

2017 BUDGET & POLICY PRIORITIES

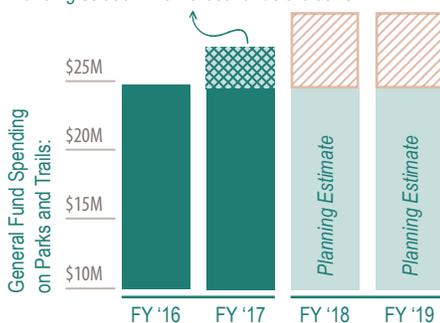
- Fully Fund Minnesota State Parks and Trails
- No New Taxes for State Trail Users
- Keep State Parks Free from the Noise and Undue Artificiality of OHVs



OPERATIONS BUDGET: FULLY FUND MINNESOTA STATE PARKS AND TRAILS

Minnesota State Parks and Trails are still recovering from drastic budget cuts they suffered in the late 2000s and early 2010s. Funding has rebounded in recent years, but much of that success has depended on temporary, one-time fixes to avoid staff layoffs and service cutbacks. The FY 2018-19 budget gives Minnesota a choice: Do we let the one-time budget fixes expire, leading to service reductions across Minnesota State Parks and Trails? Do we continue to tread water by including last year's one-time funds in the base budget, keeping services at the current levels which aren't meeting expectations? Or do we finally use a small fraction of the statewide budget surplus to fully fund State Parks and Trails? Gov. Dayton has recommended the latter choice, and we are too.

We avoided cutbacks last year thanks to a temporary funding solution. Now those funds are at risk.



WHICH PATH FORWARD FOR PARKS & TRAILS? It's an easy choice.

<p>BUDGET CUT? \$24.4 MILLION PER YEAR</p> <p><i>The baseline planning budget would cut current State Parks and Trails funding by \$3 million per year. If this happens, park and trail services will be reduced.</i></p>	<p>STATUS QUO? \$27.4 MILLION PER YEAR</p> <p><i>Legislators could choose to make the one-time funds appropriated in FY 2017 a part of base funding. This would avoid major cutbacks, but still leaves Parks and Trails stretched to a critical point, operating below expected levels.</i></p>	<p>FULL FUNDING? \$31 MILLION PER YEAR</p> <p><i>After years of chronic underfunding, is this the year Parks and Trails finally get the funding they need? A General Fund appropriation of \$31 million per year would make past one-time fixes permanent, cover increasing costs, fund new park units, and expand services at Minnesota's most-visited parks and trails. Gov. Dayton's budget meets these needs.</i></p>
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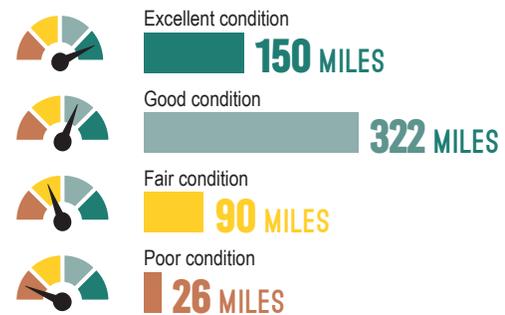


TRAILS POLICY: NO NEW TAXES FOR STATE TRAIL USERS

Charging a new fee to bike or hike on Minnesota's state trails doesn't make sense. For starters, such a policy would discourage beneficial activities (trails spur spending in Minnesota communities and promote healthy lifestyles). Such a tax would also be difficult, intrusive, and expensive to enforce. And finally, Minnesotans already agreed to pay increased taxes for parks and trails when they passed the Legacy Amendment in 2008. Revenues from the Legacy Amendment have been put to all types of good uses, including rehabilitating some of our state trails¹. In fact, a forthcoming study found state trails are in relatively good shape. While there are still trails needing repair, a new fee on biking and hiking is a bad and unneeded policy.

THE STATE OF OUR TRAILS:

Based on forthcoming study by Parks & Trails Council of Minnesota





PARKS POLICY: KEEP STATE PARKS FREE FROM THE NOISE AND UNDUE ARTIFICIALITY OF OHVs

State Parks are special places that were created to protect our state’s “unspoiled natural resources” for future generations. Parks & Trails Council opposes all efforts to introduce OHV recreation (Off-Highway Vehicles, including All-Terrain Vehicles, Off-Road Vehicles, and Off-Highway Motorcycles) into Minnesota State Parks. The introduction of OHVs into State Parks would be a change to current state policy that would compromise the State Park mission. Not only would the expansion of OHVs into State Parks violate state rules (MN 6100.1900), it also would violate the Outdoor Recreation Act. In addition, surveys conducted by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources show this is an issue most state park visitors oppose.

WHY THIS IS SO IMPORTANT:



OUTDOOR RECREATION ACT (M.S. 86A, SUBD. 2)

“ [Only] Outdoor recreation activities... that can be accommodated **without material disturbance of the natural features of the park or the introduction of undue artificiality** into the natural scene may be permitted...

