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DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

DEVELOPMENT & ACQUISITION STATUS



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Rice Lake
State Park



January 8, 1990

SB
482
.M6
D34
v.43

Printed on recycled paper.

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(Funding for document digitization was provided, in part, by a grant from the Minnesota Historical & Cultural Heritage Program.)

MINNESOTA STATE PARK SYSTEM

The mission of the Division of Parks and Recreation is to provide a state park system that perpetuates Minnesota's scenic beauty and its natural and cultural resources, while being responsive to public needs and expectations, and providing a diversity of recreational opportunities.

The Division of Parks and Recreation manages 64 state parks across Minnesota. The state park system is vital to Minnesota's tourism, an industry that is becoming the backbone of many economies in greater Minnesota. Our most unique and valuable cultural and natural resources are found within state park boundaries. It is the Division of Parks & Recreation's responsibility to acquire, protect and interpret these unique resources.

Prior to the 1989 legislative session, funding constraints and increasing visitor use seriously eroded the Division of Parks and Recreation's ability to provide quality recreational experiences and services. Since then the Governor and state legislators have responded to the need for increased funding for the operations budget. However, financing the maintenance of existing facilities and new development in the face of increasing visitor use remains a problem. This will be addressed during the 1990 legislative session when a capital bonding bill is considered.

The state park system has the Department of Natural Resource's (DNR) largest physical plant with over 2,800 major facilities requiring major rehabilitation. The Division of Parks & Recreation has identified more than \$55 million in capital budget needs. These projects include land acquisition, resource management, major rehabilitation or replacement of existing facilities and a few new facilities. Legislative funding requests to meet this need will be spread throughout future bienniums.

A recent study conducted by the Minnesota Historical Society identifies 515 historic structures located in the state park system. These structures are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Most of these structures are of Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) and Work Progress Administration (WPA) vintage. The CCC/WPA structures were constructed in the 1930's. These facilities are over 50 years old and many are in need of major rehabilitation which includes the electrical, sewage, and water systems associated with these buildings.

Many years of intensive use is also a consideration when looking at the current condition of campgrounds, picnic areas, group camps and trail systems. Lack of development and rehabilitation of these and other state park facilities will reduce park use. A reduction in state park use will adversely impact the economic development of adjacent communities and Minnesota's effort to improve tourism.

As capital development funds have become available we have completed the highest priority projects. As additional needs are identified, they are reviewed and placed on the statewide priority list for future completion.

In 1991, Itasca, Minnesota's oldest state park, will be 100 years old. For 100 years Minnesota has had a park system to be proud of. The present challenge is to manage the park resources and recreational development to ensure that Minnesotans will be proud of their state park system for another hundred years.

AN OVERVIEW OF RICE LAKE STATE PARK

Rice Lake State Park is located in southeastern Minnesota, nine miles east of Owatonna on CSAH #19. The park was established in 1963 and has a statutory boundary that encompasses 1,060 acres. Of these, 325 are not state-owned lands.

The landforms of Rice Lake State park have resulted from glacial activity that occurred 100,000 years ago. Four times, massive glaciers thousands of feet thick, have advanced and retreated across the area that is now the park. When the glaciers melted and retreated across this area, glacial drift deposits comprised of sand, gravel, rock and mineral debris, were left behind as the hills we see today. The drift deposits found in the park range from 100 to 200 feet thick, and overlay sandstone and dolostone. Rice Lake was formed by a huge piece of glacial ice buried in a drift pile. This ice melted to form the lake.

Rice Lake State Park is situated in what was once an area of scattered oak woodlands and brushlands with prairie, that extended from the Twin Cities southward into Iowa.

