outdoor spaces.
4. Help visitors, through information and education, feel comfortable, stay safe and understand rules.

#### ACCESS

1. Design and redevelop outdoor recreation facilities so that they can accommodate varying forms of transportation to sites (e.g., driving, walking, biking, ATV riding)
2. Work with other organizations to provide transportation to programs and special events tailored as first experience (trial) opportunities.
3. Design, develop, rehabilitate and manage outdoor recreation facilities to encourage use by people with all abilities and backgrounds.
4. Continue to keep costs affordable.

#### AWARENESS

1. Promote the outdoor recreation experiences, programs and activities that visitors may enjoy, so that potential and current users are aware of, and motivated to use, them.
2. Maintain ongoing market research to better understand current and potential visitors' motivations, attitudes, beliefs and preferred ways of receiving information.
3. Use technology to communicate conditions and site information with visitors in real-time to ensure visitor expectations are met and exceeded.

#### QUALITY

1. Provide high-quality experiences to visitors through thoughtful design, interpretation and innovative programming.
2. Repair and maintain high-demand facilities.
3. Invest in professional development practices that lead to exceptional staff.

## PROGRAMMING AND SPECIAL EVENTS

1. Increase development and promotion of social and health-related outdoor activities.
2. Expand introductory experience programs to attract new users and provide intermediate- and advanced-experience programs to retain existing users.
3. Recruit and welcome organizations and businesses that want to conduct programs at Minnesota outdoor recreation lands and facilities when those interests are compatible to provider missions.
4. Ensure that programming and special events cater to visitors' interests and needs, including incorporation of new opportunities and technology where logical.
5. Use program and special events as a method of attracting users during non-peak times.

## PARTNERSHIPS

1. Build relationships with community organizations and leaders that help providers better reach new visitors.
2. Develop partnerships with "friends of" groups that will help maintain, promote and support Minnesota outdoor recreation opportunities.
3. Develop partnerships with private industry, such as tourism providers and other companies that share goals and/or target markets and can enhance the image of the provider.

### Addressing the Trends: Connect People and the Outdoors

*Recreational providers in Minnesota can address the current and future trends highlighted in this plan as they implement strategies within each of the Strategic Directions. Progress toward addressing the trends does not have to be a separate effort, but can be part of core work of our agencies. Examples in this Strategic Direction include:*

#### Public Health –

*Promote the physical and mental wellness benefits of nature, and encourage people to get outside.*

#### Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion –

*Design and host activities and programming meant to attract new visitors and to welcome the broadest array of people and groups in our communities.*

## STRATEGIC DIRECTION: ACQUIRE LAND, CREATE OPPORTUNITIES

### STRATEGIC ACQUISITION

1. Place a priority on near-home acquisition of natural resource-based lands in densely settled and rapidly growing areas.
2. Place a priority on natural resource-based lands near regional centers that lack near-home opportunities.
3. Accelerate the acquisition of private in-holdings and add lands to existing parks to enhance resource protection and recreational opportunities.
4. Focus acquisitions of new state parks on high-quality natural resource areas, particularly where ecological subsections are not represented by the state park system or comparable land holding.
5. Focus on acquiring priority trail segments according to established criteria.
6. Place a priority on new trail opportunities that are closer to the concentration of users – including snowmobilers, off-highway vehicle riders, horseback riders, and canoeists/kayakers.
7. Acquire permanent trail easements within critical grant-in-aid trail corridors so they are not lost to development or other land use changes.

8. Acquire exceptional one-time opportunities of unique, high-quality natural resources that meet critical needs outside of regional centers.
9. Acquire the land needed for support facilities for trail systems (e.g., accesses, portages, rest areas, trailheads). Prioritize facilities that serve multiple interests.
10. Place a priority on protecting important water resources including lakes, rivers, wetlands, shoreline and critical watersheds.
11. Acquire land to connect protected and high-quality natural resource corridors.
12. Acquire land to mitigate the loss of recreational opportunities caused by unavoidable conversions of existing parkland to non-recreational use.

