



Special Places

PARKS & TRAILS COUNCIL OF MINNESOTA NEWSLETTER



Split Rock Lighthouse State Park in winter

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UPCOMING EVENTS

Day on the Hill

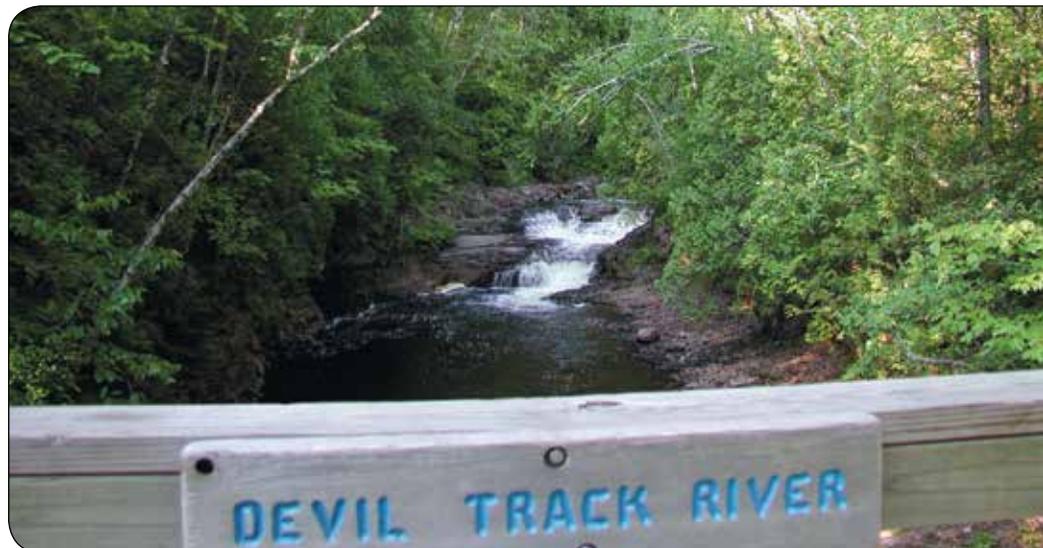
Thursday, Feb. 5, 2015
9am - 12:30pm + afternoon meetings
Best Western Kelly Inn • St. Paul, MN
\$15/person (includes breakfast & lunch)
» Register at www.parksandtrails.org

61st Annual Dinner

Tuesday, March 24, 2015
5:30 - 9pm
Town & Country Club • St. Paul, MN
\$70/person or \$500/table of 8
(includes plated dinner)

Keynote speaker ~
Climatologist Mark Seeley will share climate stories of Minnesota's state parks and implications for future management.

» Register at www.parksandtrails.org



View from the bridge on the Superior Hiking Trail over the Devil Trail River near Grand Marais, Minn., adjacent to the land owned by Parks & Trails Council

Land Project Update Making the handshake official

Parks & Trails Council is working to donate a permanent land easement for the Superior Hiking Trail.

The nearly 300-mile Superior Hiking Trail (SHT) is a unique treasure in Minnesota's outdoor recreation system. Spearheaded by volunteers, the trail traverses both public and private lands along the North Shore and stands as a testament to Minnesotans' deep appreciation and commitment to public access of our outstanding natural areas.

Parks & Trails Council owns 40 acres along the Devil Track River near Grand Marais, Minn., (see map on page 10) that provides the only access for the trail to cross out of the steep ravines created

by the river. We are currently working to donate a permanent easement for the trail to use this land. While an important, legally binding solidification of the SHT's route, this is luckily, a non-event. Nothing is actually changing for how the land is used. The SHT has been crossing this land for years.

What is changing is dynamics of land-ownership across the North Shore. As the SHT matures—it is now nearly 30 years old—numerous arrangements with landowners, predicated on handshakes, become less certain. The Superior Hiking Trail Association (SHTA) is working now to formalize those handshakes into permanent easements for the trail.

Superior Hiking Trail continued on page 10

From the President

The state's budget for parks and trails a concern



I write this a few days before the start of the legislative session. We all have thoughts and hopes over what is in prospect for our state's parks and trails. This begins with the head of the DNR, Tom Landwehr, who in a recent interview with the Star Tribune's Dennis Anderson said, "...our budgets for parks and trails are a concern..." We share that concern and others. This issue of the newsletter presents our legislative agenda and it is a good time to get informed about the issues and the great possibilities before us.