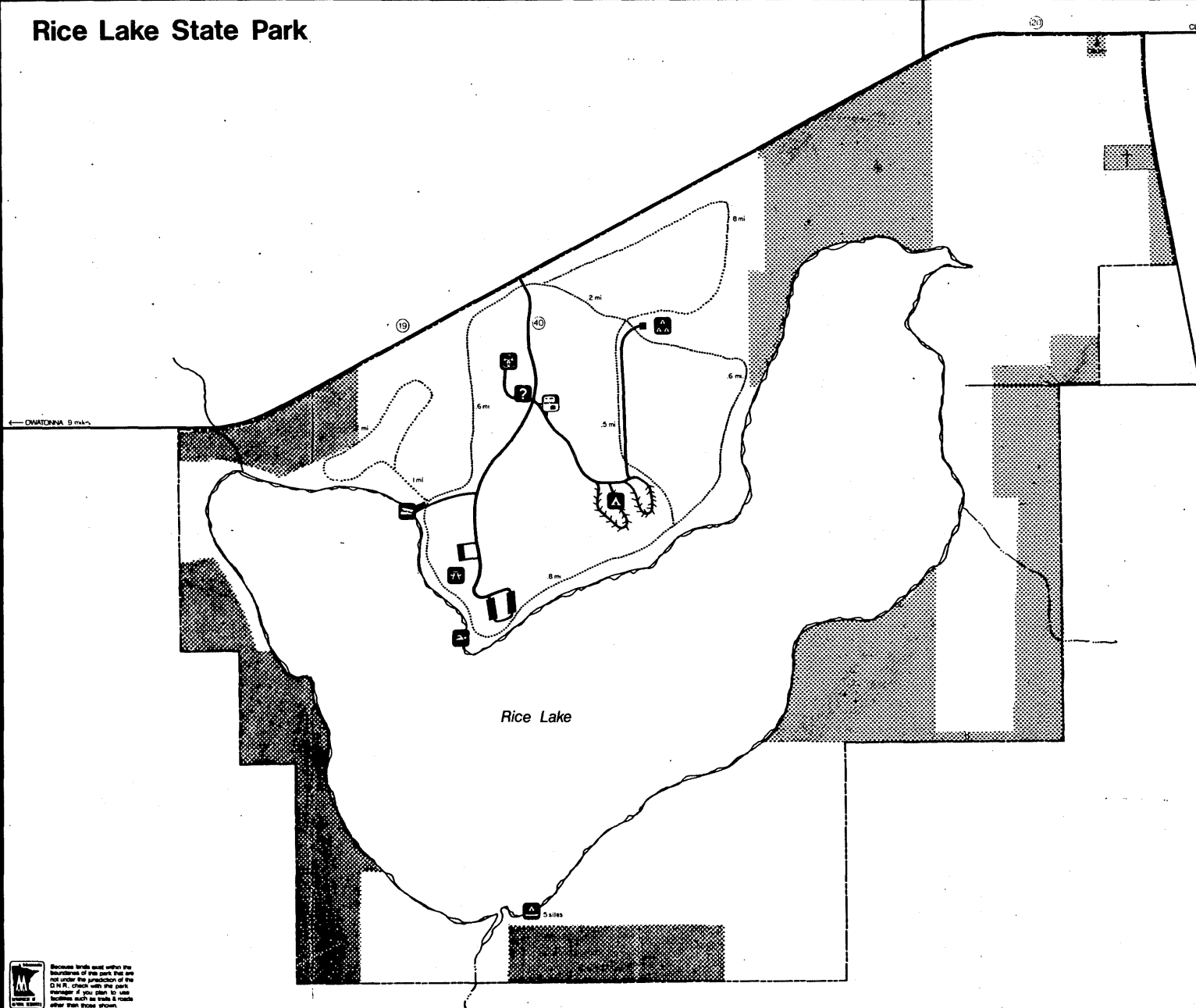
Prior to European settlement, Native Americans used this area for centuries. The many artifactual remains they left behind are now protected by the Division of Parks and Recreation. As its name indicates, Rice Lake was once extensively utilized for rice harvesting by Native Americans. One of the long-range goals of the Minnesota Division of Parks is the restoration of indigenous vegetation. Perhaps in the future, wild rice will once again produce food for migrating waterfowl at Rice Lake.