#### **DEVELOPMENT AND REDEVELOPMENT**

1. Place a priority on development in the densely settled and rapidly growing parts of the state that have the fewest opportunities per person now and into the future.
2. Place a priority on regional centers that lack a near-home outdoor recreation opportunity.
3. Design, develop and redevelop facilities that meet the differing outdoor recreation needs for people of all abilities.
4. Create an accessible environment that is open and flexible to accommodate new and emerging nature-based recreation uses, such as nature play areas.
5. Develop infrastructure and amenities that meet the needs and interests of future generations and diverse communities.
6. Establish sustainable trail systems to provide high-quality and compatible opportunities for specialized trail interests that take into account existing user groups.
7. Design and construct sustainable and resilient infrastructure. Rely on up-to-date green infrastructure and best practice design.
8. Seek opportunities to use renewable or low-carbon energy sources (such as solar and wind) to meet the needs of park and recreation facilities.

#### **Addressing the Trends: Acquire Lands, Create Opportunities**

*Recreational providers in Minnesota can address the current and future trends highlighted here as they implement strategies within each of the Strategic Directions. Progress toward addressing the trends does not have to be a separate effort, but can be part of core work of our agencies. Examples in this Strategic Direction include:*

*Minnesota’s Changing Population –*

*When acquiring or developing new facilities, add amenities that cater to the interests and abilities of the state’s aging and more diverse population – responding more specifically to how this trend is playing out in individual communities.*

*Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion –*

*Seek out acquisition and development opportunities that, because of their location or connections with transportation options, can help serve groups that have less access to outdoor recreation opportunities or that are underrepresented among our current visitors.*

*Accessibility –*

*Design new facilities and rehabilitate existing ones to serve people across a wide range of abilities. Consider how the recreational activities being provided can create a range of opportunities for people with disabilities. Recognize the variety of recreation experiences and personal challenges people with disabilities may be seeking.*



## STRATEGIC DIRECTION: TAKE CARE OF WHAT WE HAVE

### PROTECT THE PUBLIC'S INVESTMENT IN BUILT INFRASTRUCTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES

1. Prioritize investment in existing infrastructure to ensure high quality and safe experiences for the public.
2. Maintain capital asset management plans to ensure protection and full utilization of facilities.
3. When proposing new acquisitions and facilities, communicate operational, maintenance and capital management costs based on lifecycles of assets.

### MAINTAIN THE QUALITY OF NATURAL RESOURCES

1. Preserve existing high-quality natural areas and water resources. It is more cost-effective to preserve existing natural communities than it is to restore or reconstruct them.
2. Restore and reconstruct natural communities that have been degraded or lost due to agriculture or development. Prioritize locations where success of restoration is likely.



### Addressing the Trends: Take Care of What You Have

*Recreational providers in Minnesota can address the current and future trends highlighted here as they implement strategies within each of the Strategic Directions. Progress toward addressing the trends does not have to be a separate effort, but can be part of core work of our agencies. Examples in this Strategic Direction include:*

Minnesota's Changing Population –  
*Evaluate ways that existing facilities could meet the needs of older visitors and attract new visitors as part of renovation and rehabilitation projects.*

Climate Change –  
*Mitigate impacts from flooding and other climate-related changes by relocating trails and other infrastructure. Reduce our contribution to climate change by improving energy and resource efficiency in our buildings, vehicle fleets, and other systems. Manage our lands, waters, and other natural systems in ways that increase resilience and reduce the impacts of invasive species.*

Accessibility –  
*Prioritize projects to increase accessibility at existing facilities, and invest in accessibility-related improvements as part of maintenance and rehabilitation work.*

## STRATEGIC DIRECTION: COORDINATE AMONG PARTNERS

### ENHANCED, INTEGRATED AND ACCESSIBLE INFORMATION FOR OUTDOOR RECREATION USERS

1. Maintain and enhance a comprehensive, integrated, standardized and accessible database of statewide recreational assets.
2. Continue to collaborate and improve on providing an experience where users can locate essential recreation information, do trip planning, and create customized maps.
3. Incentivize coordination and cooperation among providers, such as cross-promoting local, regional, state and other opportunities for outdoor recreation and its diverse benefits.

### ENHANCED COORDINATION AT THE REGIONAL AND SITE LEVELS

1. Support projects that incorporate multi-jurisdictional planning efforts to create a seamless recreational system.
2. Develop best practices for enhancing coordination, e.g., technical information about how to set up joint powers agreements that support coordination efforts.
3. Provide technical assistance for developing grant proposals.
4. Provide funding for research and monitoring to measure progress according to benchmarks.

