



Special Places

PARKS & TRAILS COUNCIL OF MINNESOTA NEWSLETTER



Cedar Waxwing at Lyndale Park © Charles Miller

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Mill Towns State Trail's new bridge spans the Cannon River near Lake Byllesby Dam

Land Project Update

Mill Towns State Trail Segment Opens

Like a puzzle, the newest segment of the Mill Towns State Trail involved many pieces fitting together—*just so*—to complete the picture. Talks began in 2010 between the DNR, three private landowners, two counties, managers of a dam and a highway. This year, with the commitment of trail proponents, the pieces came together to make a great addition to the state trail system.

Parks & Trails Council became one piece of the puzzle starting in 2011 when a key land acquisition along the route was about to be lost. “Our land program proves its mettle in situations like these when we can step up to

ensure such an excellent trail project doesn’t fall apart,” says Brett Feldman, P&TC’s executive director.

The official grand opening, for this roughly two mile segment, is expected next spring. But already people are biking, walking and fishing along the new corridor. A key feature drawing a lot of attention is the bridge over the Cannon River near Byllesby Dam. On either side lay regional parks, one managed by Goodhue County the other by Dakota County but both named Lake Byllesby Regional Park. The bridge creates the first direct con-

Mill Towns State Trail | pg. 8

give
TO THE
MAX
NOV. 17, 2016

Mark your calendar for the biggest giving day of the year. We’ll have a matching challenge grant to make the most of your support.

From the Executive Director

Say no to motorized off-highway vehicles in state parks



Minnesota's changing seasons make our state and its rich natural resources one of the most fascinating places on earth. As a Parks & Trails Council member

you know that one of the best ways to experience Minnesota in all of its stunning natural glory is by visiting a state park—something more than 9 million people did in 2015 alone.

As a Parks & Trails Council member you also know that protecting these natural places where we all love to hike, fish, camp, bike, or simply observe nature is a full time job that requires constant vigilance. Our parks may be protected in law, but law is open to interpretation and that interpretation can change just like the seasons. So as fall turns to winter, legislators will convene at the Capitol to make decisions that will impact you and our parks as early as this spring.

One of the decisions that lawmakers are considering is whether or not we should open up our state parks to off-highway motor vehicles also known as OHVs (that includes ATVs, off-highway motorcycles and 4x4s).

We are opposed to this idea.

The Minnesota Outdoor Recreation Act of 1975 is clear that state parks are not meant to accommodate every kind of recreational use and in fact the only permissible uses are those that do not cause material disturbance to the natural features of parks.

That doesn't mean that OHV users shouldn't have a place to engage in their outdoor recreational activity. They should, and they do. The 5 percent of Minnesotans who own OHVs, currently have more than 4 million acres of public land on which they can ride. Compare that to the 232,000 acres of state parkland open to the 30 percent of Minnesotans who visit them. That's 17 times more land for a fraction of the users. Clearly the issue is not about OHV users being underrepresented in the recreational opportunities being provided. Yet, their use can materially disrupt the opportunities of state park users seeking a nature experience, if allowed into these special places.

Minnesota state parks protect and preserve 285 rare species, 900 archeological sites and 80 types of important plant communities. They are also places that park users visit to enjoy the sounds and smells of nature as well as to experience silence and quiet.

We have shared our interpretation of the law and the disparities in equity between user groups with legislative leadership and the DNR Commissioner. We have also encouraged them to review the DNR's 2012 Minnesota State Parks visitor survey, which shows there is very little support for providing opportunities for off-road motorized vehicles in state parks.

We are concerned that despite all this, our lawmakers will rewrite the law and bring OHVs into our parks.

I'm letting you know this now because now there is an opportunity to take a preemptive stand that could have more impact than waiting to respond after legislation is introduced.

Please take a moment right now to contact Gov. Dayton, Lt. Gov. Smith and DNR Commissioner Landwehr to tell them that you oppose opening state parks to OHVs. Our collective voices can prevail in keeping state parks as the special places they are. I hope we can count on you. Generations who came before us and generations that will come after us are counting on you too.

