



PEOPLE-POWERED POLICY

60 YEARS OF SAFEGUARDING MINNESOTA'S NATURAL HERITAGE

Key Note Speech by
FORMER SEN. DAVE DURENBERGER

60th Annual Dinner of Parks & Trails Council of Minnesota

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My goal tonight is to express what it means to me to be a Minnesotan. Not the one who starts every day and every conversation with a weather report—or, as we age, with a five-minute health status report. Rather the person who learned early in his life, and had reinforced along its personal and professional path, what it means to build on the gift of life here: a better future for our children, our grandchildren and our neighbors.

I am reminded from my perch here in my 80th year, of how Minnesota became a world leader in preserving the natural heritage that drew our Native American forbearers to this land in the first place. They remain here to remind us of their heritage. That also is the story of the Parks and Trails Council of Minnesota I was asked to help you celebrate this evening.

Minnesota is not famous for its oceans, its mountains or its Golden Gate, but rather for what people like you and I would become here. Those who were our parents, grandparents and great-grandparents brought a unique culture to the prairie, Big Woods and lakes state that is Minnesota. The history of this state has evolved from the frugal Yankee entrepreneurs of New England, with their Calvinist conscience and civic virtue, who met up here with northern and eastern European immigrants.

People like my great-grandfather, who on the family tree in a farmhouse just north of the Boden See in Baden-Württemberg, Germany, is listed as “Gephard Durrenberger, May 21, 1859— Gone to America.” These immigrant men and women were frugal, of necessity. But they possessed a social conscience and religious values, which more than anything shaped Minnesota’s progressive cultural and political traditions.

Yes, we are home to the largest, most profitable private agricultural company in the world. To the most famous medical destination in the world. And to Lake Wobegon. To families who, for generations, have provided us with employment in socially responsible businesses and with their philanthropy. Yes, we are the source of the greatest river in the world and the deepest of the three largest freshwater lakes in the world. We are the home of “folle avoine,” also known as wild rice. Of French voyageurs, of the iron ore that helped win two world wars and more. Of timber and turkeys, the wolf and the walleye, smelt and Spam.

But the story of parks and trails and open space preservation and prairie and wetlands restoration; the story of clean water and clean air, quality education at any cost and for all; the story of community and voluntary association, and of progressive governance in both the public and private sector under the leadership of both Republicans and Democrats; The story of the welcome for the immigrant and the

refugee, of health promotion, equal justice for all, the State of the Arts, the Minnesota Outdoor Recreation and Resources Commission, and the Citizens League. This is the heart of the people who for the past 60 years have been the Parks & Trails Council of Minnesota.

As an organization of 3,200, members, we are a mere 60 years of age, but our roots go back centuries. Ask Jim Oberstar why. He will take you, as he did me, back to the history of our forbears in small European cities, who built green spaces for the use and enjoyment of all. Call it the Commons. It is for all to enjoy. An inheritance to be passed on to future generations.

Everyone in this room tonight knows where most Minnesotans stand when it comes to protecting and preserving and enjoying our heritage. In the middle of recent partisan political battles over spending and taxing and wars we couldn't win, in the middle of the collapse of an old economy and the near collapse of our financial industry and our life savings, 62 percent of Minnesotans voted to tax themselves to provide for future generations like ours. We have gone on record to say that when the Commons is threatened, and the opportunity to create opportunity for all is at stake, we are ready to do our part—and then some.

Visitors to Minnesota tell friends elsewhere that everyone in the state seems to spend their weekends “up at the lake,” and not just in the summer. Which prompts their friends to ask just how big that lake really is.

Minnesotans believe, during a winter like the one we've experienced, that the colder it gets and the deeper the snow, the more we come to love the character of this place we call our home. We measure the thickness of the ice on Lake Superior and the ice caves of the Apostle Islands, the depth of the snow banks along our sidewalks and the number of auto manufacturers doing endurance testing on new cars in International Falls.