### ENHANCED COORDINATION AMONG THE FOUR LEGACY FUNDS

1. Share the goals and strategies of the four Legacy Funds with outdoor recreation providers and others, so they can find overlapping opportunities.
2. Encourage coordination among the Legacy Funds to work together at the funding, landscape and project levels.

### ENHANCED COORDINATION WITH OTHER AGENCIES, ORGANIZATIONS, AND NONPROFITS

1. Continue partnering with transportation interests and regional and local transportation authorities to support access to outdoor recreation as well as expand opportunities to develop new trails, enhance trail use and increase access to transit.
2. Continue partnering with health agencies, health maintenance organizations and providers to support shared health and wellness goals.
3. Build stronger relationships with schools and increase the level of service provided to schools. Outdoor recreation providers are an important resource for schools in teaching lifelong recreation skills and environmental stewardship.
4. Continue partnering with tourism, chambers of commerce and other local tourism

#### Addressing the Trends: Coordinate Among Partners

*Recreational providers in Minnesota can address the current and future trends highlighted here as they implement strategies within each of the Strategic Directions. Progress toward addressing the trends does not have to be a separate effort, but can be part of core work of our agencies. Examples in this Strategic Direction include:*

#### Public Health –

*Work with health care providers, community health agencies, and other partners to promote outdoor recreation as part of pursuing healthy lifestyles – linking health outcomes and the outdoor activities in ways that attract more people to participate in outdoor recreation.*

#### Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion –

*Outdoor recreation providers can work together to expand their connections to diverse audiences, to share contacts with leaders and influencers in under-represented communities, and to coordinate outreach efforts.*

providers. They play a key role in providing information about outdoor recreation providers to promote opportunities.

5. Continue partnering with grant-in-aid groups and local communities that are actively promoting outdoor recreation opportunities.
6. Continue partnering with natural resource conservation groups, non-profits, and other key stakeholders.
7. Facilitate discussion among different trail user groups across the state to find balance and cooperation on recreational trail use demands and management.



## OPEN PROJECT SELECTION PROCESS FOR LWCF PROPOSALS

The Open Project Selection process is a systematic approach for administering the Land and Water Conservation Fund financial assistance programs. It ensures equal opportunity for all eligible projects by establishing public notification of the availability of funding, application assistance, and an objective review system based on the priorities established in the SCORP.

The criteria and standards for prioritizing and selecting projects are based on the first three strategic directions. The fourth strategic direction is not directly utilized in evaluating grant proposals.

For the state-level program, projects are solicited from managers of the State Outdoor Recreation System on a periodic basis. The State Outdoor Recreation System is established in state statutes and includes an array of outdoor recreation areas and facilities owned and managed by the State of Minnesota and the Minnesota Historical Society.

For grants to local units of government, project applications are solicited annually from cities, counties, townships and recognized tribal governments. The Department of Natural Resources manages the program and applications, which are due by March 31 of each year.

### MINNESOTA'S 2020-2024 OPEN PROJECT SELECTION PROCESS

#### 1. PUBLIC NOTIFICATION

For the state-level program, potential grantees are made aware of the availability of funding (Minnesota departments of Natural Resources and Transportation and the Minnesota Historical Society).

For grants to local units of government, the Department of Natural Resources local grants staff informs all potential project sponsors each November about the availability of funding. This is done through e-mail, news releases and notice on the DNR website. Potential applicants can request application materials that include Minnesota's selection criteria for use of the funds during the current funding cycle, the types of areas and facilities eligible for funding and an explanation of how the open project selection process works. Potential applicants may obtain application materials by e-mail, by visiting the DNR website at [www.mndnr.gov](http://www.mndnr.gov), or by calling the DNR public information number at (651) 296-6157 or (888) 646-6367.



#### 2. PROGRAM ASSISTANCE

For grants to local units of government, DNR local grants staff assists potential applicants with the preparation of applications, including prerequisite requirements such as the need to pass a public resolution before submitting the proposal and the preparation of proposed site plans. Grants staff will review draft applications and provide comments prior to the application deadline.