Parks & Trails Council (P&TC) members come from across the state and from all our legislative districts. We can join our voices and efforts to make a difference with our elected representatives. Joe Bagnoli and Sarah Psick continue to serve us as consultants at the Capital. Our legislative committee has refined our priorities under the guidance of outgoing committee chair, Mark Larson. Friends groups are making connections with their local representatives. Andrew Oftedal, our policy and research specialist, has assembled some very important data. We are ready.

Our Day on the Hill comes early this

year, Thursday, Feb. 5, and it will be great to have a good turnout. It is a wonderful day to make connections with our own legislators. Make sure you are also signed up for our emailed action updates. Our staff are there to help us make our case.

And the P&TC staff continues the daily efforts to enhance our parks and trails with ongoing work on land purchases, supporting friends groups, and creative strategies such as the permanent easement for a portion of the Superior Hiking Trail which is highlighted in this newsletter.



Event Update

Labor Day Bike MN 2015 announcements



Riders on the 2014 Bike MN with Parks & Trails

We are excited to announce that our annual BIKE MN *with Parks & Trails Council* event will be based at Glendalough State Park in northwestern Minn., over Labor Day weekend in 2015.

This will be the eleventh year Parks & Trails Council has coordinated the 3-day bike event. Each year has been based at a different state park and often with the help of a local Friends Group. In 2015 we will be helped out by the volunteers from Battle Lake, Minn., who helped establish the new Glendalough Trail that connects the park with the city.

A significant development for the ride in 2015 is an added fundraising component. Riders will not only enjoy the camaraderie of fellow bike riders, the well-planned routes, interesting program stops and good food, but they will help raise critical funds to acquire land and advocate for Minnesota's parks and trails.

"We're excited to enhance the meaning and impact of this event for Minnesota's special places," said executive director Brett Feldman.

Details about the event registration will be made available soon with registration opening in April. Our Magney Circle members will have the fundraising requirement waived in recognition of the tremendous support they already provide to help us achieve our mission.

Friends Group News New Grant Guide

Do you have a great park or trail project that needs money to make happen? Luckily, there are many grant opportunities available. In 2014 alone, over \$7 million were granted for park or trail projects. But finding them can be a time-consuming work.

That is why Parks & Trails Council is introducing our first edition of "Grants for your Park or Trail."

This guide outlines each grant program and leads interested applicants in the right direction for more information. The guide will be updated annually to reflect the evolving world of grant funding; the first major deadline of 2015 is at the end of February. The guide is available for download at www.parksandtrails.org.





Peggy Prowe near the Mill Towns State Trail bridge named in her honor in Northfield, Minn.

Trail Builder Profile

Recognizing 20 years of tenacious advocacy

Parks & Trails Council of Minnesota is proud to announce that Peggy Prowe has been selected as the 2015 Reuel Harmon Award recipient. The award will be presented at the Parks & Trails Council's Annual Dinner on Mar. 24, 2015.

Peggy Prowe's name is virtually synonymous with the Mill Towns State Trail. In her hometown of Northfield, Minn., they even named a bridge along the trail in her honor.

All her efforts to create the Mill Towns State Trail began more than 20 years ago, while she was serving on the Northfield City Council. The way she describes it it was just a logical idea to connect two already existing trails: the Sakatah Singing Hills State Trail and the Cannon Valley Regional Trail.

There have been many challenges along the way. Through it all, she has maintained an unflagging determination. Today, after 20 years of sustained effort, the Mill Towns State Trail consists of a meager—but greatly appreciated—three miles of paved trail, two trailheads, two tunnels, and 1.5 bridges.

When you mention this progress to Peggy, she just laughs undeterred and adds, "but we have lots of plans in the works."

"She is tenacious, gentle, intelligent, and tells it like it is but knows how not to offend," says fellow advocate and Parks & Trails Council board member Emily Nesvold.

Ms. Prowe has a distinct ability to rally others toward the trail. In the early 1990s she helped organize volunteers into a group called the Friends of the Mill Towns State Trail. Together they help raise funds and meet with legislators and planners from the DNR.

It started out with letters to the editor and other organizing efforts, and has blossomed into a community-wide effort. "It's all because of Peggy," says Meg Otten, the current president of the Friends of Mill Towns State Trail. "Without her this whole effort would have fizzled out. This is a woman who believes in the benefits of the trail with every fiber of her being and through her strength of personality she gets people to be part of it."