THE EVOLUTION OF PARKS AND TRAILS

It was with a Minnesota lake and the origin of the most famous river in the world that Minnesota's parks and trails began. Credit for Itasca State Park at the headwaters of the Mississippi River goes to a man named Jacob V. Brower, who camped with two friends in a deserted log cabin on the lake in the winter of 1888. His survey of what he concluded should be a protected resource persuaded the Minnesota Historical Society in 1891 to initiate the legislative approval process.

It might interest you to know that as early as 1867, a 200-acre plot of land around Minnehaha Falls was first proposed as a state park. In 1889, the Minnesota Legislature gave the city of Minneapolis \$100,000

to purchase 173 acres around the falls. We go there today to celebrate Syttende Mai and Svenskarnas Dag.

Whether you date the state parks movement from 1867 or 1891, it is the story of local civic leaders preserving and protecting unique resources and monuments to our history. It is also the story of population growth and economic growth and development, with successes and failures, and of a fairly conservative approach to the role of government.

To make my case tonight, I will describe the evolution of parks and trails in Minnesota in three stages. The first stage is the natural resource development period. The second, the land development period, and the third I'll call the environmental health period. The first begins with the European immigrant

settlements and extends through the 1940s. The second is the decades of the '50s and the '60s and the third begins with the first Earth Day in April 1970.

The first stage makes the case for the leadership of individuals and communities of individuals and a relatively small role for public investment. The second stage focused these leaders in a collective effort to influence the entire state community and its elected leaders to make substantial public investment decisions—this is where we come in. It is also the beginning of a strong influence from our national government. The third stage deals with the impact of population and economic growth on the environmental health of the community; it expands the resource preservation instinct to focus even more on protecting both the resource and the people of this state and region and it becomes both an influence on national policy decisions and dependence on federal appropriations.

You are committed to one of the most important efforts in which we Minnesotans have engaged. The events and the leadership of the past have made what you will contribute in the future a lighter burden to carry. Because the members and the leaders of the Parks & Trails Council of Minnesota have always been—and now, especially, are—relied upon by policy makers as the lead voice and actors for parks and trails and for land acquisition and recreation access.

STAGE ONE: Natural Resource Development

The first stage of park development was stimulated in part by history and in part by the economic development of natural resources, especially timber from the great forests of the northern half of our state that supplied lumber and eventually paper to the nation. Inter-State Park at the Dalles of the St. Croix

River was established in 1897 by lumbermen and locals who, from before the Civil War, recognized its fragile beauty. Monuments to the Dakota Wars, to disastrous fires in Hinckley and Moose Lake, Jay Cooke State Park on the St. Louis River and Whitewater State Park near St. Charles (known when founded as “the Paradise of Minnesota”) were followed by other parks that owed their sponsorships more to civic pride and endeavor than statewide significance.

Each of these parks were created through the initiative of local civic and business leaders to celebrate an historic event or a natural resource ideally preserved for the use of the common man who could not afford his own estate. While there were officially 40 parks in the state by 1940, Minnesota was only slowly beginning to think systemically and professionally about its investments.

Parks like William O’Brien, Nerstrand Woods, McCarthy Beach and Helmer Myhre, plus the acquisition of some of the more significant parts of what became the famed state parks along the North Shore, were evidence of better things to come.

What stood in the gap between minor league and major league parks was not leadership. Perhaps the most famous of our park leaders Clarence J. Magney of Duluth helped create Jay Cooke State Park in 1915 while mayor of Duluth. Then he stimulated legislative interest in acquiring lands on the North Shore which he envisioned with the development of TH 61 during the twenties, would need to be preserved; and concluded, as a state Supreme Court Justice, by providing leadership to the Minnesota Council of State Parks at its birth in the ’50s. In Minneapolis, there was the nationally renowned professional leadership of Theodore Wirth.

But as properties became more valued for private purposes, greater public financial investment was needed.

