



Working to acquire, protect and enhance critical land for the public's use and benefit.

2014 LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

In preparation for each session of the Minnesota Legislature, Parks & Trails Council works with leaders of Minnesota's park and trail systems to review priorities. We also partner with friends groups, chambers of commerce and other community groups to ensure local voices are incorporated into our efforts of cultivating world-class parks and trails that contribute to the health, economy and quality of life of all Minnesotans.

2014 BONDING FOR PARKS AND TRAILS

Minnesotans value our interconnected systems of parks and trails. But a rapidly growing population and aging infrastructure means more must be done to protect these outdoor treasures that are so essential to our economy, our health and our outdoor way of life. The 2014 bonding bill is a vital component for ensuring that necessary and wise investments are made on behalf of Minnesota's state, metro and greater Minnesota regional systems.

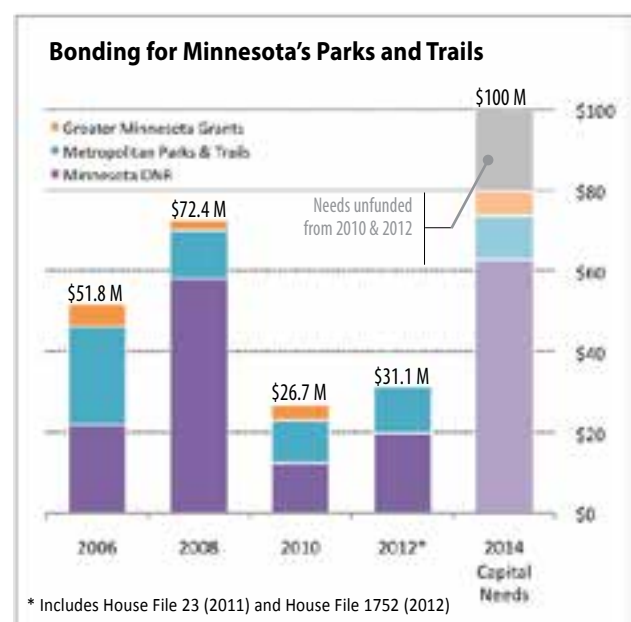
During the two biennia prior to the passage of the Legacy Amendment in November 2008, Minnesota appropriated \$50 to \$70 million in Capital Bonding per biennium to parks and trail projects. Regrettably, in the two biennia since the Legacy Amendment's passage, capital investment in Minnesota's parks and trails has been reduced by more than 50 percent.

Minnesota's park and trail systems have substantial capital needs. In their budget planning for years 2011-2020, the Department of Natural Resources reports capital needs of more than \$60 million per biennium to tackle deferred maintenance, land acquisition, and park and trail development. The Metropolitan Council reports capital bonding needs in excess of \$10 million biennially to develop and expand park and trails throughout the Twin Cities. And while the long-term needs for developing and expanding Greater Minnesota's system of parks and trails are still being quantified, they too are significant.

The Parks & Trails Council of Minnesota, as part of its mission, advocates for the acquisition, development and operation of parks and trails throughout the state. Our following agenda, which outlines \$99.1 million in bonding priorities for parks and trails in

2014, builds on the goals presented to the Legislature in the last few years; many of the projects listed have gotten state funding in the past. This year's bonding should continue the investments already made.

As the 2014 legislative session convenes, Parks & Trails Council urges the legislature to fully support the bonding requests submitted on behalf of parks and trails by the Department of Natural Resources and Metropolitan Council while providing for the emerging system in Greater Minnesota.



State Parks and Trails System

Minnesota's state park and trail system is managed by the Department of Natural Resources and includes 67 state parks, 7 state recreation areas, 25 state trails, and contains 1,600 buildings, 332 miles of roads, and 1,277 miles of in-park trails, and over 1,300 miles of developed state trails.

The bonding request made by the DNR includes six areas related to parks and trails, totaling \$77.1 million. Parks & Trails Council supports this request plus an additional \$10.95 million for the state trails initiative.



Tettegouche State Park (photo by Paul Sundberg)

STATE TRAILS ACQUISITION & DEVELOPMENT - \$20.95 MILLION

- ➔ EXCEEDS DNR REQUEST BY \$10.95 MILLION
- ➔ PRIORITY GIVEN TO 2010 VETOED PROJECTS

Parks & Trails Council has worked with community groups across the state to identify state trail projects with the highest priority based on strong local support and shovel-readiness. These projects have been ready and sitting on hold since 2010.

