

2023

Legislative Agenda



Minneopa State Park • Maranda Miller / P&TC Photo Contest

About us:

Parks & Trails Council is an independent nonprofit 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.

Our 2023 Legislative Priorities:



A BUDGET FOR
PARKS & TRAILS



KEEP OHVs OUT
OF STATE PARKS



CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT
PROJECTS



DIVERSITY, EQUITY
AND INCLUSION



LEGACY AND
LCCMR

See reverse side for details

Parks & Trails Legislative Priorities:



State Parks and Trails Budget

Minnesota has a projected \$17.6 billion surplus* on top of billions in federal aid. Meanwhile, visitation to Minnesota's parks and trails is at an all-time high. Investing a small portion of this surplus into parks and trails to meet demand, and building that increase into the general fund base, would ensure our special places remain well cared for and open to all.

State Parks and Trails should be affordable for all Minnesotans

A new proposal seeks to raise state park entrance fees to \$45 for an annual pass (up from \$35) and \$10 for a daily pass (up from \$7). Minnesota state park fees have risen rapidly in recent years, to the point we fear we're pricing people out of our state's special places. We oppose this fee increase because:

- DNR has a stated goal to keep park user fees affordable and equitable, and DNR research has found user fees are a key barrier to participation in outdoor recreation activities.
- When fees were increased 40% in 2017, state park visitation decreased for the first time in years.
- The fee increase would make Minnesota State Parks the most expensive among neighboring states.
- The proposed fee increase greatly exceeds the rate of inflation. Current prices are already in line with historical, inflation-adjusted averages.
- The historic \$17.6 billion state surplus means there's other resources available to fund our parks and trails.



Capital Improvement Projects

We urge the legislature to address the backlog of infrastructure needs and fund key park and trail projects using bonding and the surplus.

- \$100+ million for state park and trail improvements
- \$15 million for the Metro Regional Park and Trail Grant Program
- \$4 million for Local and Regional Park and Trail Grant Programs



Legacy and LCCMR

- The Legacy Amendment's Parks and Trails Fund should be allocated equitably between the needs of the State, Metropolitan, and Greater Minnesota systems. We support the 40%-40%-20% split between these park and trail systems unless a new consensus agreement is reached.
- We support the full LCCMR recommendations on appropriations from the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund.

Blue Mounds State Park • James Ecklund / P&TC Photo Contest




State Park Entrance Permits

Cost Comparison

Price of Resident State Park Annual Permit

 **\$45**
Minnesota
Proposed
(Currently \$35)

 **\$22**
Upper Midwest
Average
(IA, MI, ND, SD, WI)

Skyrocketing Minnesota State Park Fees

Change since 2016

Daily Park Permit (Proposed)	+100%
Annual Park Permit (Proposed)	+80%
U.S. Inflation Rate	+24%



Keep OHVs out of State Parks

We oppose all efforts to introduce or expand the use of off-highway vehicles (OHVs) in state parks and on paved state trails for the following reasons:

- State law is clear that OHVs are incompatible with state parks.
- Opinion surveys show state park visitors don't want OHVs in parks.
- OHVs would introduce visitor safety and environmental hazards.
- OHVs already have disproportionate access to public lands.
- State Park visitation is increasing faster than OHV registrations.



Diversity, Equity & Inclusion

We want parks and trails to be welcoming places for everyone, yet studies consistently show Black people, Indigenous people, and people of color are underrepresented among park and trail visitors. We encourage legislative efforts to explore options and develop new programs that help address these disparities.

* Based on November Forecast. For more information on state park fees and Capital Improvement needs, see our other fact sheets.