Visit our website at www.parksandtrails.org to see how to contact these leaders and learn more about this issue.

Bett Feldman

THANK YOU TO OUR BUSINESS SPONSORS



125 Years of MINNESOTA STATE PARKS

Key events that helped create the legacy of parks and trails in Minnesota

Start Here



1891

Minnesota creates its **1st STATE PARK**: *Itasca*, earning Minnesota the distinction of having the second-oldest state park in the nation. It was created by a margin of one vote.



1960

Parks & Trails Council successfully advocates for an updated State Parks and Recreation Study. Results prompt the passage of the 1963 bill creating 9 new state parks: Banning, Glacial Lakes, Lake Louise, Maplewood, Great River Bluffs, Rice Lake, Sakatah Lake, Soudan Underground Mine, and Upper Sioux Agency.

1967



Hello Trails! Minnesota Legislature authorizes the first state trail: Casey Jones State Trail.

Today

Minnesota State Parks experience record attendance!



1954

Parks & Trails Council of Minnesota is born.



1953

The era of free entry ends as the newly passed State Park Permit Act requires a permit on any vehicle entering the parks, then costing

\$1/YEAR.



1940s

Here come the naturalists!

State Parks begin to incorporate "enjoyable education" into the park experience. Then Parks Director writes, "this type of recreation is a departure from the generally accepted and prevailing practices of emphasizing the purely amusement types."



1975

Outdoor Recreation Act mandates each park have a management plan and that they be open for public review.

1988

Minnesota voters approve the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund. Lottery money goes to helping parks and trails and other environment projects.



2011

La Salle Lake State Rec Area added as the newest park unit. It's the 2nd since Legacy passed--Lake Vermilion was added in 2010.



2008

Minnesota voters approve the Legacy Amendment which increased sales tax by 0.375% until 2035 for water, outdoor heritage, arts, and parks and trails. The related plan has a goal of establishing 5 new state parks and connecting 10 state parks to state trails by 2035 among other goals.

Assessing the condition of Minnesota's trails, one mile at a time

Have you ever been riding along one of Minnesota's beautiful bicycle trails when, *thud*, a jarring bump shakes your entire frame? Well, you're not alone. Staff, board members and volunteers from Parks & Trails Council have been spending the summer out on the trails, feeling—and recording—these bumps ourselves.

As Minnesota's bicycle trails age, trail maintenance has become a hot-but-ton issue at the legislature. So much so that perhaps no other issue is more important to the long-term viability of Minnesota's bicycle trails.

To begin addressing this challenge, our latest research project is assessing the condition of every mile of trail pavement in Minnesota's State Trail System. Our assessment will provide managers, policy-makers, and trail

users with a detailed, mile-by-mile snapshot of trail conditions across the entire state. This will be the first time such information is publicly available, and will be vital for understanding how much work is needed to get all of Minnesota's trails in good shape.

We're collecting three types of information: First, we're taking the "old fashioned" approach of giving every mile a subjective rating between poor and excellent based on our experience from riding it. Second, we're taking photos. And third, we've mounted iPhones on our bicycle handlebars to collect data on the force of vibration caused by bumps and depressions on the trail.

To our knowledge, this research is the first large-scale, system-wide effort using smartphones to collect objective

data on trail pavement conditions.

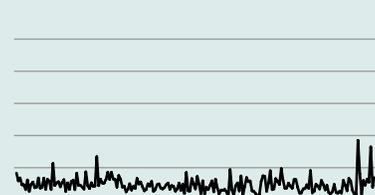
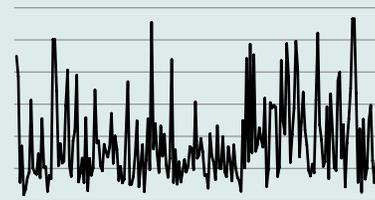
Data collection started over the summer and is planned to go through October. To date, we've completed 430 miles of the roughly 600 miles in the state system. That amounts to over 1,200 photographs and over 330,000 data points logged on our iPhones.