Investing in these acquisition and development projects would ensure that Minnesota continues to attract tourists and provides safe and healthy transportation alternatives for its citizens.

Project details listed on handout

STATE PARKS ACQUISITION & DEVELOPMENT - \$8.7 MILLION

- ➔ SUPPORTING FULL DNR REQUEST

To continue to be a valuable resource that contributes to our state's overall quality of life, our state parks need to offer recreational opportunities aligned with Minnesotans' lifestyles. Funds are needed to complete a new state-of-the-art campground, to provide sanitary facilities that meet the needs of people of all abilities, to purchase key inholdings, and to develop two new public water accesses.

LAKE VERMILION STATE PARK DEVELOPMENT - \$25 MILLION

- ➔ SUPPORTING FULL DNR REQUEST
- ➔ COMPLEMENTS PAST STATE FUNDING

For ongoing development of Lake Vermilion State Park, including the Cable Bay Campground (road, water access site, 26 campsites, 3 group camps; 2 sanitation buildings, 3 picnic shelters, 1 fish house, RV dump station; Wi-Fi), remote backpack and boat-in campsites, camper cabins, a welcome plaza, Stuntz Bay picnic area and boat launch, Cable Bay family adventure area, road connecting Soudan Underground Mine and Lake Vermilion state parks, and Lake Lodge road. Construction priorities may change due to challenges encountered on-site and may require that some substitutions be made.

ASSET PRESERVATION - \$30.4 MILLION

- ➔ SUPPORTING FULL DNR REQUEST

Many facilities within our state parks are 50-70 years old. They have fallen from a maintenance issue to rehabilitation. And many state trails are becoming hazardous to bicyclists. Since 2010 when Minnesota was recognized as the nation's Best Trails State, limited investments have been made to maintain these trails.

Within this request \$24 million would be used to rehabilitate campgrounds, water access sites, roads and bridges within parks.

The other \$6.4 million would be used for improvements to state trails, including resurfacing, culvert and bridge replacements, erosion control, trail alignments, and accessibility improvements to priority projects at Root River, Sakatah, Arrowhead Trails, and Itasca Park bike trail.

LOCAL & REGIONAL GRANT PROGRAM - \$3 MILLION

- ➔ SUPPORTING FULL DNR REQUEST

The DNR, under the direction of the legislature, administers four matching grant programs that are designed to help local governments across Minnesota acquire and manage outdoor recreational opportunities in partnership with the DNR.

These funds would be used to provide competitive grants to local governments to acquire approximately 70 acres and develop or redevelop three to seven local and/or regional parks and also provide funding for ten to 15 local and regional trail projects.

Metropolitan Regional Parks and Trails System

The Metropolitan Regional Park System consists of 54,800 acres of parks and 308 miles of trails which hosted 43.9 million visits in 2011. The Metropolitan Regional Park System is owned, operated and maintained by ten regional park implementing agencies:

Anoka County	City of Bloomington
Ramsey County	Three Rivers Park District
City of St. Paul	Minneapolis Park & Rec Board
Carver County	Scott County
Dakota County	Washington County

GRANT PROGRAM - \$11 MILLION

- ➔ SUPPORTS FULL METROPOLITAN COUNCIL REQUEST
- ➔ COMPLEMENTS METROPOLITAN COUNCIL BONDS

The Metropolitan Council, a regional planning agency, prepares and administers the state bonding requests on behalf of the ten regional park implementing agencies. Each agency is allocated a percentage of the total bonding budget based on the agency's population and the percentage of park and trail visits that are non-local users.

Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails System

The Greater Minnesota Regional Park System is an emerging entity. While counties and cities in greater MN have managed parks and trails of regional significance for many years, there was no overarching agency to coordinate efforts until 2010 when the Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Coalition was established.

Additionally, in 2013 the Minnesota Legislature created the Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission to undertake system planning and provide recommendations to the legislature for specific grants funded by the Legacy Amendment (Minnesota Statutes, 85.536).

An inventory of the Greater MN Regional Parks and Trails System is underway and will include the newly established criteria for "regionally significant."