Each year Ms. Prowe rounds up a group of volunteers to attend Parks & Trails Council's Day on the Hill where they visit with state legislators.

"As long as I have known Peggy, which is a fair amount of time, she has been organizing citizens or leading the way on the city council for bike trails or hiking trails," said Rep. David Bly (DFL, Northfield).

She also has learned to keep a close eye on project details so that when legislative action is needed, she helps educate legislators on what they need to do to move it forward. This past year she worked with Parks & Trails Council staff to get a \$476,300 appropriation for the Mill Towns State Trail to acquire land and develop the trail from Faribault to Dundas, Minn.

Ms. Prowe says she is motivated by her love of the outdoors and a desire to help others get out and enjoy nature. This theme has run through her whole life. As a young adult she led wilderness canoe trips and was a camp counselor. Then after earning a Masters Degree in Physical Education in 1965, she went on to teach and coach at Carleton College in Northfield. She served on the board of Parks & Trails Council from 2002-2008 and is currently on our legislative committee.

Today, when she's not busy advocating, fundraising and planning for the Mill Towns State Trail, she co-organizes weekly bike rides for seniors in Northfield. "It's all about helping people stay active outdoors," Ms. Prowe says.

ABOUT THE REUEL HARMON AWARD

The award, started in 1995, is an annual recognition of exemplary service on behalf of Minnesota's parks and trails. It is named for Reuel Harmon (1904-1994), one of our founding members. During his remarkable tenure, Harmon provided bold, strategic leadership and he inspired others to follow his lead. You can see a list of previous recipients at: www.ParksAndTrails.org

DNR Update

Draft system plan differentiates parks and trails

In December, the DNR Division of Parks and Trails released a draft system plan, which has been in the works since spring 2013. Most significantly, the 56-page plan adds differentiation among our state's parks and trails by placing them into investment categories.

New categories for state parks and recreation areas:

- Destination
- Core
 - Classic
 - Gateway
 - Adventure
- Rustic

New categories for state trail segments:

- Destination
- Core
 - Division-Led
 - Partner-Led

These categories will help users understand the unique experience that each park and trail offers. But more importantly, they provide direction to DNR staff on where and how to invest resources, with a focus on *Destination* units.

One area that will not be subject to these investment categories is in resource management. The plan recognizes the primacy of protecting the natural and cultural resources and will prioritize these efforts based on impact.

Work on this plan was prompted by the Minnesota Legislature in 2012, which directed the DNR to submit a report on new funding options and investment criteria. As a result, an ad hoc committee of 19 members, including Parks & Trails Council (P&TC) board member, Mark Larson, was formed and recommended



Draft System Plan for the DNR Parks and Trails is available at dnr.state.mn.us/input/mgmtplans/strategic_plan/system_plan.html

the DNR move toward a differentiated system.

“We appreciate the thoughtfulness of this plan and the opportunities we had to provide feedback on earlier versions,” said Brett Feldman, P&TC executive director. “Going forward we hope to work closely with Friends Groups to make the most of those partner-led opportunities that were identified.”

Legislative News

What to expect in the 2015 Legislative Session

The 2015 legislative session commenced on Jan. 6 with a cast of new and familiar faces. Gov. Dayton was elected for a second term last November, while Republicans won a 10 seat majority in the House. The DFL remains the majority party in the state senate, which was not up for reelection last fall.

THE BUDGET

The main topic for the legislature in the 2015 session will be the passage of a biennial budget. Unlike past budget sessions, 2015 began with essentially a firm financial base: unemployment in Minnesota is below five percent, the economy is growing, state revenues are stable and safety net expenditures are declining. The most recent economic forecast, released

in December, projected an approximately \$1 billion surplus for the state in the next biennium. This is the largest surplus since 2007.