STAGE TWO: Land Development

Parks leaders pressed their representatives to increase public investment in land preservation. The baby boom had started, homes were expanding into suburbia and consumer demand was feeding new business and industry. The Dayton brothers were creating shopping Dales for their retail operations, but they also were the civic conscience that sought to influence legislative policies to anticipate land use change. They supported the Citizens League focus on public planning and investment. Brother Wally Dayton was particularly committed to natural resources. The theme for this period could well be Will Rogers famous quote, “They ain’t making land anymore.”

In 1953, the legislature authorized a park permit fee of \$1 a year to create a maintenance fund for parks. About the same time, a 44-year-old civil engineer named Udert W. Hella—forever known as Judge Hella—was appointed director of the Parks Division of Conservation. Conservation Commissioner Chester Wilson and Parks Director U.W. “Judge” Hella were committed to professionalism in developing a state park system, but recognized that a citizens’ legislature would better respond to the leadership of citizens.

At their suggestion, the Minnesota Council of State Parks was formed by the Itasca State Park Advisory Board, at meetings in Douglas Lodge on September 19 and December 3, 1954. It had 16 members, including the Minnesota Supreme Court Justice Clarence R. Magney who, since his pre-WWI days as mayor of Duluth, had been fathering state parks. Red Wing publisher Al Marshall was elected chair. In 1963, the invited membership was expanded to 50 and in 1967, it was renamed Minnesota Parks & Trails Council and the Minnesota Parks Foundation was created to raise money and gifts of equity and land. In 1987, the organization became an association of all who wanted to be leaders in parks and trails.

A state senator from St. Paul had been elected governor in 1960. Elmer L. Andersen came to Minnesota from his boyhood home in Muskegon, Michigan. Raised in relative poverty by a divorced mother, Elmer loved to roam the shores of Lake Michigan, collecting nature specimens. At age 13, he started writing a newspaper column he called “Birds of Muskegon” which grew into “Birds of Michigan.” Andersen grew up to run HB Fuller and to become a state senator. He was asked by Al Marshall, Commissioner George Selke and Judge Hella to carry the bill to create Frontenac State Park on the site of the last French fur-trading post on the Mississippi.

Andersen ran for Governor in 1960 and, like all progressive Republicans, fell in love with northern Minnesota, its people and the prospect of winning statewide by cutting into the DFL vote “on the range.” This led to a chance meeting with Theodore Wirth’s son Conrad, who directed the National Park Service. Wirth planted in Andersen’s mind the notion of a Voyageurs’ National Park.

Andersen was a visionary who early in his term appointed a high-powered Minnesota Natural Resources Council chaired by businessman (and state senator) Henry McKnight. In 1962, the Council offered bold, far-reaching recommendations for investing in our natural resource infrastructure: wetlands, fisheries, wildlife, parks, trails and open space.

The McKnight Report led to the creation of the Minnesota Outdoor Resources and Recreation Commission, later known as the Legislative Commission on Minnesota Resources, under the leadership of Senator Gordon Rosenmeier, a Little Falls lawyer. Funded by a percentage of the cigarette tax, LCMR was the cornerstone of the state’s natural resource investments. F. Robert Edman was hired as research and planning coordinator. In that role, he was able to provide legislative leaders with the research they needed to enact nationally recognized development policies, including the creation of the State Planning Agency that would help a part-time legislature anticipate the future.

Sam Morgan was a lawyer at Briggs and Morgan in St. Paul, which numbered among its clients the H.B. Fuller Company. The Morgan in Briggs and Morgan was Sam's father, who died in 1957 and left Sam feeling comfortable enough by 1961 to dedicate an appreciable part of his time—and that of his trusted assistant Mary Johnson—to the work of the Council of State Parks. Thanks to Marilyn and Tom Utter, I have a copy of *Environmental Recollections*, the story of the first 20 years of the Minnesota Parks Foundation (1967–1988).