NO SEPARATE REQUEST - SEE STATE PARKS AND TRAILS REQUEST FOR LOCAL & REGIONAL GRANTS PROGRAM

While Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails have not historically requested separate bonding funds, this system has received vital funds through the DNR's Local and Regional Grant Program, when funded. Therefore the state parks and trails system request for the grants program should be considered a priority to ensure funding for the greater Minnesota system.



Quarry Regional Park in Stearns County

LEGISLATIVE-CITIZEN COMMISSION ON MN RESOURCES

In late October, the Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources (LCCMR) recommended 72 projects totaling \$28.9 million to the 2014 Minnesota Legislature for funding from the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund.

The Parks & Trails Council is disappointed that none of the DNR's requested \$2.2 million for state parks and trails acquisition and only \$1.5 million of the Metro Parks' \$2.25 million request was funded.

We urge the legislature to fund all, or part, of these requests should funds become available prior to the close of the 2014 legislative session.



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STATE TRAILS ACQUISITION & DEVELOPMENT—PROJECT DETAILS

1 Blazing Star State Trail \$500,000

✓ SHOVEL READY
\$1 MILLION VETOED IN 2010

Toward the acquisition and development of a 4-mile segment that would extend the current trail east from Myre-Big Island State Park to the village of Hayward.

2 Casey Jones State Trail \$750,000

✓ SHOVEL READY
\$2 MILLION VETOED IN 2010

Toward three projects: 1) to develop and pave a five-mile segment in Pipestone County from Co. Rd. 16 through Woodstock, 2) to preserve and enhance prairie grasses and the horse trail along an existing nine-mile segment from Pipestone through Woodstock and 3) to enhance the trailhead in Pipestone and interpretive signage along the existing trail.

3 Cuyuna Lakes State Trail \$2.75 million

✓ SHOVEL READY
✓ COMPLEMENTS PAST STATE FUNDING
\$1 MILLION VETOED IN 2010
✓ \$700,000 MATCHED BY FEDERAL FUNDS

To continue connections of the trail to the Cuyuna Country State Recreation Area on the east end and to the Paul Bunyan Trail in Brainerd on the west end. Project details include:

\$1.1 million to connect Deerwood to Crosby and the Sagamore unit of the CCSRA.

\$1.3 million to connect this trail to the Paul Bunyan State Trail and into Lum Park in Brainerd.

\$350,000 to connect this trail from Lum Park to the airport. The last section will be done in conjunction with the redevelopment of the airport.

4 Gateway State Trail \$2 million

✓ COMPLEMENTS PAST STATE FUNDING
\$2 MILLION VETOED IN 2010

Toward the continued acquisition and development of the trail to extend from its current end point at Pine Point Park in May Township into William O'Brien State Park near Marine on St. Croix. This would create a connection for bicyclists within the park to access the

state trail and for residents along the trail, which starts in St. Paul and passes through numerous cities, to bike into the park.

5 Gitchi Gami State Trail \$3 million

✓ SOME SEGMENTS SHOVEL READY
✓ COMPLEMENTS PAST STATE FUNDING
✓ MATCHED BY FEDERAL FUNDS
\$1 MILLION VETOED IN 2010

Toward the acquisition and development of the trail from a MnDOT wayside rest on Hwy 61 at Cutface Creek to the existing trail terminus on the west edge of Grand Marais. This highly scenic section will closely parallel the rugged shore of Lake Superior. Other priority segments include: Beaver Bay to West Road in Beaver Bay, Silver Bay to Tettegouche State Park, Tofte missing link and Lutsen Ski Hill Road to Co. Rd. 41.

6 Glacial Lakes State Trail \$1.5 million

\$2 MILLION VETOED IN 2010

To acquire and develop a 5-mile spur from the existing trail, through New London and into Sibley State Park. Project includes a bridge over Hwy. 71. This would create a safe passage for residents into the park and for park users to access the state trail.

7 Goodhue Pioneer State Trail \$1.3 million

✓ COMPLEMENTS PAST STATE FUNDING
\$1.3 MILLION VETOED IN 2010

To continue to acquire and develop a five-mile segment of the southern portion of the trail to extend from its current end point in White Willow into Goodhue. The state already owns three miles of the trail, and the remaining two miles have seven willing sellers. This project would provide a scenic trail between the cities of Goodhue and Zumbrota.