### 3. THE PRIORITY RANKING AND PROJECT SELECTION SYSTEM

Minnesota has an objective, two-part process to evaluate, rank and select state and local projects for LWCF dollars.

The first part of the process is an evaluation based on the Minnesota's SCORP strategies and the associated priority actions. A number of specific criteria derived from these priorities are included in the evaluation sheet used in reviewing each application.

In the second part of the evaluation, applications are evaluated on site-level design criteria including accessibility, quality of design and safety. Other criteria include: quality of the application, level of local government commitments, environmental impact, etc. This evaluation ensures that projects selected for funding are viable, well designed and in conformance with current laws and standards.

Minnesota allocates 50% of its LWCF apportionments to state agencies and 50% to local units of government. Minnesota's state agency apportionment has gone toward statewide facilities including state parks, historical interpretive sites, state trails, wildlife management areas and water access sites. Most of these state grants have been used by the DNR, though some have also been used by the MN Historical Society, the University of Minnesota, and MN Department of Transportation. The local government apportionment has been awarded via grants to counties, cities, and townships throughout the state.

DNR is responsible for overseeing the LWCF program in Minnesota and is the liaison between the state and the National Park Service. DNR staff conduct separate funding competitions for the state agency and local government apportionments and recommend the highest-ranking proposals to the Commissioner of Natural Resources for final approval.

#### STATE AND LOCAL LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION FUND SELECTION GUIDELINES

The state and local LWCF programs use the following selection guidelines to evaluate project applications. These guidelines are based on three of the four strategic directions and associated priority goals and strategies in the SCORP. The fourth strategic direction dealing with coordination among partners is not directly utilized in evaluating grant proposals.

#### SCORP PRIORITIES

The answers to the following questions, based on the priority actions for each strategy, will be used to evaluate project applications.

##### *Does the Project Connect People to the Outdoors?*

- Does the proposed project design and redevelop outdoor recreation facilities so that they can accommodate varying forms of transportation to sites (e.g., driving, walking, biking)?
- Does the proposed project design, develop, rehabilitate and manage outdoor recreation facilities to encourage use by people with all abilities?
- Does the proposed project design, develop, rehabilitate and manage outdoor recreation facilities to encourage use by people of diverse backgrounds and experience?
- Does the proposed project provide high-quality experiences to visitors through thoughtful design, programming, and interpretation?



*Does the Project Acquire Land and/or Create Opportunities?*

- Is the proposed project located in a densely settled area or area of rapid population growth?
- Does the proposed project accelerate the acquisition of private in-holdings and add lands to existing parks to enhance resource protection and recreational opportunities?
- Does the proposed project acquire exceptional one-time opportunities of unique, high-quality natural resources that meet critical needs outside of regional centers?
- Does the proposed project acquire land to connect protected and high-quality natural resource corridors?
- Does the proposed project acquire land that protects important water resources including lakes, rivers, wetlands, shoreline and critical watersheds?
- Does the proposed project design, develop, and/or redevelop facilities that meet the differing outdoor recreation needs for people of all abilities?
- Does the proposed project create an accessible environment that is open and flexible to accommodate new and emerging nature-based recreation uses?
- Does the proposed project develop infrastructure and amenities that meet the needs and interests of future generations and diverse communities?
- Is the proposed project designed and constructed with sustainable and resilient infrastructure, (rely on up-to-date green infrastructure and best practice designs)?

*Does the Project Take Care of What We Have?*

- Does the proposed project result in redevelopment, renovation or rehabilitation of existing infrastructure to ensure high quality and safe experiences for the public?
- Does the project sponsor maintain a capital asset management plan to ensure protection and full utilization of the proposed facilities?
- Does the proposed project preserve existing high-quality natural areas and water resources?
- Does the proposed project restore and reconstruct natural communities that have been degraded or lost due to agriculture or development?





## MINNESOTA'S WETLANDS

The National Park Service requires each SCORP to address wetlands as an important outdoor recreation resource. This section articulates this value for Minnesota's SCORP 2020-2024

There are many types of wetlands in Minnesota, each with widely varying characteristics. Some wetlands are dry for much of the year; others are almost always covered by several feet of water. Some wetlands have grasses and sedges, shrubs, or trees. They may be small confined basins or extend for hundreds of miles. It is estimated that Minnesota has lost about 50 percent of its original wetland acreage.