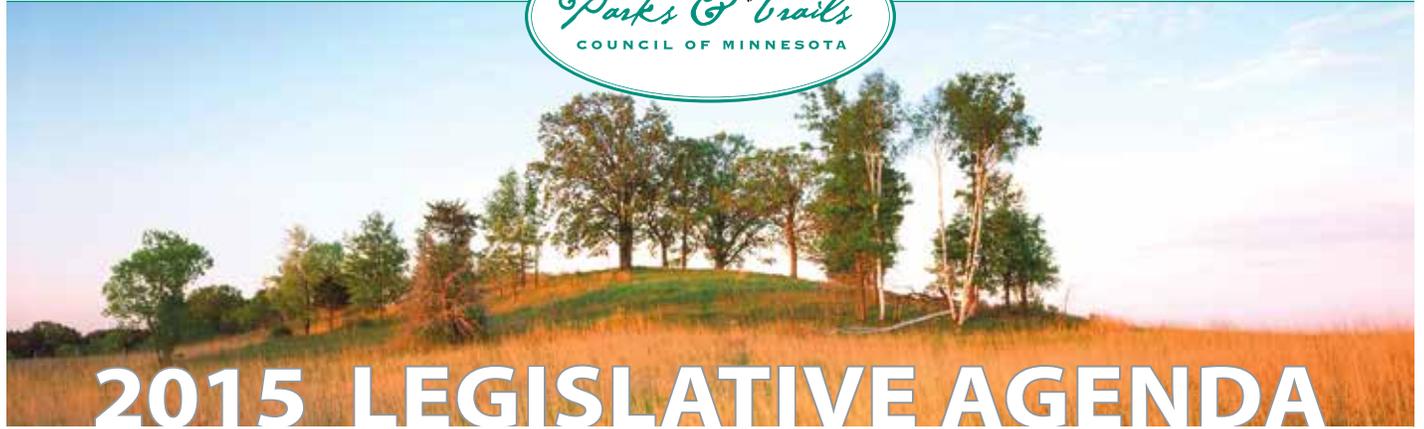
Using this forecast, Gov. Dayton must submit his budget proposal to the legislature by Jan. 27. Then the legislature will begin to work on their budget. The state economic forecast will be updated in early March before the Governor and legislature develop a final budget for passage.

The biennial budget will include an appropriation for the DNR to operate and maintain state parks and trails from July 2015 to June 2017. Parks & Trails Council is advocating an appropriation of \$62 million dollars. For details, see our 2015 Legislative Agenda on pages 5-8.

OTHER ISSUES

In addition to passing a biennial budget, a number of other issues are expected to dominate political discussions in 2015. Transportation infrastructure, and how to pay for it, is a priority for both parties. Gov. Dayton emphasized education in his inauguration address. And the new Republican majority in the House has expressed a desire to focus more on Greater Minnesota issues, including mining, local government aid, water and pesticide regulations, motorized trails, and economic development policy.

By law, the legislative session must end on or before May 18.



2015 LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

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

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.

Minnesota’s parks and trails preserve the best natural wonders our state has to offer: The headwaters of the nation’s greatest river and its confluence with the Minnesota River 500 miles downstream; the once-sprawling prairies; the sprinkling of lakes across the north woods; the rolling bluffs of the southeast and the rugged north shore of Superior. All these places are preserved in our parks and trails and made open for all to enjoy.

As Minnesota’s preeminent public places, Minnesota’s parks and trails rely on public support to accommodate the millions upon millions of people who use them every year. Our parks and trails are today amongst the best in the country thanks to the foresight and investment of past legislators. Minnesotans are counting on the 89th Legislature to continue this tradition.

The Parks & Trails Council of Minnesota, as part of its mission, advocates for these special places to have the resources they need to acquire land, develop new opportunities, and operate on a day-to-day basis. Our latest legislative agenda lays out a set of practical proposals that will serve these needs for Minnesota’s parks and trails in 2015 and beyond.

Parks & Trails Council’s

2015 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

- Restore and expand General Funds for Minnesota’s state parks and trails
❖❖❖❖
- Create a stunning park and trail legacy for future generations
❖❖❖❖
- Reinvest in Minnesota’s state park and trail’s aging infrastructure
❖❖❖❖
- Continue building Minnesota’s parks and trails through the Environment & Natural Resources Trust Fund
❖❖❖❖
- Strengthen policies that protect and enhance Minnesota’s parks and trails



Priority: Restore and expand General Funds for operations and maintenance in Minnesota's state parks and trails

- ➔ APPROPRIATE \$62 MILLION FROM THE GENERAL FUND TO STATE PARKS AND TRAILS
- ➔ INCLUDE FUNDS DESIGNATED TO INCREASE MAINTENANCE ON STATE TRAILS

For the first time in nearly a decade, Minnesota is entering a budget year with a projected General Fund surplus. With a projected billion dollars in the bank, now is the time for the Minnesota Legislature to give state parks and trails the investment they have long deserved.