8 Heartland State Trail \$3.1 million

✓ SHOVEL READY
✓ COMPLEMENTS PAST STATE FUNDING
\$1.5 MILLION VETOED IN 2010

Toward the acquisition and development of a new 9-mile portion of the trail from Detroit Lakes into Frazee. And for the completion of a conceptual corridor design for a 21-mile portion between Moorhead and Hawley (HF 625) and (SF390).

9 Luce Line State Trail \$2 million

✓ SHOVEL READY
✓ PARTNER FUNDING
\$2.373 MILLION VETOED IN 2010

To pave 28.5 miles of the Luce Line State Trail from the Carver/McLeod County border through the cities of Winsted, Silver Lake and Hutchinson to Cedar Mills in Meeker County. Currently the surface is crushed aggregate and ready for paving. Local units of government will contribute the remaining \$1.36 million to the project. The DNR has committed \$1 million in Legacy funds.

10 Mill Towns State Trail \$550,000

\$550,000 VETOED IN 2010

Toward the acquisition and development of a currently undeveloped rail bed from Faribault to Dundas.

11 Minnesota Valley State Trail \$2.5 million

✓ CONCEPTUAL DESIGN COMPLETE
\$400,000 VETOED IN 2010 FOR SEPARATE SEGMENT

Toward the development of the remaining 12-mile segment from Bloomington Ferry Bridge to Minnesota Valley Wildlife Refuge Visitor Center in eastern Bloomington. Once this segment is complete, a short distance remains to reach Ft. Snelling State Park and thereby fill in a critical missing link in the South Metro Trail System. Accommodates both a surfaced trail and a mountain-biking, dirt trail.

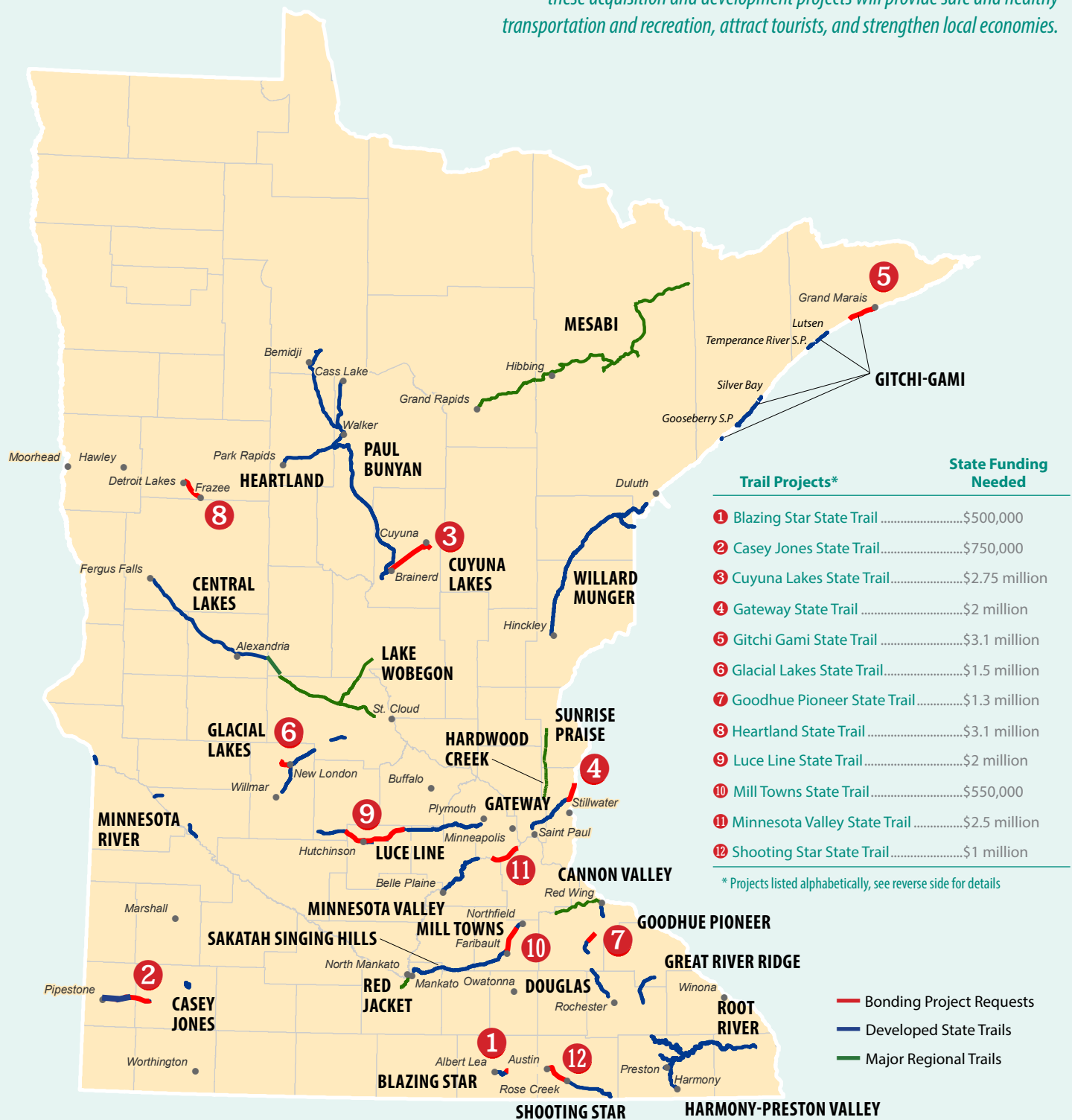
12 Shooting Star State Trail \$1 million