The original directors of the Foundation are men history will not forget. Reuel Harmon, president of Webb Publishing; Goodrich Lowry, chair of Northwestern National Bank; Arthur Roberts, Duluth attorney; Tom Savage, an original environmentalist and wealth management advisor; Henry “Heinie” Somsen, New Ulm attorney and Governor Harold LeVander's hunting buddy; Al Marshall; and Sam Morgan.

We see Sam Morgan's hand in the creation of the Washington County Land Trust created in 1991 and chaired by David Hartwell, a grandson of Charles Bell of General Mills and Bellwin. It later became the Minnesota Land Trust, another invaluable community resource. Morgan's description of the last-minute lobbying effort to establish Afton State Park in 1969, with detailed job assignments to some of the state's most prominent citizens to contact the Governor, key legislators and influential lobbyists, is a classic for teachers of public policy in Minnesota.

The 1960s and '70s saw the greatest surge in citizen leadership. It was also a time of major transition for the role of government in our country and our state. State legislators had full-time jobs at home and met just four or five months every other year. They called themselves conservatives or liberals but they were able to get more done than Republicans and Democrats now manage in four years.

A genuine citizens' legislature took a professional approach to the task of anticipating the impact a developing economy and population growth would have on our natural resources. In just two short sessions, 1961 and 1963, fifteen state parks were authorized, from Banning and Bear Head to Big Stone, and from Fort Snelling to the Upper Sioux Agency.

My political party in the 1960s and '70s was made up of progressive urban Republicans and more frugal rural conservatives. My boss, Governor Harold LeVander, was conservative enough to look askance at the Great Societies and New Frontiers in Washington DC. He preferred to work with the Minnesota Legislature to create uniquely Minnesota governmental solutions to commonly shared problems presented by citizens, defined by citizen legislators and solved by finding common ground between left and right. How well I recall LeVander's concern that he might be remembered as the first governor to approve a state budget of more than \$1 billion for a biennium!

LeVander's four-year term marked the apex of the non-partisan, citizen leaders' influence on public policy. The Citizens League, under Verne Johnson and then Ted Kolderie, recruited study committees on critical topics that attracted top-flight participation. Because so many members of the legislature were also members of the Citizens League, both Governor LeVander and Sen. Gordon Rosenmeier were sympathetic to the notion of Minnesota leadership in changing the capacity of state and local government to deal with urban sprawl and a host of related issues. A Metropolitan Council of 15 citizens appointed from 15 districts in the seven counties was created, along with a Metro Sewer Board and a Metro Transit Commission.

The League was also concerned about the lack of state parks and trails in the metro area and about the confluence of the state's three major rivers there. The Hennepin County Park Reserve District had been established a decade earlier, not as an agency of county government but dependent on the county tax base. The professional lead in the district was Cliff French, a man cast in the role of Theodore Wirth, but with a much more costly task to undertake. Creating a system of large park reserves, woodland and prairie restoration and linear trails—all ahead of the new suburban bulldozers. French and the Board, especially commissioner Larry Haeg, then general manager of WCCO Radio, incessantly lobbied the state legislature for bonding authority for all seven metro counties to do the same.

In 1968, a Citizens League Committee chaired by Clem Springer, recommended establishment of a Metropolitan Parks and Reserve Commission. This was promptly acted on by the 2/3 Republican majority in the legislature in 1969. Sam Morgan was appointed chair by the Council's new President, Jim Hetland, a former Citizens League president and then a vice-president of First National Bank in Minneapolis. The first-ever regional park system for the seven-county region was politically significant because it would have subsumed the park authorities that were already established in the seven counties. But it fell victim to the Supreme Court's 1971 decision relative to the Council's authority.

Then newly appointed Met Council chair, and former Minneapolis Mayor Al Hofstede appointed me to chair a 15-member Metro Parks and Open Space Advisory Commission which, among other things, was responsible for the 1973 legislature creating the Metro Parks and Open Space Commission chaired in 1974 by Elliott Perovich of Anoka. We also secured passage of \$40 million in state bonding for metro parks. Metro Council staffer Jerry Bell, later President of the Minnesota Twins, reminds me that happened largely because we stayed below the radar while the TV cameras in the state capitol were following the bonding bill of \$55 million for the new Twins baseball stadium. At that point, Cliff French recruited me to the Hennepin County Park Board and I succeeded Fred King as chair, a job I held until launching my political campaign in 1977.