The General Fund is Minnesota's main checking account. Every year, roughly \$20 billion dollars - mostly from income and sales taxes - is deposited into the General Fund; currently only \$20 million of it goes towards state parks and trails. That's 11 cents out of every \$100, or roughly four dollars from each Minnesotan. These General Funds are the dollars that keep our special places open and maintained daily. In 2014, General Funds accounted for half of state parks and trails' operation and maintenance budget.

Over the last 15 years, however, the state parks and trails General Fund appropriation was hit hard by economic recession in 2004 and again in 2010-2012. Funding recovered a little last biennium, but not enough to offset losses. As a percentage of Minnesota's overall General Fund spending, state parks and trails today receive roughly half what they received through the 1990s. Meanwhile, the state park and trail system has increased in size, is hosting more visitors than ever before, and costs increase every year.

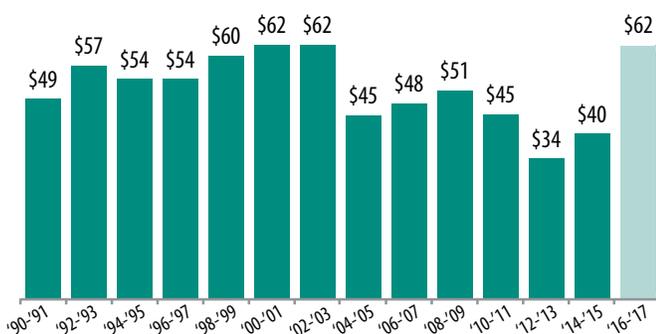
As a result of years of tight budgets, many needs exist across the state park and trail system. So much so that emergency funds were needed each of the last two biennia:

\$3.6 million was raided from the Environment & Natural Resources Trust Fund in 2012-13, and \$2 million supplemental funds were needed last year to keep our state parks afloat. But even with those temporary measures, jobs have gone undone: hours and seasons have been shortened, trail and building maintenance has been deferred, and new park units have not been fully staffed.

Parks & Trails Council has identified a needed General Fund appropriation of \$62 million for the 2016-17 biennium. This figure includes the \$39.6 million base appropriation state parks and trails received last biennium, plus an additional \$22 million to restore park hours and operating seasons, staff new park units, keep pace with inflationary costs, and permanently replace the temporary budget stop gaps used the past two budgets. Included in this recommendation is \$4 million for increased trail maintenance, which has been one of the hardest hit areas of the budget. Even though there are twice as many paved state bicycle trails as 15 years ago, the DNR hasn't received additional funds to care for them.

A \$62 million General Fund appropriation is in line with historical appropriations to state parks and trails, and could be achieved at minimal cost to the state budget as a whole. If only two extra dollars for each Minnesotan was spent on state parks and trails, the above needs would be met. That's the price of just one cup of coffee. And that's a price Minnesota can currently afford.

Base General Fund Appropriations to State Parks & Trails
(Dollars in millions, adjusted for inflation)



THE NEEDS FOR FISCAL YEARS 2016-2017:

- \$39.6M** General Fund base
- + **4M** Permanently replace 1-time stop gaps
- + **8M** Restore visitor services, park seasons, and building upkeep
- + **4M** Routine trail maintenance
- + **4M** Operate new units including Lake Vermilion & Brown's Creek
- + **2M** Keep pace with the rising cost of supplies and equipment

\$62 MILLION GENERAL FUND APPROPRIATION



Parks & Trails are a small investment, with a huge return for Minnesota...

Only four dollars per Minnesotan, from the General Fund, are spent on state parks and trails every year. **That's the price of two cups of coffee.**



Just one more cup would be enough to operate and maintain destination-quality parks and trails.

\$35 million

State Park O&M Budget (2014)

\$372 million



State Park Visitor Economic Effect (2012)

EVERY \$1 SPENT ON STATE PARKS AND TRAILS SUPPORTS OVER \$10 IN ECONOMIC ACTIVITY.

...Making our state a better, healthier place to live, work, and play:



State parks host nearly 9 million recreation visits every year



Property values can increase 15% by having parks or trails nearby



Habitat protection for over 280 endangered, threatened, special concern, and rare species



Nearly 20% of summer tourists in Minnesota visit a state or national park.