Minnesota recognizes the multiple benefits that wetlands provide, including:

- Erosion control: Wetland vegetation reduces lakeshore wave damage and stream bank erosion.
- Flood control: Wetlands can slow and retain runoff, reducing the frequency of flooding along streams and rivers.
- Groundwater recharge and discharge: Some wetlands recharge groundwater by holding surface water and allowing it to slowly filter into the groundwater reserves. Some wetlands are discharge areas; they receive groundwater even during dry periods, and help maintain flows in nearby rivers and streams.
- Water quality: Wetlands protect the water quality of downstream lakes, streams and rivers by removing pollutants and moderating flow.
- Rare species habitat: 43 percent of threatened or endangered species in the U.S. live in or depend on wetlands.
- Recreation: Wetlands are a great place to canoe, hunt, fish or watch wildlife.
- Economic value: Wetlands provide economic commodities such as wild rice and bait fish.

### MINNESOTA WETLANDS CONSERVATION PLAN

The *Minnesota Wetlands Conservation Plan (MWCP)* sets directions for managing and regulating the state's wetlands and examines the way to consolidate the many different existing wetland programs. As stated in the plan, the goal for wetland conservation in Minnesota is to maintain and restore the quality and diversity and increase the overall quantity of wetlands in the state, varying regionally in accordance with differences in the character and health of the wetland resource, in order to promote ecologically, socially, and economically sustainable communities.

Implementation of the MWCP is further guided by a memorandum of understanding that includes state and federal agencies whose work impacts wetland issues. Signing agencies to the memorandum are Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources, the Minnesota Department of Transportation, the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, and the Minnesota Department of Agriculture as "Sponsoring State Agencies"; and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services collectively as the "Cooperating Federal Agencies."

Further description of the status of wetland resources in the state, the *Minnesota Wetlands Conservation Plan*, and the Memorandum of Understanding are available on the Minnesota DNR website:

<https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/wetlands/index.html>.

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# APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A. OUTDOOR RECREATION HOUSEHOLD SURVEY 2017

### INTRODUCTION

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) conducted an Outdoor Recreation Household Survey between October of 2017 and February of 2018. The survey, also known as the 2017 Minnesota Outdoor Activities Survey, serves as a tool to better understand and respond to Minnesotans' needs and preferences for outdoor recreation. The information gathered from the survey was used to update the 2004 Outdoor Recreation Participation Survey, define current trends in adult recreation and factors that motivate and create barriers to recreation, and establish a baseline dataset on outdoor activities participation across the state. Outdoor recreation providers throughout Minnesota are able to reference this information to better serve their communities.

### METHODOLOGY

#### *SURVEY INSTRUMENT DEVELOPMENT*

The survey and related communication materials were developed by the survey project team following a cross-division meeting with DNR staff and a key informant review process. Staff representing different divisions within the DNR helped to develop high-level goals and priorities for the survey, and establish how the information would be used. The key informant group consisted of members from Minnesota's Somali, Hispanic/Latinx, African American, Southeast Asian, and Native American communities with expert knowledge in both recreation and the communities they represent. This group reviewed the survey instrument and communication materials to ensure they were developed using appropriate and respectful language that would be understood by individuals within their communities. Additionally, the group shared knowledge related to how best to deliver messages and generally reduce barriers to completing the survey.

#### *SURVEY INSTRUMENT DESCRIPTION*

The finalized survey instrument instructed participants that 'outdoor activities' were defined as "anything you do outside during your free time," and consisted of 22 scale, list, and open-ended response questions. Questions related to a wide variety of topics, including but not limited to, participation in outdoor activities and motivating factors, barriers to participation in outdoor activities, and preferences for communication related to outdoor activities. The survey also asked participants general demographic questions.

#### *SAMPLING STRATEGY FOR THE HOUSEHOLD SURVEY*

A stratified random sample of 8,000 Minnesota households was purchased for the study, and after initial surveys were sent out, 468 were returned as non-deliverable, making for a true sample size of 7,532. To maintain consistency with the 2004 survey, sampling was based on five regions, four of which represent greater Minnesota, and the fifth representing the Minneapolis-St. Paul seven-county metropolitan area. Proportionality was distributed the same in both the 2017 and 2004 surveys, meaning the four greater Minnesota regions each represent 18 percent of the total sample size, while the Minneapolis-St. Paul region represents 28 percent of the total sample size.