Three new state parks and an expanded William O'Brien State Park were created under LeVander. Despite previous governors' endorsement of a Voyageurs National Park, LeVander was reluctant and Congress wasn't going to approve it without the endorsement of the District's Congressman—and John

Blatnik wasn't about to do it without Harold LeVander. After much soul-searching, LeVander decided to do so and I couldn't wait to call his aide Jim Oberstar with the news. Oberstar and I met over this issue and bonded many times over resource issues in the 1980s and '90s as I became critical in getting appropriations for both Voyageurs and later the BWCA out of the Senate and past Republican presidents.

LeVander also took a strong, for him, stand on water pollution issues, signing the law that created the first State Pollution Control Agency in the nation. This enabled Minnesota Republicans later to influence President Richard Nixon to establish the Environmental Protection Agency by Executive Order. This leads us into . . .

STAGE THREE: Environmental Health

I suggest that this stage started with Earth Day in April 1970 and featured Minnesotans front and center on the issues of clean air and water. Truth be known—and Shirley Hunt remembers this better than most of us—it, too started on LeVander's watch, with the MECCA of environmentally involved citizens fired up about storm and sanitary sewer effluent and the North Star Steel effluent poured by St. Paul into the Mississippi. Raw sewage from Hopkins went into Nine Mile Creek leading to the Minnesota River. The Alan S. King NSP plant on the St. Croix put SO₂ into the air and water into the river. And Reserve Mining dumped taconite tailings into Lake Superior, giving rise to Arlene Lehto and the Save Lake Superior Association and Grant Merritt's kicking off the popularity of environmental law in Minnesota.

It is important to recognize our cultural commitment to the health of our community and the role played by activist citizens too numerous to mention tonight, so many of whom were also involved in parks, trails and wildlife. In their view, the Commons was threatened and they got their churches and schools and everyone else involved as well.

Important to mention the commitments that Governor Wendell Anderson and Attorney General Warren Spannaus made to preserve natural resources through appointments to the PCA and the DNR and the commitment to use the courts to press environmental health law. Sam Morgan's son Jonathan Morgan was the assistant attorney general who brought and won the law suit over President Richard Nixon's impoundment of water pollution funding over a Congressional override of his earlier veto. Minnesota took the suit to the U.S. Supreme Court and won 8-0. Bob Herbst who started as a Cambridge forester, graduated to Keep Minnesota Green and ended up after his tour as DNR Commissioner as an assistant Secretary of the Interior. His chief assistant at Interior and the assistant director of the National Park Service was Peter Gove.

Three of the most substantial trails in Minnesota are the Mississippi, the Minnesota and the St. Croix rivers. During my brief tour as chair of the committee that launched metro parks and open space bonding by the state, I learned just how critical each was to our state parks and trails. But they are difficult for state, regional or local parks and trails policy because of conflicting economic use and government jurisdiction. We all learned that rapid population and land development could ruin the health of the rivers for their original purpose. These rivers, in particular,, national resources each, focused citizens and policy makers on their environmental health and their significance as trails.

The work of environmental lawyers in our community, legislators here and in Washington and citizen leaders have given us the Upper Mississippi Corridor study, Mississippi National River and Recreation Area (thank you Bruce Vento), the Critical Area Designation law and the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge (thank you Elaine Mellott, Mary Alice Seal, Dick Duerre, Ed Crozier and Rick Schultz).

We need another hour on the subject of the Council's role in trails policy, because it's so critical right now that our state legislators recognize just how far people, and private owners and businesses and local government leaders in every county in Minnesota have come in just the last 30 years to bring us all together in the most healthful of all outdoor activities. Theodore Wirth proposed parkways on either side of the Minnesota River in 1935. Al Marshall first put trails on the Council's agenda in 1955, and it was adopted in 1963.