Every \$1 spent on trails saves an estimated \$3 in health costs

Priority: Create a stunning Legacy for future generations

- ALLOCATE LEGACY FUNDS EQUITABLY ACROSS MINNESOTA'S THREE MAJOR PARK & TRAIL SYSTEMS
- ACCELERATE HIGH-PRIORITY ACQUISITION AND DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS
- CREATE TRAIL CONNECTIONS BETWEEN WHERE MINNESOTANS LIVE, WORK, STUDY, AND PLAY

The Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment, which Minnesota voters overwhelmingly passed in 2008, is an opportunity to create a stunning legacy that future generations will look back on as forever transforming Minnesota's parks and trails. The Legacy Amendment raised the sales tax three-eighths of 1 percent and dedicated 14.25% of the new revenue to park and trail projects. Constitutionally, these funds must supplement not substitute the traditional funds parks and trails receive.

In order for Legacy Funds to be truly transformative, they must be allocated equitably across Minnesota's park and trail systems. A 2012 work group reached a consensus recommendation that Legacy Funds be divided 40%-40%-20% between the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, the Metropolitan Council, and the Greater



Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission for fiscal years 2014-2019. This allocation formula helps ensure Legacy Funds impact all corners of Minnesota in an equitable and balanced manner.

The DNR's 25-Year Parks and Trails Legacy Plan set a goal of acquiring and developing five new state parks and 600 miles of state trails between 2009 and 2034. With 19 years left until the Legacy Amendment is set to expire, there is still time to accomplish these ambitious goals. But to date, only 9% of Legacy Funds for state parks and trails have been used for acquisition, and only 20% has been used on new development. Accelerating the use of Legacy Funds for these purposes, and creating key trail connections to connect more people to Minnesota's great outdoors, should be priorities for the legislature moving forward.



Weeds taking root along the Heartland State Trail in Northwestern Minnesota.



Taking care of an Aging State Park & Trail System

Minnesota’s state parks and trails are preparing to celebrate their 125th birthday in 2016, and they are starting to show their age. The system includes 76 state parks and recreation areas, 25 state trails, 1,600 buildings, 332 miles of roads, 1,300 miles of state trails., 355 fishing piers, and 1,496 water access points. Many of these facilities were built in the 1930s. Now is the time to spruce them up before the 125th birthday celebration.



Broken bridge trestle along the Willard Munger State Trail (©Minnesota DNR)



Historic Seppman Mill in Minneopa State Park is in need of repairs (©Randy Wood)

Priority: Reinvest in Minnesota’s state parks and trail’s aging infrastructure

- INCLUDE STATE PARK AND TRAIL ASSET PRESERVATION, REHABILITATION, AND RENEWAL IN ANY 2015 BONDING PACKAGES
- PRIORITIZE PROJECTS THAT THREATEN VISITOR SAFETY SUCH AS UNEVEN TRAILS, DETERIORATED BRIDGES AND SANITATION FACILITIES IN STATE PARK CAMPGROUNDS
- CREATE A CAPITAL INVESTMENT PLAN THAT DETAILS AND PRIORITIZES SYSTEM NEEDS

Minnesota’s state park and trail system will turn 125 years old in 2016. And as the nation’s second oldest state park system, our parks and trails are starting to show their age. Many of the facilities managed by the Division of Parks and Trails were built in the 1930s and are lacking major upgrades. The Department of Natural Resources estimates that rehabilitation needs across state parks, state trails, and water access points are close to \$50 million annually.

While 2015 is not a “bonding year,” Parks & Trails Council is anticipating that the legislature will debate and pass a small

bonding package that focuses on emergency needs and other urgent, time-sensitive projects. A full array of state park and trail projects meet those criteria and should be included in any 2015 bonding package. For example, nearly 100 miles of state bicycle trails are in poor condition and create hazardous conditions for users, many state park facilities lack modern plumbing, and historic structures across the park system are in urgent need of renewal. Funding these projects now is crucial for putting our state parks and trails on full display for their 125th celebration in 2016.

In order to fund the rehabilitation needs of Minnesota’s state parks and trails in an efficient manner, Parks & Trails Council is continuing to work with the Department of Natural Resources to create a capital investment plan that details and prioritizes the system’s needs on a regular basis. Such a plan would prioritize asset preservation, development, and acquisition needs across the system and serve as a road-map for decision makers to make wise investments in Minnesota’s state parks and trails.