In the coming month, we'll crunch these numbers and pinpoint the locations in most need of repair. This data will also provide an overview of the system as a whole to help guide the development of trail maintenance plans.

Be on the lookout for our final report, which we expect to release in December.

How can iPhones collect data on trail conditions?

Did you know that all you need to turn your bicycle into a data-collection machine is a handlebar mount for your iPhone? All iPhones come equipped with a handy device called an accelerometer, which is designed to measure vibrations. Once your phone is configured to record this data, every ride becomes an opportunity to collect valuable data.



Above: An iPhone mounted to a bicycle's handlebars is enough to collect objective measurements of a trail's condition. Trails in really rough shape produce a lot of vibration (*top right*), while excellent trails produce smooth results (*bottom right*).

Regional parks and trails continue to grow in significance

The Greater Minnesota Parks and Trails Commission (GMPTC) has been continuing its work of establishing a formal system of regionally significant parks and trails in Greater Minnesota. This summer the commission, which was created by the legislature in 2013, designated an additional 16 parks and trails (listed in orange below) as regionally significant, bringing the total to 43.

Cities and counties apply for regional designation from the GMPTC for

specific parks or trails they manage. They undergo a review process that includes several rounds of evaluation looking at criteria such as size, amenities, usage, and master plans.

By being designated as regionally significant, these parks and trails become eligible to request funding from the Parks & Trails Legacy Fund.

Since the GMPTC began the designations in 2015, \$16 million in Legacy Funds have been appropri-

ated to Greater Minnesota projects, including funds to build numerous trails, acquire additional lands for parks, hire additional program staff at parks, and build visitor amenities.

To learn more about the GMPTC process for designations, visit their website at www.gmrptcommission.org

GREATER MINNESOTA REGIONAL PARKS AND TRAILS

| Managing City/County | Park or Trail Name | Managing City/County | Park or Trail Name |
|------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Aitkin County | Northwoods ATV Trail | McLeod County | Dakota Rail Trail |
| Beltrami County | Northland Sports Park | Mille Lacs County | Plains to Port Trail |
| Big Falls | Big Falls Campground and Horse Camp | Moorhead | MB Johnson Park |
| CVT Joint Powers Board | Cannon Valley Trail | Moorhead | Moorhead River Corridor Trail |
| Chisago County | Swedish Immigrant Trail | Olmstead County | Chester Woods Park |
| Chisago County | Sunrise Prairie Trail | Otter Tail County | Perham to Pelican Rapids Trail |
| Cohasset | Tioga Recreation Area | RLRC Joint Powers Board | Red Lake River Corridor |
| Cook County | Cook Co. Mountain Bike Trail System | Redwood County | Plum Creek Park |
| Crow Wing County | Milford Mine Memorial Park | Redwood Falls | Alexander Ramsey Park |
| Detroit Lakes | Detroit Mountain | Rochester | Quarry Hill Park |
| Douglas County | Kensington Park | Rochester | Gamehaven Park |
| Douglas County | Lake Brophy Park | Rochester | Cascade Lake Park |
| Duluth | Hartley Park | Sandstone | Robinson Park |
| Elk River | Woodland Trails Park | St. Cloud | Beaver Island Trail |
| Granite Falls | Memorial Park | Stearns County | Lake Wobegon Trail |
| Hermantown/Proctor | Munger Trail Spur | Stearns County | Quarry Park |
| Isanti County | Irving & John Anderson Park | Stearns County | Rockville Park |
| Lake County | Lake County Mountain Bike Trails | Stearns County | Warner Lake Park |
| Lake Shore | Gull Lake Trail | Wright County | Bertram Park |
| Le Sueur County | Lake Washington Park | Wright County | Robert Ney Park |
| Luverne | Luverne Loop & Blue Mounds Trail | | |
| Lyon County | Garvin Park | | |
| Lyon County | Twin Lakes Park | | |

***Note:** Parks listed in orange indicate the 16 newly designated units in 2016

Supporter/Board Member Highlight

Dr. Maureen Reed: We can't drop the baton

Our members' stories are essential to our story. The deep connection we all have with the places preserved as parks and trails provide inspiration to continue to advocate for these special places. Here we like to highlight some of these stories.