...[State] Park use shall be primarily for aesthetic, cultural, and educational purposes, and **shall not be designed to accommodate all forms or unlimited volumes** of recreational use.

VISITORS WANT QUIET, NATURAL STATE PARKS

72% ...of visitors say the **smells and sounds of nature** are “very important” for their visit.²

60% ...of visitors oppose allowing OHVs in state parks. Only 12% support the idea.³

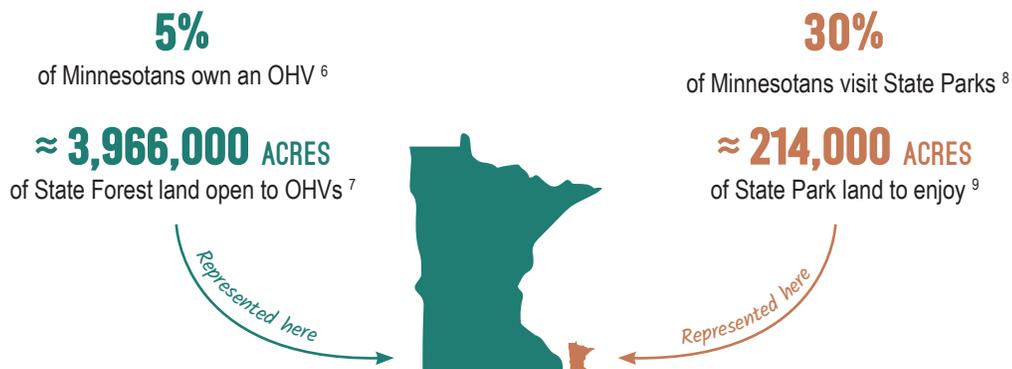
57% ...of visitors say **silence and quiet** is “very important” for their visit.⁴

PROTECTING OUR NATURAL RESOURCES

“ The effects of OHV activities on ecosystems are **diverse and potentially profound**... Studies have revealed a variety of effects on soil properties, watersheds, and vegetation resulting from one to multiple passes by OHV vehicles.

~ U.S. Geological Survey⁵

OHVs ALREADY HAVE DISPROPORTIONATE ACCESS TO STATE LANDS



Expanding OHV opportunities doesn’t need to come at the expense of State Parks



Artwork designed by Freepik

References available on following page

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REFERENCES

1. Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. 2015. "DNR Parks and Trails Fund: Report to the Legislature on Legacy Priorities for FY 2016 and FY 2017."

The report identified "accelerate rehabilitation of an aging park and trail infrastructure to ensure high-quality experiences as a top priority for Legacy funding. The report identified rehabilitation projects on the Root River, Willard Munger, Douglas, Glacial Lakes, and Sakatah Singing Hills State Trail as projects to be funded with FY 2016-17 Legacy funding. According to the Legislature's online database, Legacy Funds were used to rehabilitate and/or repaved 38 miles of State Trails trails between 2010 and 2013.

2. Kelly, Tim. 2008. "2007 Minnesota State Parks Research Summary Report." Minnesota Department of Natural Resources: Operations Services Division.

The 2012 Survey did not ask about the smells and sounds of nature, thus we cite the older 2007 survey.

3. Kelly, Tim. 2013. "Results of 2012 Minnesota State Park Visitor Survey." Minnesota Department of Natural Resources: Operations Services Division.

4. Kelly, Tim. 2008. "2007 Minnesota State Parks Research Summary Report." Minnesota Department of Natural Resources: Operations Services Division.

The 2012 Survey did not ask about silence and quiet, thus we cite the older 2007 survey.

5. Ouren, D.S., Haas, Christopher, Melcher, C.P., Stewart, S.C., Ponds, P.D., Sexton, N.R., Burris, Lucy, Fancher, Tammy, and Bowen, Z.H. 2007. "Environmental effects of off-highway vehicles on Bureau of Land Management lands: A literature synthesis, annotated bibliographies, extensive bibliographies, and internet resources." U.S. Geological Survey, Open-File Report 2007-1353.

6. Kelly, Tim. 2014. "Observations on Minnesota off-highway vehicle trends using registration information from 1995 to 2013." Minnesota Department of Natural Resources: Operations Services Division.

7. The percentage of Minnesotans visiting State Parks was provided by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources.

8. Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. 2008. "Motor Route Designation on State Forest Lands - Final Summary." Minnesota Department of Natural Resources: Parks and Trails Division.

The number we cite include acres of state- and county-administered State Forest land that is classified as either "Managed" or "Limited" for OHV use. "Managed" means trails and roads are open to OHVs unless posted close. "Limited" means trails and roads are closed to OHVs unless posted open.

9. Data from Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. Retrieved December 22, 2016.

The number we cite includes State Park acres managed by the DNR. State Recreation Areas and State Waysides are excluded.