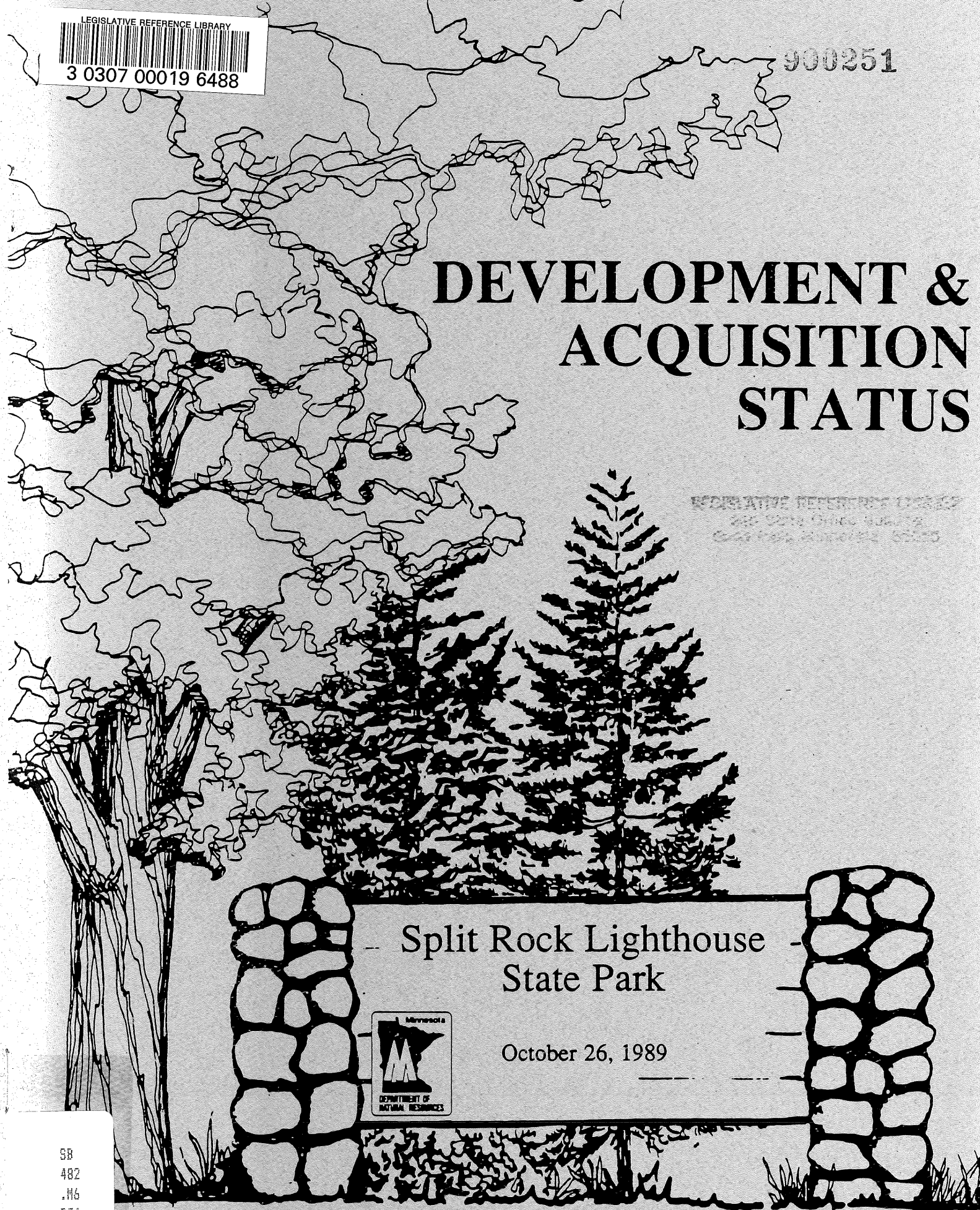


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# DEVELOPMENT & ACQUISITION STATUS

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## 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 SPLIT ROCK LIGHTHOUSE STATE PARK**

Split Rock Lighthouse State Park is located in Lake County along the North Shore of Lake Superior approximately twenty miles north of Two Harbors on U.S. Highway 61. The statutory boundary encompasses 1987.18 acres. Of these 132.30 acres are privately owned.