For Dr. Maureen Reed, parks and trails have always been important places. "In a nutshell, they are the antidote to craziness," she says.

As a medical doctor who has been deployed to emergency situations like Hurricane Katrina and Rita and the I35W bridge collapse, Reed knows life can get crazy; and being in nature puts things into perspective. "When I'm in a park or trail I can just let go and let the birds bring their truth to my life; let the ever changing shimmering of sun and shadows dance around and just quiet the mind and spirit."

Reed was the executive director of the Noble Peace Prize Forum, where she had the honor of meeting leaders from around the world. Visionary leadership is a theme she sees reflected in the parks and trails movement, started a century ago and carried on at Parks & Trails Council of Minnesota.

"I have long marveled, wondering what it was in those people 100 years ago—at a time when nature seemed limitless—that they knew preserving the natural land would be important to future generations."

"One of the reasons I support Parks & Trails Council is I believe those predecessors of ours were right and we can't drop the baton."

Reed grew up in Redwood Falls, Minn. where she spent countless hours at Alexander Ramsey Park—a place that trivia-minded folks may like to know was a state park from 1911 to 1957 before being turned over to the city. "Parks were part of my life from the beginning and never ceased to be part of my life."

Today, she enjoys visiting the parks throughout the state. For her, it's important to protect the landscapes unique to each area, from prairies to forests and everything in between. "I've come to understand that beauty in the landscape may have different definitions, but it's all beautiful."

Reed got involved with P&TCM when her friend, Bob Nesheim, was serving on the board. He helped her make the connection between these places that she enjoyed so much and the need for citizens to support them. "While I immediately grasped that it was extremely important not to sit on



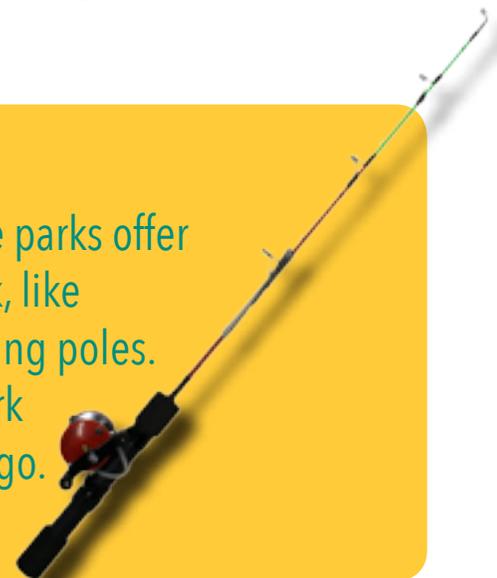
Dr. Maureen Reed with her "favorite hiking and skiing buddy," husband Dr. Jim Hart

our laurels with respect to parks and trails, I learned later just how robust Parks & Trails advocacy was, and the role of the revolving land trust."

Through her work with P&TCM, Reed says she has become more adamant about building an *interconnected* system of parks and trails. In an ideal future, she sees a trail within five blocks of every person. "I'm convinced that to preserve parks and trails for the future we need more families to experience these places, and trails are a mechanism by which more people are engaged."

Did you Know?

Free! Free! Free! Many state parks offer FREE gear to use in the park, like GPS units and fishing poles. Just ask at the park office when you go.



Master Planning Updates

Master plans are required for each state park and trail in Minnesota. These plans are intended to guide the management of these places consistent with the authorized purpose, as spelled out in Minnesota Statute 86A.05. The public can provide input at various times in the process, either by volunteering on an advisory committee, answering public input questionnaires, or providing written feedback on draft plans.