Priority: Continue building Minnesota’s parks and trails through the Environment & Natural Resources Trust Fund

- ➔ FUND THE PARK & TRAIL INITIATIVES RECOMMENDED BY LCCMR
- ➔ RESTORE ENRTF FUNDS FOR LOCAL PARK AND TRAIL GRANTS

The Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund (ENRTF) receives revenues from the Minnesota State Lottery to fund projects that enhance Minnesota’s “air, water, land, fish, wildlife, and other natural resources.” The Legislative-Citizen Commission on Natural Resources (LCCMR) is an advisory body that makes recommendations to the legislature on how the ENRTF funds should be spent each year.

For 2015, LCCMR recommended 65 projects totalling \$45.8 million including over \$4 million for parks and trails. Historically, the ENRTF also provided funds to grant programs for local park and trails projects, but has not done so since 2011. Parks & Trails Council urges the legislature to fund the park and trail initiatives recommended by LCCMR, and to restore ENRTF funds for local grant programs should funds become available in 2015 or future years.

ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES TRUST FUND

PARK & TRAIL PROJECTS RECOMMENDED BY LCCMR:

- Metro Regional Park System Land Acquisition** \$1,000,000
- State Park and Trail Land Acquisition** \$1,500,000
- Mesabi Regional Trail Development** \$1,000,000
- Bison Reintroduction in Minneopa State Park** \$600,000

Priority: Strengthen policies that protect and enhance Minnesota’s parks and trails

Parks & Trails Council continually reviews, analyzes, and updates policy positions on issues that affect Minnesota’s parks and trails heritage. Some of these issues span multiple legislative sessions, and may or may not require legislation to achieve results. In 2015, we are working with our partners on the following policies that protect and enhance parks and trails across the state.

➔ GREATER MINNESOTA REGIONAL PARKS AND TRAILS COMMISSION

Parks & Trails Council supports an appropriation for the Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission to support a staff person and office space to carry out the Commission’s work, which is essential for making planning and funding decisions in Greater Minnesota’s regional park and trail system.

➔ STATE TRAIL EXPENDITURE REPORTING

Parks & Trails Council is encouraging the DNR to report operation and maintenance expenditures on state trails. Tracking state trail budget trends has become more difficult following a division merger in fiscal year 2010. Reporting expenditures would increase transparency, illustrate needs, and better inform stakeholders.

➔ STRATEGIC LAND ASSET MANAGEMENT

Parks & Trails Council is monitoring the DNR’s Strategic Land Asset Management (SLAM) program to ensure decisions are made transparently and that park and trail lands remain in the public trust. SLAM is a new program to improve Minnesota’s “portfolio of public land assets through comprehensively planning for and implementing acquisitions, sales, and exchanges.”

➔ CITIZEN VOLUNTEERING

Parks & Trails Council will continue to work with the DNR to identify and implement solutions that support volunteer group’s contributions to state park and trail projects.



View of Devil's Track River along the property Parks & Trails Council owns for the Superior Hiking Trail.

Superior Hiking Trail

continued from page 1

A land easement is an agreement in which a landowner grants someone else the right to use land for a specific purpose. This right can be purchased or donated and once executed it is tied to the property, so even if the land is sold, the easement remains in place.

Creating the SHT 1986-1990

The Superior Hiking Trail Association (SHTA) was formed in 1986 to take on the task of creating the trail. Their toolbox consisted of a grassroots cadre of volunteers with financial support from members along with state grants. Another vital tool in their box was the plethora of public land along the North Shore—much of it thanks to Parks & Trails Council co-founder, Judge C. R. Magney, who was an amazing advocate for the creation of parks.

The SHTA was able to use the network of public land within seven state parks and some forests, to bring quick progress to the trail. The hardest part came next:

figuring out how to cross over the tracts of privately owned lands.

The way Rudi Hargesheimer, former president of the SHTA, describes it, they went out and had friendly conversations with many private landowners that turned into handshake agreements. By 1990, just four years into the effort, half the trail had been completed. Compared with many state trail projects, that is record speed.

The down side to the friendly conversations is that as time chugs on, handshakes can become a distant memory. Meanwhile new situations evolve, ownership changes hands or people simply have a change of heart.

Why we stepped in

This seemed to be the case with the land that P&TC came to own in 1995. Several years prior, in 1991, the SHTA talked with the landowners and received written permission for the trail to cross into a small section of their land along the Devil's River just north of Grand Marais.

But by 1994 this arrangement was in jeopardy. The SHTA received a note with instructions to return the land to its pre-trail condition. The owners were getting ready to put the land on the market.

“And that’s when Parks & Trails Council stepped in to save the day,” says Gayle Coyer, the current executive director of the Superior Hiking Trail Association.