The Minnesota Historical Society administers the 25 acre Split Rock Lighthouse Historic Site and the recently completed interpretive center adjacent to the site. The center features a theater, a large exhibit on shipwrecks, lighthouses, and commercial fishing on Lake Superior and a museum shop. Visitors can tour the lighthouse, fog signal building and restored keepers residence.

The federal government contracted to have Split Rock Light Station built in 1909 after a storm wrecked six ships within a dozen miles of the Split Rock River four years earlier. The lighthouse was commissioned in 1910 and shined over Western Lake Superior for the next 59 years until it was decommissioned by the Coast Guard in 1969 because of improvements in shipboard technology. In 1971 the federal government transferred ownership of the light station to the State of Minnesota to be operated as a historical site. In 1976 the Minnesota Historical Society operation of the site.

Split Rock Lighthouse is situated atop scenic bluffs created by ancient volcanoes. Hundreds of millions of years ago volcanic activity forced masses of molten rock up through cracks and fissures in the earth's crust. This molten rock formed extensive lava flows that serve as bedrock underlying the park.

In addition to the lighthouse, the park has some very diverse resources. There are 4 1/2 miles of shoreline on Lake Superior. The Split Rock River Valley is quite scenic, as are the high ridges inland from Highway 61 and along the lake. The vegetation is primarily birch with scattered aspen although prior to the logging there were extensive stands of white pine.

Steep wooded hills dissected by stream and river valleys typify much of the park. Before European settlement vast forests of red and white pine dominated the landscape of the park and most of the lower portion of the North Shore. With the onset of logging in the late 1800's and the suppression of wildfires by man, the vegetational pattern of the region changed dramatically. Today the dominant forest cover type is birch followed by spruce, fir and ash interspersed with scattered areas of lowland and upland brush.

Split Rock Lighthouse State Park provides habitat for a variety of wildlife. Many species of birds inhabit or visit the park including great-horned owls, ruffed grouse, herring gulls, common loons and a variety of song birds. The park is host to a number of bird-of-prey species during spring and fall migrations. These include Peregrine falcons, bald eagles, merlins, cooper's and sharp-shinned hawks, kestrels and broad winged hawks. The park is home to many mammal species as well. Commonly seen mammals include white-tailed deer, moose, black bear, raccoon, beaver and snowshoe hare.

The rugged natural beauty of Split Rock Lighthouse staged against the splendor of Lake Superior makes this park popular with hundreds of thousands of visitors each year. The Split Rock Light Station is the focal point for visitors to the park and includes the most photographed lighthouse in the United States. Other popular visitor activities include camping on the shore of Lake Superior, stream and river fishing, picnicking, and hiking the miles of park trails.