Plans open for public comment



ST. CROIX STATE PARK - NEW PLAN TO ENHANCE DESTINATION STATUS

The new plan will recommend how to manage the changing landscape that resulted from recent blowdowns as well as how to provide recreation opportunities in line with this park's "destination" status, as identified within the new system plan.

Input Opportunities:

- Public is invited to the 4th Citizen Advisory Committee held on Thurs., Oct. 27 from 6:30 - 8:00pm at the park's interpretive center.
- Questionnaire available to take at www.dnr.state.mn.us/input/mgmtplans/parks/st_croix.html



FORT RIDGELY STATE PARK - PLAN AMENDMENT TO ADDRESS GOLF COURSE CLOSURE

The DNR is developing an amendment to the state park plan to address the planned closure of the golf course in the park. A local group is working on a proposal to manage the course.

A citizen advisory committee has been formed and met several times starting in August with the final meeting expected in October.

Input Opportunities:

- Online questionnaire at www.dnr.state.mn.us/input/mgmtplans/parks/fort_ridgely.html

Plans in development

The following plans are not currently open for public input at the moment, but as plans are developed they may become opened for review. You can look online for updates here:

www.dnr.state.mn.us/input/mgmtplans/parks_trails/index.html

MISSISSIPPI BLUFFLANDS STATE TRAIL

This planned trail was authorized in 2015 to extend about 17 miles from the Cannon Valley Regional Trail in Red Wing to Lake City and connect with Frontenac State Park.

The DNR is currently considering comments and may revise the draft plan, which was prepared in May. The draft plan identifies a search corridor for potential routes and has recommendations for trail management.

JAMES L. OBERSTAR STATE TRAIL

The DNR is in the midst of preparing a plan to guide the development of this segment of the Willard Munger State Trail. This segment extends from Chisago City to Hinckley.

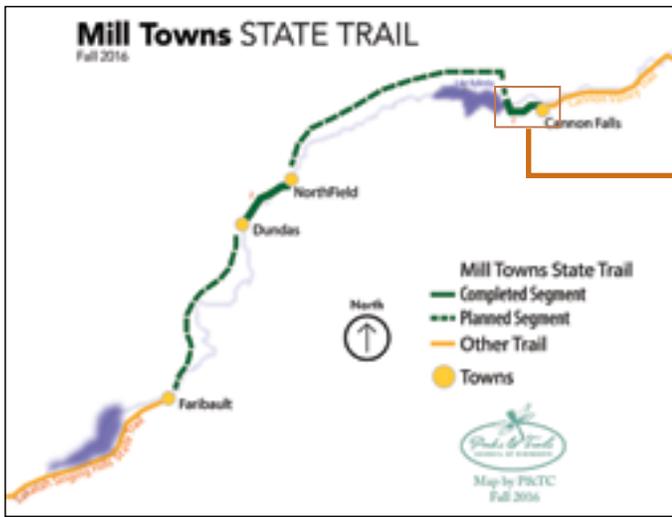
TACONITE STATE TRAIL

This trail is complete and mostly used for snowmobiling. The DNR is updating the plan developed in 1980 to reflect the completion of the trail and consider changes to the management. Public comments were collected in 2015 and a summary is available online.

Numerous comments suggesting opening the trail to ATV use and allowing such use in state parks. If such uses move forward Parks & Trails Council would strongly oppose it. A draft plan is being awaited.



We are a proud member of the Minnesota Environmental Fund, a workplace giving option comprised of 21 environmental nonprofits working to protect, conserve and restore Minnesota's environment. www.mnenvirofund.org



Mill Towns State Trail is authorized to connect from Cannon Valley Trail to Sakatah State Trail. The inset shows the newest segment.

» Mill Towns State Trail | *cont'd from pg. 1*

nection between these two parks.