Behind every one of the many trails in Minnesota you find two critical elements: first, members of the Parks & Trails Council like Sam Morgan and Peter Seed at Gateway or Craig and Nadine Blacklock and Alden Lind on the Lake Superior Kayaking Trail; and second, communities and civic leaders and hikers and bikers and snowmobilers and runners who support the Parks & Trails Council in our efforts to help city councils, county boards, school districts and state legislators understand their role. We celebrate the contribution this staff makes to Cannon Valley and Mills Town and land swaps, to the Luce Line, Paul Bunyan and Cuyuna. Every trail has a hero as a leader. Paul Bunyan's Terry McGaughey, whose untimely death was a great loss, was one of the best examples of genuine leadership—and he never, ever missed an opportunity to celebrate the accomplishments of others. Never. And with us here tonight are a couple of Terry McGaugheys in the person of the Mill Towns Trail's Peggy Prowe who has been at it since 1992 and Hutchinson Mayor Steve Cook who has lined up \$1.36 million in commitments from cities along the trail of the Luce Line.

In addition: Before Klobuchar became a famous political name, a Tribune columnist named Jim Klobuchar persuaded the newspaper to fund the start of Jaunt with Jim, to create what he calls “a community on wheels” of friendships created and renewed each year as 500 Minnesotans biked 500 miles in five days across the state. Dave Minge will be celebrated here tonight. Rails to Trails began in Minnesota and literally rolled across the country after that.

In the early '90s, I was on hand for the birth of the national trails investment program as a member of the Senate-House conference committee on the Surface Transportation Act of 1991. Rep. Jim Oberstar told us how his wife Jo had introduced him to biking as therapy for her chemotherapy. Minnesota Transportation Commissioner Dick Braun had already found a way to use highway funds by reengineering highways to include 10-foot shoulders to hold snow in the winter and bikers during the snowmelt season.

Another of my Minnesota heroes is the Blue Zones biker Dan Buettner, now turned world renowned healthy aging expert, who started with the leaders in Albert Lea to spread the gospel of connecting people using their own locomotion to build relationships and long lives. Today the Blue Zones, with funding from National Geographic, AARP and others, are spreading across America.

The history of public investment in parks, trails and open space and environmental protection may ebb and flow and change its course through the politics of local, state and federal action, but our cultural roots remain the same. Those who have made critical contributions to this history include artists whose gift is capturing the natural beauty of this state with a camera, on an easel or in a wildfowl stamp: Sigurd Olson, the Blacklocks, Jim Brandenburg, Paul Sundberg, Bruce Miller, Neal Anderson, David Maass, Joseph Hautman and Les Kouba—who left an original pinot noir on our living room carpet one evening after tipping over his wine while sketching ducks in flight for the highest bidder at a charity event.

Contributors to the growth of our parks and trails include journalists, who are the conscience of this state whether on the sports or outdoors pages of newspapers, on radio and television, in books or on social media. They are families like my friends the late Olivia Dodge and Connie Otis, whose family estates have been dedicated to the future of environmental education. Will Steger, an international adventurer from Richfield, asked me on his return from the first trip to Antarctica to introduce him to Al Gore and then, at the White House ceremony for his team's welcome, asked if I'd get him five minutes with Barbara Bush on what he experienced that everyone should know about climate change.

Dick Gray dedicated so much of his 95 years to Zero Max and then to creating the Freshwater Biological Institute in Navarre. Elmer L Andersen's provided vision and financial contributions to the Minnesota Arboretum and the family preserve at Deer Lake, WI.

I see the evolution of Parks & Trails Council. At the start of my presentation, I recalled Jim Oberstar's reference to our cultural heritage, the Commons of villages in Europe. Who we are depends on the values we brought over on the boat.