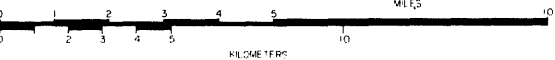
TRAILS

- ..... Hiking
- ..... Superior Hiking Trail
- \* Overlook

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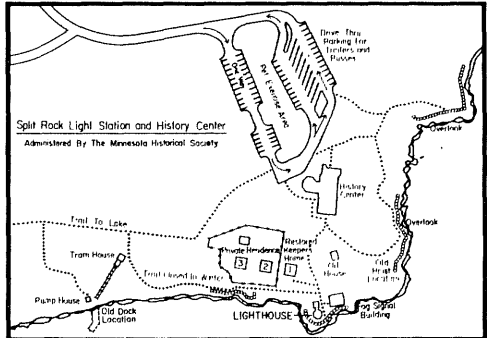
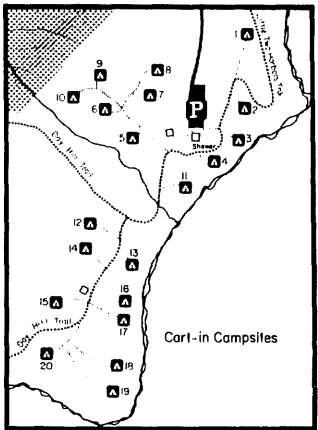
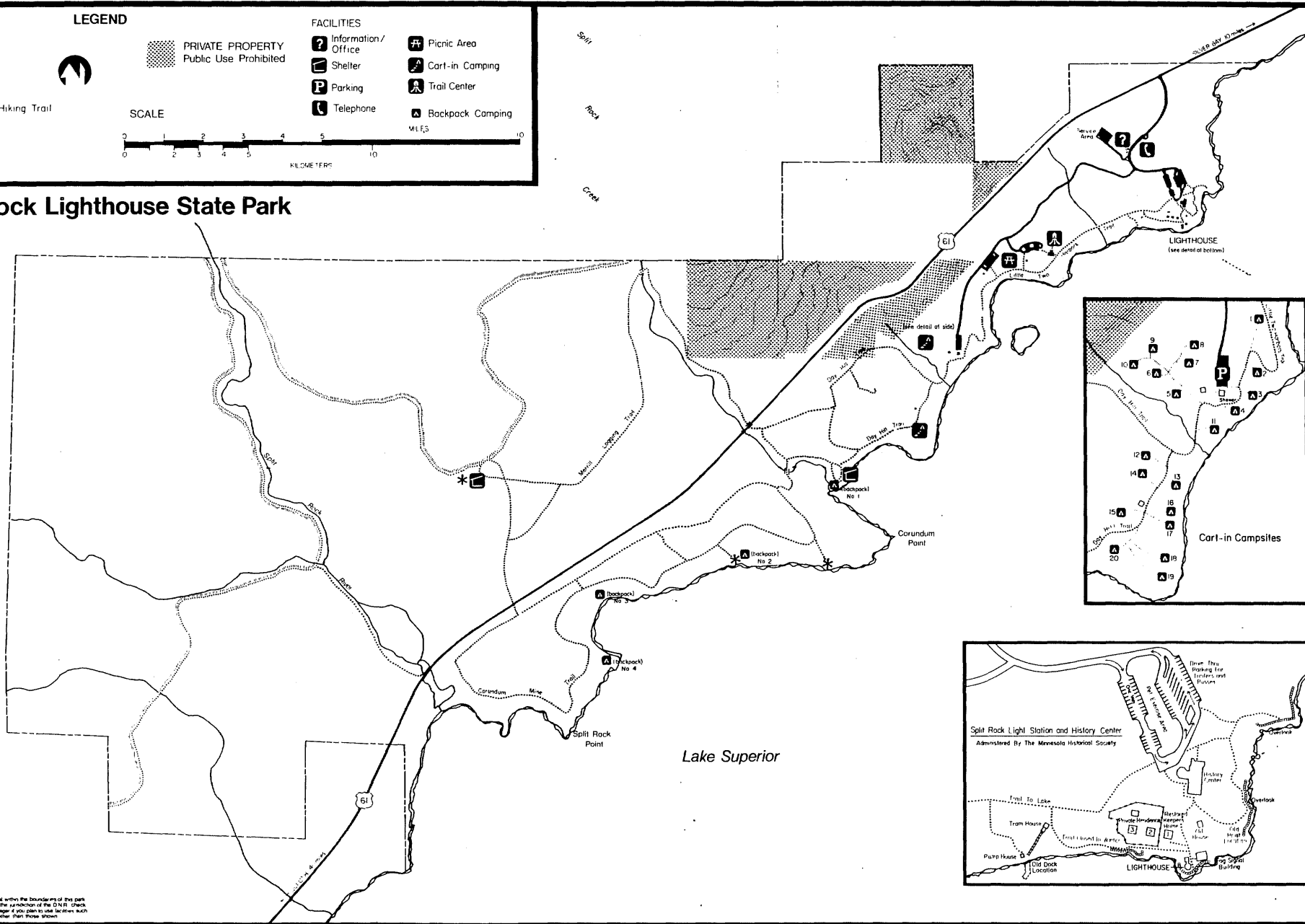
PRIVATE PROPERTY  
Public Use Prohibited



FACILITIES

- ? Information / Office
- Shelter
- P Parking
- Telephone
- Picnic Area
- Car-in Camping
- Trail Center
- Backpack Camping

# Split Rock Lighthouse State Park



Be aware that land within the boundaries of this park may not be under the jurisdiction of the DNR. Check with the park manager if you plan to use facilities such as trails & trails other than those shown.