Starting at the Dakota County park beach, trail users can now bike along Lake Byllesby (a dammed section of the Cannon River), wind down to the bridge, descend a gentle grade through prairie and along the river bluff, safely pass under Hwy 52 and end at Hannah’s Bend Park in Cannon Falls. The city is planning to build a trail connection from here to the nearby Cannon Valley Trail.

Steve Hennessy, DNR trail planner, said the trail construction involved some challenges, but succeeded in the end because of the “partnership from Parks & Trails Council, Dakota County, Goodhue County, city of Cannon Falls and the DNR, who all really worked together to make these pieces fall into place.”

The project had a lot going for it with half of the land being publicly owned. The remaining land was owned by

three private landowners, which seemed like a manageable number—until all three declined the original offer to buy their land.

That’s when P&TCM stepped in to successfully negotiate a purchase from one owner, where 39 acres (roughly half the land acquired) is being used for the trail. The remaining land was sold to a different owner.

The 39 acres, located near the Goodhue County Park, provided the necessary space to create a gentle slope down through the river bluffs. The land had previously been farmed, and the DNR has plans to restore it to oak savanna.

Funding for this segment of trail came from a variety of sources, including Legacy Funds, Federal grants and state bonds.

The Mill Towns State Trail was originally authorized by the Minnesota

Legislature in 2000. When complete, the trail will follow the Cannon River for 25 miles from Faribault to Cannon Falls. The trail will also provide the connection between the Sakatah Singing Hills State Trail and the Cannon Valley Regional Trail.

In addition to this newly opened segment, progress has been made at the other end of the Mill Towns State Trail in Faribault, Minn. The DNR recently built two highway underpasses in the city and Hennessy expects that trail segment, which connects to the Sakatah Singing Hills State Trail to be completed in 2018.

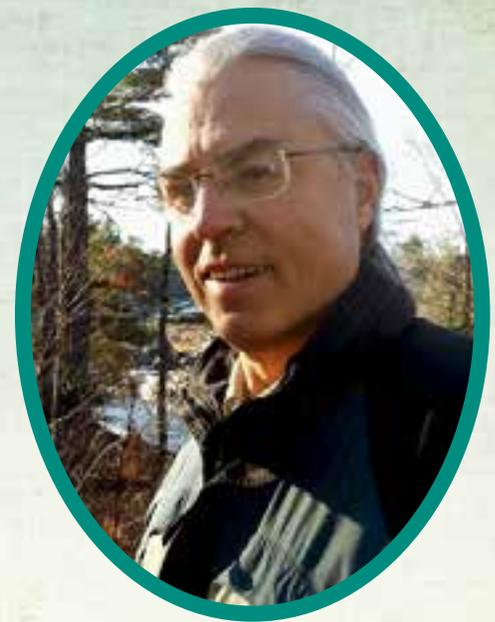
Earlier this summer the DNR acquired six miles of former railroad property for the trail between Faribault and Dundas. Hennessy says the DNR has control over nine miles and now they are working on connecting those pieces. Finally P&TC has been helping to coordinate a necessary re-route of the trail in Northfield.

In Memoriam

Remembering Mike Tegeder

Earlier this summer, Minnesota parks and trails lost one of its most ardent supporters with the death of our past president, Mike Tegeder, 67, on July 9.

Since his passing, we have been moved by the outpouring of support shown by those who knew him both personally and from his writings and work with this organization. More than one hundred people have made gifts totaling more than \$7,500 to Parks & Trails Council of Minnesota to honor his memory:



Joel and Teresa Anderson
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Marilyn Barnicle
Ralph and Maureen Bartolotta
Paul Bauer and Patricia Cretilli
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Marlys J Weber
Peggy Werness
Mary Wesenberg
Catherine Anne Wick
Kathleen and Jimmy Williams
Dorothy Wrona
Anonymous (2)



Magney Circle members gather on the observation deck to see the recent land acquisition. Picnic shelter and boardwalk in Anderson park.