Here's what nearly 80 years as a Minnesotan has taught me: It isn't what you can see or even what you can become that is Minnesota. It is who you can become, as a person. It's about the values you build from

the examples of others and the works you leave behind to enrich future generations of your children and others. That is Minnesota. That, my friends, is also the man who introduced me here tonight. Peter Gove began his parks and trails and rivers and clean water career in the 1970s and he just keeps getting better and more persuasive.

This little talk is not intended so much to be about what we've done in 60 years of Parks & Trails, but who we have become. The examples of our forbears have left us a legacy and a calling to leave this state much better for our having lived here. I intend my own involvement since going to South St. Paul to practice law, and eventually politics, with Harold Le Vander, to be one simple lesson: That I grew up in Minnesota among giants of this earth, and was eventually given the gift of representing them. By standing on the shoulders of men and women like those in this story. Which, I suspect, is what your Reuel Harmon Awardee tonight knows has been his gift as well.

It would appear that today we live in a very different time. Seemingly devoid of leaders or institutions we can trust. A time when the one word that pollsters tell us Americans believe best describes our country is "divided." It doesn't have to be this way. Lean on our history, listen to the people you have learned to respect, give your time and attention to the Commons, the community in which you live.

I spent a fair amount of time preparing for this talk because Brett promised you a trip through history. I contacted those in this room I knew could refresh my 79-year old memory. A week ago I had on my laptop a three-hour speech to describe 60 years of our history. Then Brett sent me an email saying: "Judging by what I've been hearing from our members, I know you're speech is going to be one for the ages." I went totally to pieces. My wife Susan then said, simply, you are now in possession of the clues to a treasure unique to Minnesota. You know who made this history possible. It's the job of the members of the Parks & Trails Council to tell the story. Challenge them by a few examples you know best, out of thousands of what you call heroes, to do an oral history before any more of your "giants" slip away.

Earlier this month, the DNR announced that 9 million of us visited our state parks in 2013. John Gunyou claims 10 million visitors to the Three Rivers Park System last year. In times that are as tough on public policymakers as they seem today, it is easy to take our natural resources for granted when there are so many and they are so convenient. But I'd like to remind you of where I started. There's a reason other than visitor counts that we do this.

Parks and trails and heritage preservation bring people together. Even at times when we are divided by stand-your-ground laws, legislated religious beliefs and opposition to paths to citizenship for immigrants who were too young when they came here to be charged with doing anything illegal. Or as we are divided by new information technology meant to bring us closer together, technology that makes the far seem so

near, and the near, too often, so far. Tom Friedman warned us in a column eight years ago, “We are so accessible we are inaccessible. We can’t find the ‘off’ switch on our devices, or, on ourselves. We are everywhere, but where we actually are, physically.” At the place, in the institution and at the most appropriate time to define our mutual interests.

It’s the rare public policy today that is not partisan. In the 2012 Republican presidential primary, Minnesota Governor Tim Pawlenty appeared to be just about as far to the right of the political spectrum as he could get and still leave room for Michele Bachmann. But, as governor, he endorsed the acquisition of what would become Lake Vermilion State Park, making it possible for Democratic Senate Tax chair and now DFL majority leader Tom Bakk of Cook to get the job done—at 2 in the morning on the final day of the session, just as the fireworks went off to celebrate the State’s sesquicentennial.

How did this happen? I suggest that a conservative governor in a time of anti-tax, anti-spending, anti-government partisanship, sensed that South St. Paul and Minnesota would always be home to him. It’s a sense of place that each of us has. That even a South St. Paul truckdriver’s kid, whose family couldn’t afford a place at the lake, could afford a shared home on the lake available to everyone, even if it happens to be five hours away.

That, my friends, is what Jacob Brower, Supreme Court Justice Clarence Magney, a 13-year-old author of “Birds of Muskegon” who became a Minnesota Governor, Sam Morgan, Terry McGaughey, Cliff French, Brett Feldman’s dad Harvey, Peter Gove and every one of you represents. Not just our past, but our future and that of our grandchildren.