## EXISTING FACILITIES

The following is an inventory of the existing physical plant of Split Rock Lighthouse State Park.

Acres in Statutory Boundary - 1987.18

Acres of state land - 1854.88

Acres of private land - 132.30

### Campsites

Walk in - 20

Back Pack - 4

Showers

Modern toilets

### Miles of Trails

Hiking - 12

Bicycle - 5

Cross Country Ski - 8

### Miles of Road

Blacktop - 1

### Open and Enclosed Picnic Shelters

Number of Picnic Tables - 25

### Number of Buildings

Over 100 sq.ft. - 6

Under 100 sq.ft. - 4

Miles of Posted Boundary - 1

Visitor Center

### Park Utilities

Miles of State Owned Power Line - 0.4

## PROBLEMS FACING SPLIT ROCK LIGHT HOUSE

There are many public recreational facilities in Split Rock Lighthouse State Park to maintain. The parks natural and cultural resources are also in need of protection and management to perpetuate Split Rock Lighthouse's resources.

There are major birch die backs particularly in the campground. Resource Management needs are for pine re-establishment, native hardwood regeneration and underplanting, campground replantings because of the dieback, wildlife openings and a resource assessment of the recently acquired Merrill property.

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

## **RECENT DEVELOPMENT IN SPLIT ROCK LIGHTHOUSE STATE PARK**

Major development projects over the past few years have included:

1. New cart-in campground.
2. New picnic/trail shelter and area.
3. New contact station/office.
4. New entrance road.

## **SPLIT ROCK LIGHTHOUSE STATE PARK CAPITAL NEEDS**

### **RESOURCE MANAGEMENT**

#### **Pine Re-establishment - \$9,500**

Although a large effort was recommended in the management plan, nothing has been completed. This project would establish 10,000 Norway and white pine transplants in areas formerly occupied by pine and provide browse protection for 20 percent of the plantings.

#### **Convert Hardwood Stands to Spruce - \$10,000**

To counter the birch dieback, 30,000 white spruce will be underplanted in the birch stands. Since they are not preferred deer browse, they will not require the protection of other conifers.

#### **Campground Replanting - \$20,000**

A major effort to replace campground trees and shrubs lost to the dieback is needed. Transplants would be moved with a small tree spade or by hand.

#### **Wildlife Openings - \$3,500**

Establish several one-half to one acre openings on the inland side of Highway #61. These mature birch trees will sprout a dense young birch stand that will benefit a variety of wildlife and will reduce the number of deer crossing Highway #61.

#### **Resource Assessment of Merrill Property - \$5,000**

Inventory significant plant and animal species, former land uses and significant communities on recently acquired Merrill property.

**Subtotal \$48,000**

### **MAJOR REHABILITATION**

#### **Trail system rehabilitation \$30,000**

Project includes rehabilitation of old trails on inland side of Highway 61.

**Subtotal \$30,000**

**NEW DEVELOPMENT**

**Shop Facility - \$135,000**

Construct a new shop facility with water to allow efficient use of staff for equipment and facility maintenance.

**Trails - \$25,000**

Construct hiking/skiing trail through 1013 newly purchased acreage.

**Vehicle Campground - \$250,000**

Construct vehicle campground with showers/toilet facility.

**Subtotal \$410,000**

**TOTAL DEVELOPMENT NEEDS - \$488,000**

**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 reduce public use of existing park facilities and lands because of their location.

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

**PRIVATE LANDS TO BE ACQUIRED IN  
SPLIT ROCK LIGHTHOUSE STATE PARK**

Parcel #	Acres
3a	19.00
5	113.30
<b>Total</b>	<b>1 32.30 acres.</b>



## PARK POTENTIAL

What efforts will the completion of resource management, and rehabilitation projects have on Split Rock Lighthouse 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.

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

New campsites will allow us to rest some sites. This will improve the camping experience while protecting the resource.

The acquisition of private lands within the park will assure that private and commercial development do not detract from the natural beauty of Split Rock Lighthouse 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.

Split Rock Lighthouse State Park acquisition costs will be determined by appraisals.

Split Rock Lighthouse State Park development needs - **\$488,000**

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