The prehistoric vegetation in the park area was dominated by prairie intermingled with ash groves and scattered oak trees. As the area was settled, the rich prairie soils were converted to cropland or pastured, resulting in a loss of many of the oaks. The present vegetation pattern reflects this disturbance, as well as the suppression of wildfires, necessary to maintain the oak woods and brushlands, and prairie habitats. Currently, the vegetation consists of old fields, oaks on the dry upland sites, maples and basswoods on the moist slopes, and bottomland hardwoods and marsh in the wet sites.

The variety of plant communities found in the park, including the lake, provide important habitats for a wealth of wildlife. Numerous species of birds are known to inhabit the park throughout the seasons. Some of these include the osprey, northern harrier, great-horned owl, great blue heron, pileated woodpecker, and belted kingfisher. More importantly, the lake provides habitat for waterfowl and shorebirds in an area of the state where this habitat is limited. Many mammals also inhabit the park, including the white-tailed deer, raccoon, mink, red and grey fox, muskrat and fox squirrel.

Rice Lake State Park offers visitors a variety of recreational experiences. Miles of trails provide opportunities to explore the natural and historical features of the park. Rice Lake is probably the most important interpretive feature of the park. It is one of the last remnants of a once vast and numerous array of prairie pothole lakes. Nearly all of these wetlands have been drained for modern crop production. Rice Lake was formed on the edge of glacial ice, and is the most eastern natural lake in southern Minnesota. This habitat is critical, as there are no waterfowl nesting lakes between Rice Lake and the Mississippi River. Visitors can experience terrific waterfowl and bird watching, in addition to camping, cross-county skiing, snowmobiling, canoeing and picnicking.

Rice Lake State Park



LEGEND

TRAILS
 Hiking

FACILITIES

- Information / Office
- Picnic Area
- Swimming
- Boat Ramp
- Interpretive Center
- Campground
- Primitive Group Camp
- Canoe Camping
- Trailer Sanitation Station

PRIVATE PROPERTY
Public Use Prohibited

SCALE

0 1 2 3 4 5 MILES
 0 1 2 3 4 5 10 KILOMETERS

Because birds and other wildlife are not under the jurisdiction of the DNR, please contact the park manager if you plan to use facilities such as trails & roads other than those shown.

EXISTING FACILITIES

The following is an inventory of the existing physical plant of Rice Lake State Park.

Acres in Statutory Boundary - 1,060

Acres of state land - 735.00

Acres of non-state land - 325.00

Campsites

Drive in - 42

Canoe in - 5

Showers

Modern toilets

Campsites with electricity - 16

Miles of Trails

Hiking - 4.3

Cross Country Ski - 4

Snowmobile - 2.5

Playgrounds - 1

Beaches - 1

Canoe Rental

Miles of Road

Asphalt - .5

Gravel - 3.5

Open Picnic Shelter

Number of Picnic Tables - 40

Trailer Dump Station

Water Accesses - 1

Number of Buildings

Over 100 sq.ft. - 10

Under 100 sq.ft. - 6

Miles of Posted Boundary - 14

Seasonal Visitor Centers

Park Utilities

Number of Septic Tanks - 2

Number of Wells - 5

Number of Individual

Water Distribution Systems - 4

Miles of State Owned Power Line - .3

PROBLEMS FACING RICE LAKE STATE PARK

There are many public recreational facilities in Rice Lake State Park to maintain. Many are in need of replacement or major rehabilitation. Most were constructed in the 1960's, and are now in need of rehabilitation. New facilities are needed to meet growing recreational demands.

The parks natural and cultural resources are also in need of protection, management and interpretation to perpetuate Rice Lake's identity. Problems with exotic species, such as the invasion of European buckthorn in oak woods, are displacing native species. A current lack of prairie seed from local origins limits prairie and oak woodland restoration efforts. The park's relative isolation as a natural area in an agricultural community increases the difficulty to manage and maintain the ecological balance necessary to protect park resources. Increased pressures for uses within and outside the park increase the difficulties of maintaining these island communities.