#### *ADMINISTRATION OF THE HOUSEHOLD SURVEY*

Participants could complete the survey using one of three modes—online, on paper, or by phone. The survey and many of the communication materials were available in English, Somali, and Spanish. Those who shared their responses to the survey were entered into a series of drawings for Visa gift cards.

Each household was first sent a postcard letting them know they were selected to participate. The postcard included a web address to complete the survey online. Those who did not complete the survey online after initial contact were sent paper copies of the survey via mail on two separate occasions. The paper version of the survey included a cover letter explaining the survey’s purpose, a pre-paid, pre-addressed reply envelope, as well as a web address to complete the survey online. Following the mailings, selected participants were contacted by telephone interviewers to complete the survey over the phone. A final mailing of the paper survey was distributed to those households who had not yet completed the survey.

#### *ANALYSIS*

Following data collection, all completed survey responses were combined into a single dataset. Following the removal of all duplicate responses from a single household and unusable partial responses, the final dataset included 1,987 respondents, making for an overall response rate of 26 percent. Because the data showed heavier response rates from those identifying as male, as well as those who were older, weighting was applied to both gender and age, helping the data more closely represent the general population of Minnesota. Weighting was also applied according to the state regions to improve proportionality between responses and the population of each region. Overall, the resulting weighted dataset is reflective of the age, gender and geographic distributions in Minnesota’s population, with slight over-representations of people age 18 to 34 and of females. However when comparing to the total population of Minnesota, the final weighted dataset still underrepresents people from communities of color. Weighting to account for this underrepresentation would have been inappropriate given the low number of responses from some of these groups in the dataset.

### INTRODUCTION

To help inform this SCORP, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) distributed an on-line survey to local outdoor recreation providers throughout the state of Minnesota in November 2018. The intent of the survey was to gather information from local providers – primarily counties and cities – about issues they see for outdoor recreation and how they anticipate prioritizing their efforts for the next five years. The survey results would supplement information about local-level outdoor recreation that was already available from other sources, including the Greater Minnesota Park and Trail Commission.

### METHODOLOGY

#### *SURVEY INSTRUMENT DEVELOPMENT*

The survey instrument and communication materials were developed by the DNR SCORP project team. Survey topics were selected to collect data that could be compared with information about state-level and regional level priorities. The team also looked at survey instruments used by other states as part of their SCORP planning processes.

#### *SURVEY INSTRUMENT DESCRIPTION*

The survey instrument consisted of 29 scale, list, and open-ended response questions. Topics addressed by survey questions included visitation trends, funding sources, types and conditions of facilities managed, and plans for acquisition, development and rehabilitation activities. Open-ended questions included inquiries about climate change impacts and adaptations, and priorities for the next SCORP.

#### *ADMINISTRATION OF THE LOCAL RECREATION PROVIDERS SURVEY*

The notice of the online survey was distributed to local recreation providers with the assistance of several groups. The survey notice was distributed by the Minnesota Parks and Recreation Association to its member organizations. The notice was also distributed via the Association of Minnesota Counties and League of Minnesota Cities. The project team realized there would be some overlap – with some organizations possibly receiving multiple notices – when distributing the survey through these three groups, but preferred that situation to potentially not reaching some local providers.