Magney Circle Mingle Recap

Seeing the land we helped save at Isanti County's Anderson Park

Parks are created to take advantage of days like the one we had for our Magney Circle Mingle on Sept. 8. With the wind gently blowing to keep away the mosquitos, we gathered in the picnic shelter at Isanti County's Irving & John Anderson Park to hear about and then walk to the land Parks & Trails Council of Minnesota helped to acquire for the park earlier this year.

Parks depend on people, and this park in particular has been the beneficiary of people's investments. Interpretive naturalist Tom Anderson, who also happens to be the grandson of the original owners, told us how this park was created in 2007 with the support of a Friends Group. Without citizens advocating for adding this

park, it would not have been created and without our members, the newest addition to the park wouldn't have happened.

Anderson says this place tells the story of change and renewal: starting thousands of years ago when miles-thick glaciers occupied the land, to providing a homeland for generations of Native Americans, to being farmed by his family, to returning to a more natural state as a park. It's the story of change and renewal of purpose.

A renewed purpose is certainly happening on the former fox farm that we've helped add as parkland. This addition straddles two clear, shallow lakes, doubling the amount of park shoreline to 3,000 feet on Horseshoe

and 3,300 feet on Horseleg Lake, with plans to build a short portage trail between the two. This would provide canoe access to Horeshoe Lake.



Named in honor of Judge C. R. Magney, the Magney Circle consists of members who support our mission with a generous contribution of \$500 or more each year. Magney Circle members are invited to special events during the year. To join, visit parksandtrails.org/join_donate



Meet a Friend

Getting more people into the Big Woods



FRIENDS OF NERSTRAND BIG WOODS

— *at a glance* —

Mission:

A community organization devoted to preserving and enhancing the experience of the park.

Websites:

friendsnerstrandbigwoods.org

About Nerstrand Big Woods

A 2,884-acre forested area with spectacular spring flowers, 11 miles of hiking and 6 miles of xc-skiing.



In the three years that Nerstrand Big Woods State Park has *made friends* with a group of committed volunteers, the park has seen skyrocketing visitor numbers. It could be coincidence, good weather, or part of the system-wide trend, but the park manager says the friends have been a boon to the park.

The friends have been busy from the get go. “We have a group of people who like to do things,” says the chair of the Friends Group, Katy Gillespie. They’ve helped organize, publicize and provide volunteer support for numerous events, from prairie seed collecting to candle-light skiing and wildflower walks.

Three years ago attendance at the candle-light ski was about 150 people and that number has jumped to 650 last year. “We just feel great that we can support getting more people out here,” says Friends member Emily Nesvold.

The group really wanted more people to discover the unique treasures in this park. “Nerstrand is one of the best parks in the state for spring flowers, for fall colors and for monarch butterflies,” boasts Gillespie.

Currently the group has about 150 people they can send the call out to when volunteers are needed. Another 43 provide financial support and 7 people serve as board members.

Friends Group Partners

Friends Groups that are members of Parks & Trails Council of Minnesota

Border Route Trail Association, Inc.

Cedar Lake Park Association

Central Lakes Trail Association

Cuyuna Lakes State Trail Association

Freeborn County Trail Association

Friends of Anderson Park

Friends of Cannon Valley Trail

Friends of Casey Jones Trail

Friends of Fort Ridgely

Friends of Glacial Lakes State Park

Friends of Itasca State Park

Friends of Jackson County Trails

Friends of Lake Bemidji State Park

Friends of Lake Maria State Park

Friends of Luce Line West

Friends of Maplewood State Park

Friends of Mill Towns State Trail

Friends of Nerstrand Big Woods State Park

Friends of Scandia Parks and Trails

Friends of Wild River State Park

Frontenac State Park Association

Gateway-Brown’s Creek Trail Association

Gitchi Gami Trail Association

Glacial Ridge Trail Association

Glendalough Park Partners

Lake Louise State Park Association

Minnesota Horse Council

MN Nordic Ski Association

North Star Ski Touring Club

Northstar Trail Travelers

Prairie Visions

Sibley State Park Improvement Association

Southeast Minnesota Association of Regional Trails (SMART)

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