Important improvements have been completed at Rice Lake State Park in recent years. However, the goals identified in the ten-year-old management plan have not been achieved.

RECENT DEVELOPMENT IN RICE LAKE STATE PARK

Major development projects over the past few years have included:

1. Beach area improvements.
2. Construction of picnic shelter.
3. Addition of showers to existing toilet building.
4. Addition of electricity to 16 campsites.
5. Development of playground equipment.
6. Development of canoe-in campsites.

**RICE LAKE STATE PARK
CAPITAL NEEDS**

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Oak Woods Management - \$10,000

Control the invasion of European buckthorn, and maintain the native oak woodlands.

Subtotal \$10,000

MAJOR REHABILITATION

Campground Rehabilitation - \$20,000

Grading and graveling roads, leveling campsites and spurs, landscaping, and replacing picnic tables.

Subtotal \$20,000

NEW DEVELOPMENT

Shop - \$55,000

Construct new shop area with heated work area and construction of a gravel service court.

Enclose Picnic Shelter - \$30,000

Enclose existing picnic shelter to serve as winter warming shelter. Partial funding for this development is being raised by the Rice Lake Park Advisory Board.

Cold Storage Building - \$30,000

New storage building to house state equipment and supplies that are currently stored outside.

Subtotal \$115,000

TOTAL DEVELOPMENT NEEDS \$145,000

LAND ACQUISITION

There are approximately 20,000 acres of private land within the boundaries of Minnesota State Parks. Acquisition of these lands is an ongoing process that occurs as parcels become available for purchase and funds are available. Present acquisition costs are averaging about a \$1,000 per acre across the state. It would therefore cost about \$20,000,000 to acquire all the private land within state parks at present values.

The park map shows the location of private holdings within the park. These properties should be purchased before private development increases within the park's statutory boundary.

The following issues highlight problems associated with private property within state parks.

- * Private lands within state parks are being sought out by developers.
- * Subdivision for residential use will cause such lands to be too expensive to acquire in the future.
- * Land uses such as gravel extraction and clear cut logging adversely impact state parks and adjoining public lands.
- * Some private lands limit public use of existing park facilities and lands because of their location.
- * Difficulty in carrying out consistent and effective resource management.

These issues associated with privately owned lands within state parks threaten existing public investment and limit public use.

PRIVATE LANDS TO BE ACQUIRED IN RICE LAKE STATE PARK

Parcel #	Acres
1	49.00
2	40.00
3	20.00
4	20.00
5	55.43
6	35.00
7	60.39
8	15.00
10	5.50
11	2.17
12	4.50
13	2.00

Total 308.99 acres

PARK POTENTIAL

What efforts will the completion of resource management, rehabilitation and new development projects have on Rice Lake State Park? These projects along with the acquisition of private lands within the park will assure the preservation of these unique resources and facilities for future generations. Active management will be required to maintain and regenerate existing plant communities. These will ensure that future visitors will be able to experience the diverse nature of Minnesota's prairies, forests and wetlands.

Some improvements will not only increase park use but will greatly increase the quality of the visitors experience. Many of the rehabilitation projects will increase staff efficiency and cut the costs of maintaining facilities.

New facilities will improve customer service while giving the visitor a greater opportunity to learn about Minnesota's natural and cultural resources.

The acquisition of private lands within the park will assure that private and commercial development do not detract from the natural beauty of Rice Lake State Park.

A stable funding source is essential for effective long term resource management and capital budget planning for the Minnesota State Park system and Rice Lake State Park.

SUMMARY

Currently, statewide capital needs for development and acquisition are **\$55,000,000**. The mission of the Minnesota State Park System can be achieved by funding support to meet this need over the next several bienniums.

Rice Lake State Park acquisition costs will be determined by appraisals.

Rice Lake State Park development needs **\$145,000**.

**Help us celebrate the 100th anniversary of the
Minnesota State Park System in 1991!**