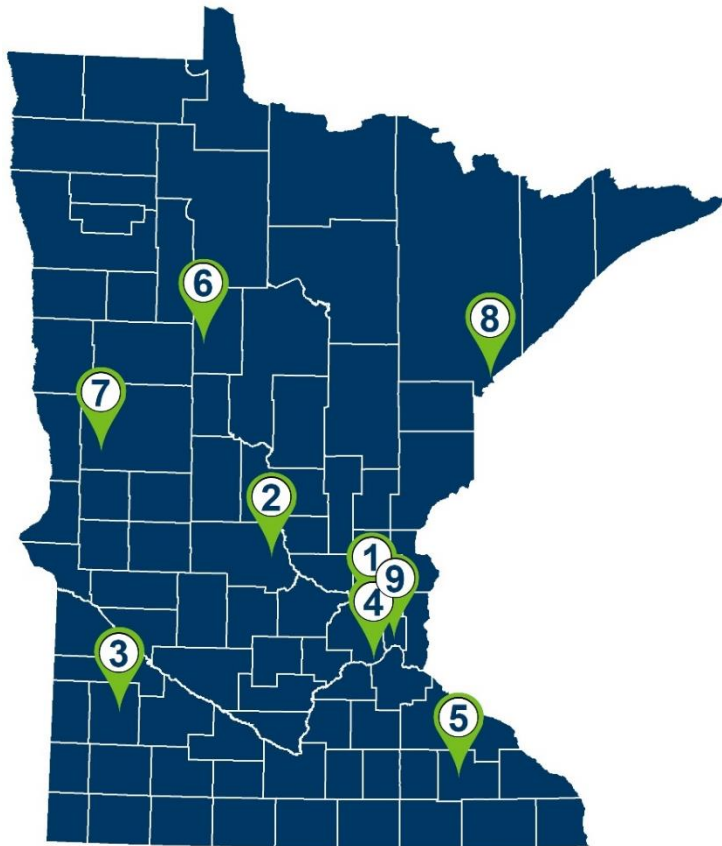
#### *ANALYSIS*

A total of 56 survey responses were received – 34 from counties and 22 from cities. Overall, the information shared by local recreation providers about recreational trends and their plans for providing opportunities over the next five years was consistent with the directions heard from state and regional entities, and with the input that had been gathered from the Parks and Trails Legacy 10-Year Celebration events and other sources.



## APPENDIX C. LEGACY AMENDMENT 10<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY – PARKS AND TRAILS CELEBRATION EVENTS

In 2018, Minnesota marked the tenth anniversary of the passage of the Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment to enhance, but not replace, existing funding for the protection of natural resources, outdoor recreation, the arts and cultural heritage. To recognize the first ten years of this 25-year constitutional amendment, a series of nine regional public events were held around the state to celebrate, educate, and listen as citizens shared their perspectives on, and aspirations for, Minnesota’s comprehensive system of state and regional parks and trails. These public engagement events were held at the following locations:



### 1. *Silverwood Park*

Location: (North Twin Cities) St. Anthony (Three Rivers Park District)  
Date: Saturday, January 27, 2018  
Number of public attendees: 200

### 2. *Saint John’s University*

Location: (Central Minnesota) Collegeville  
Date: Friday, April 27, 2018  
Number of public attendees: 20

### 3. *City of Marshall*

Location: (Southwest Minnesota) Red Baron Arena, Marshall  
Date: Sunday, April 29, 2018  
Number of public attendees: 65

### 4. *City of Bloomington*

Location: (South Twin Cities) Hyland-Bush-Anderson Lakes Park Reserve, Normandale Lake Band Shell, Bloomington (City of Bloomington Parks/Three Rivers Park District)  
Date: Friday, May 11, 2018  
Number of public attendees: 85

### 5. *City of Rochester*

Location: (Southeast Minnesota) 125 LIVE Center for Active Adults, Rochester  
Date: Saturday, May 19, 2018  
Number of public attendees: 20

### 6. *Itasca State Park*

Location: (Northwest Minnesota) Itasca State Park, Park Rapids  
Date: Saturday, June 2, 2018  
Number of public attendees: 200

### 7. *City of Fergus Falls*

Location: (West-Central Minnesota) Prairie Wetland Environmental Learning Center, Fergus Falls  
Date: Saturday, June 16, 2018  
Number of public attendees: 20

### 8. *City of Duluth*

Location: (Northeast Minnesota) Essentia Health Duluth Heritage Sports Center, Duluth  
Date: Wednesday, June 27, 2018  
Number of public attendees: 1,000

### 9. *Minnesota State Fair*

Location: Minnesota State Fair, MN DNR Building, Falcon Heights

Dates: August 23 to September 3, 2018  
Number of public attendees: 2,400+ (recorded interactions)

Note: Several thousand more fairgoers provided feedback on Legacy priorities through an engagement activity at the fair. This attendance number does not reflect those interactions.