✓ COMPLEMENTS PAST STATE FUNDING
\$1.5 MILLION VETOED IN 2010

Toward the acquisition and development of the 11-mile segment from Rose Creek to Austin where it will connect to a proposed segment of the Blazing Star State Trail.

STATE TRAILS ACQUISITION & DEVELOPMENT - MAP

Parks & Trails Council has worked with community groups across the state to identify locally-supported, shovel-ready state trail projects. Investing in these acquisition and development projects will provide safe and healthy transportation and recreation, attract tourists, and strengthen local economies.



School Trust Fund Lands

LAND ACQUISITION - \$20 MILLION

➡ SUPPORTS FULL DNR REQUEST
WITH ADDED PROVISION TO USE A PORTION OF THE FUNDS FOR TRAIL EASEMENTS/LEASES

Background

In 1858, when Minnesota became a state, the federal government granted sections 16 and 36 of every township, or their equivalent, to the state as School Trust Fund Lands. The Minnesota Constitution established the Permanent School Fund to ensure the lands' use as a long-term source of funds for public education in the state. Currently, approximately 2.5 million acres in Minnesota are designated as Permanent School Trust Land.

Today, the DNR manages these lands on behalf of the School Trust Fund (STF) and is directed to maximize the long-term revenue that they generate from mineral leases, timber sales and the sale of land to private owners.

Riparian Land Sales

Recently, with funding for public schools being a challenging issue, some leaders began looking to increase the revenue being generated for the STF by selling lands located along the banks of water. Last year, the legislature accommodated this desire by no longer requiring legislative approval prior to such sales.

Protected Lands within STF

However, there are a significant number of parcels (75,500 acres) within the STF inventory that simply cannot generate any revenue for the STF due to their location within protected areas such as Scientific Natural Areas or Wildlife Management Areas, which prohibit their sale to private owners or from having any resources extracted.

The legislature requested that the DNR develop a plan to compensate the STF for these lands. As such, the DNR, for the first time, has made a recommendation that the Governor include \$20 million in his 2014-15 capital bonding budget to buy these lands of high natural resource or recreational value from the STF, to be owned by the DNR for continued management as protected areas.

The Parks & Trails Council fully supports this recommendation. Furthermore, we believe this approach should not only be applied to those lands that are not currently generating revenue for the STF, but also to lands that are generating minimal return for the STF such as a number of hiking

trails where a small lease fee is collected from nonprofit organizations maintaining the trails. By making such lands eligible for purchase using this bonding appropriation, the DNR could protect authorized trails in perpetuity for the public's use and benefit.

Parks & Trails Council of Minnesota Proposals:

We encourage the Legislature to support the DNR's request for \$20 million to compensate the School Trust Fund for lands of high natural resource or recreational value. Furthermore, we encourage the Legislature to enable the DNR to use this appropriation to purchase permanent easements and/or the maximum 50-year leases from the STF on those lands where current trails exist or are authorized or proposed.



Superior Hiking Trail © Gary Alan Nelson