On the one hand this project was easy for P&TC because, at 40 acres, it is relatively small compared with other land projects we’ve worked on. On the other hand it represented a departure from P&TC’s land protection model, which is to hold onto land only long enough for a public agency to secure funding and authority to acquire it—anywhere from a month to a few years. This project, however, would require P&TC to own the land in perpetuity.

“We know how critical this land is for the Superior Hiking Trail; it’s a unique situ-

ation that deserves an extraordinary use of our Land Fund,” says Brett Feldman, executive director of P&TC.

While P&TC continues to hold this land for the SHT, we are delighted to help usher in the SHTA’s efforts to bring the whole trail onto firmer ground—metaphorically—by granting a permanent easement. This ensures that the trail has a legally binding right to use this land in perpetuity. Happy hiking!



Hike to this Land

There’s easy access to this part of the trail via a 5-mile, out-and-back hike from a parking lot north of Grand Marais along Co. Rd. 58. You’ll hike along the edge of the deepest canyon in Minnesota and see Devil Track River far below.

Getting There

From Hwy. 61 milepost 113.8, turn onto Co. Rd. 58 and drive 0.8 miles to the parking lot on the left side of the road.

State Trail Project

Family's 11-year effort to donate land for state trail finally happening

Working with the DNR to add land to and enhance our parks and trails is often not as straightforward as expected. One family is learning that the hard way. For eleven years they have been trying to donate their land to create a parking lot along the Glacial Lakes State Trail. It finally looks like it's going to happen.

Tracy and Ricky Clark's home abuts the trail near New London, Minn. Part of their land included an empty lot where trail users have long pulled in to park and unload bikes. Seeing the need, they decided to donate the land for a trailhead.

The idea actually originated with their son Ryan. He intended it to be his Eagle Scout project, motivated by the memory of his friend who was killed in 1999 when hit by a car while bicycling on the road.

Ryan kept the grassy lot mowed for people to use while trying to get the land donated. According to Tracy, her son continued to push for this project even while

he was serving in Afghanistan. "It meant a lot to him," says Tracy.

In 2010 Ryan died in Afghanistan. That's when Tracy and Ricky Clark assumed the mantle for completing the project. "It has been much harder than I thought it would be," says Tracy. But their determination has finally paid off. On Oct. 17, 2014, a date that marks four years since Ryan's funeral, there was a ground breaking for the site. The Clarks expect the DNR will have the site paved and curbed by Sept. 2015.

This site is about a mile north of the proposed 5-mile trail spur into Sibley State Park that Parks & Trails Council has been involved with (see article in Special Places Fall 2014 edition).

The Clarks are now working to raise \$25,000 for three flagpoles, a bench with a military footstone and a story plaque about Ryan and his friend who inspired the project.

Parks & Trails Council made a small donation. "We wanted to show our support for this family, knowing how challenging it can be for individuals unaccustomed to navigating this system to complete a land project for a park or trail," said P&TC executive director Brett Feldman.

The Clarks have set up a fund at the United Minnesota Bank, 105 Central Av. E., New London, MN 56273.



Parks & Trails Council of Minnesota is a proud member of the Minnesota Environmental Fund, a workplace giving option comprised of 23 environmental nonprofits working to protect, conserve and restore Minnesota's environment.

www.MNENVIROFUND.ORG

In Memoriam

Keith Fester, 72, was a trail rider to the end



Our friend and long-time supporter, Keith Fester died on Dec. 1, 2014 surrounded by family and friends in hospice. He had just turned 72.

Keith will be remembered as a generous and kind man who believed in the maxim "pay it forward." Keith was an incredible advocate for the Parks & Trails Council of Minnesota and a person who loved to experience the outdoors with gusto.

Keith served on the Parks & Trails Council Board from 2011-2014 and P&TC's Land Committee from 2009-2014. He and his wife Louise were fixtures on the annual Bike MN with Parks & Trails Council—so much so that over the past

six years Keith was responsible for scouting, shaping and mapping the event's routes.

Like many of us at P&TC, bike riding brought Keith great joy. For him it was more than just a personal pursuit--biking brought his family together and fostered friendships. A rite of passage for each of his sons was a 400-mile trip from their home in the Twin Cities to Omaha, Neb. to visit their grandmother.

We are grateful that he was inspired to share his love of parks and trails by supporting the work of Parks & Trails Council in creating and enhancing these special places across Minnesota.

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