

Legislative Agenda | 2019

Parks & Trails Council has been working since 1954 to acquire, protect and enhance critical land for the public's use and benefit. Every year we meet with community leaders, local advocates, park and trail managers, and policy experts to identify the top issues affecting our state's critical infrastructure of parks and trails. We hope you will work with us to cultivate a world-class park and trail system that benefits all Minnesotans.



People Saving Special Places
www.parksandtrails.org

Judge C.R. Magney State Park
Mick Rollins / P&TC Photo Contest

Our 2019 Legislative Priorities:



A BUDGET FOR
PARKS AND TRAILS



EQUITABLE USE OF
LEGACY FUNDS



SUPPORT LCCMR
RECOMMENDATIONS



KEEP STATE PARKS
QUIET AND NATURAL

See reverse side for details



A budget that works for parks and trails

- ▶ **WE BELIEVE** parks and trails should be funded primarily by the General Fund because they benefit the general public good -- not just park and trail users. We support General Fund appropriations for State Parks and Trails, Metropolitan Regional Parks and Trails, and the Greater Minnesota Parks and Trails Commission.
- ▶ **WE SUPPORT** increasing the DNR's flexibility to spend park-generated revenue as it's earned rather than waiting for an appropriation; and creating a long-term investment account whose corpus generates income to pay for state park and trail maintenance.
- ▶ **WE BELIEVE** all Minnesotans have a right to affordable access to parks and trails. We oppose hiking and biking trail fees because they would not generate significant revenue; they are costly and impractical to enforce; they disrupt outdoor experiences; and they discourage healthy lifestyles.
- ▶ **WE SUPPORT** the unfunded and underfunded projects from our 2018 priority bonding list. For details see www.parksandtrails.org.

It costs about \$52 million* each year to operate and maintain State Parks and Trails at current levels.

Funding comes from three primary sources:

About **\$27M** is needed from the State's General Fund, **but currently only \$24 million of that is funded after budget cuts last session.**

About **\$19M** comes from user fees, such as park permits and camping reservations. Fees were increased by 40% last session.

About **\$6M** comes from lottery revenue.



The Legislature could fix this funding gap by restoring the General Fund appropriation to \$27 MILLION PER YEAR.

(That's equal to about 1/10 of 1% of the total state budget.)

\$27 million is the amount State Parks and Trails received from the General Fund in FY 2017, and is the bare minimum required to avoid future cuts in services.

* State Parks and Trails manage several additional supplemental accounts that can only fund specific activities.



Equitable Legacy

Between 2010 and 2018 a compromise was in place to split the Parks and Trails Legacy Fund between the DNR (40%), Met Council (40%), and Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails (20%). That compromise was only meant to last for six years, however, and now the Legacy allocation is once again an open question.

- ▶ **WE SUPPORT** the concept of equity, coordination and balance between the needs and priorities of Minnesota's three major park and trail systems. We believe future fund allocations should be a compromise agreed to by the Minnesota DNR, Metropolitan Regional Parks and Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails.



Support LCCMR

- ▶ **WE SUPPORT** the full recommendation of the Legislative-Citizens Commission on Minnesota Resources, which includes \$16 million to fund 12 park and trail projects.



Camden State Park
Courtesy of Jon Wood



Quiet and Natural State Parks

There is continued pressure to allow off-highway vehicles (OHVs) -- such as ATVs, four-wheelers, and dirt bikes -- to use Minnesota State Parks.

- ▶ **WE OPPOSE** any change that would introduce the use of recreational OHVs in Minnesota State Parks.
- ▶ **STATE LAW** is clear that OHVs are not compatible with State Parks.
- ▶ **STATE PARK VISITORS** consistently oppose the change.
- ▶ **THERE IS NEARLY 1,800%** more state land already available for OHVs compared to the amount of land available to state park users.