



# Greater Minnesota Parks & Trails Connections

Monthly Newsletter

April/May 2016

## Important Dates

### GMPT Board Meeting

**Wednesday, June 15**

9:30 a.m. at the Stearns County Parks Department

### GMPT Membership Meeting

**Wednesday, August 17**

ITV Meeting, 9:30 a.m. to noon  
Scheduled ITV Locations:

Becker	Olmsted
Beltrami	Polk
Brown	Redwood
Douglas	St. Louis
Isanti	Wright

## 2016-2017 Board of Directors

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## Legislative Session Wrap-Up

The 2016 Legislative Session came to a chaotic close without the passage of a bonding bill. Now the only hope for a bonding bill this year is if Gov. Dayton call a special session.

For the first time in recent memory, neither the Senate nor the House were able to pass their initial bonding proposals with the two-thirds majority required. This failure resulted in perhaps the first-ever conference committee appointed to reconcile two bills that had failed to pass. The committee was appointed Thursday, May 19, just three days before the session deadline to pass bills. The committee met the next day to discuss policy language, and on Saturday, the Senate presented a compromise offer to the House. The Senate proposal included \$18.9 million for state parks and trails, plus money for several regional trails. The House presented their counteroffer late Sunday evening, which was made public about 20 minutes before the midnight deadline. This new proposal included \$11.49 million for the Gitchi-Gami, Glacial Lakes and Heartland trails and Cuyana State Recreation Area and \$1 million for the Lake County Prospectors ATV Trail System.

With the clock ticking toward midnight, the House voted to pass the bill, and a page then literally ran the bill to the Senate floor. As senators were about to vote, Sen. Ron Latz (DFL-St. Louis Park) rose to amend the bill. His amendment passed and was added to the bill. The Senate then passed the bill with just minutes to spare, but because of the amendment, the House needed to re-pass the bill. However, the House adjourned before taking the bill back up for a vote. Legislative leaders now dispute whether the House knew that the bill was coming back. Either way, the bill failed.

Legislative leaders, local governments and others are now calling on Gov. Dayton to hold a special session to pass the bonding bill. So far the Governor has given no clear indication when or if he will call a special session. If you want to urge the Governor to call a special session, please call his office at 651-201-3400 or 800-657-3717.

### LEGACY

The Legislature passed a small Legacy bill this year, mainly to address shortfalls in several spending categories. There were no funding changes for parks & trails, but a few policy changes were proposed.

First, Rep. Dean Urdahl (R-Grove City) introduced language earlier this session to address a concern raised by the Office of the Legislative Auditor (OLA). The Legacy Amendment requires that "the dedicated money under this section [the Legacy Amendment] must supplement traditional sources of funding for these purposes and may not be used as a substitute." In its recent report, the OLA expressed concern that the Department of Natural Resources had not demonstrated that it met the "supplement, not supplant" test.

Advocates, including GMPT, worked with Rep. Urdahl on the language. The final version requires agencies or organizations seeking Legacy funds to identify whether the funds supplant previous funding. Because identifying previous funding is already part of the application for Legacy funds, this requirement should not be a problem for our members.

The GMPT successfully fought an amendment added to the Legacy bill on the floor by Rep. Phyllis Kahn (DFL-Minneapolis). The amendment would have required the DNR, in consultation with Metropolitan Parks and the Greater Minnesota Regional Parks & Trails Commission, to propose criteria to evaluate whether awards by the fund are meeting the constitutional criteria. Not only would such a proposal cost money that would otherwise be spent on building, it could have resulted in a proposal that evaluated metropolitan and Greater Minnesota regional parks on the same basis, regardless of the differences between the two systems. GMPT lobbyist Elizabeth Wefel testified against the proposal and worked with legislators to remove it completely.

Session wrap-up continues on next page...

See next page for more!

## Opportunities & Events

### GMRPTC seeks applicants for District Planning Committees

The Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission (GMRPTC) seeks applicants to serve on each of six District Planning Committees (DPCs) across the state. The purpose of the DPCs is to be the planning arm of the Commission by nurturing a district-level system of parks and trails that meet regional standards and by helping the Commission understand District-level issues.

The application can be downloaded off the GMRPTC website, [gmrptcommission.org](http://gmrptcommission.org). The deadline for submitting applications is June 30, 2016. Questions may be directed to System Plan Coordinator Joe Czapiewski at [coordinator@gmrptcommission.org](mailto:coordinator@gmrptcommission.org).

### Minnesota Sports to host free program on adapted sports

Minnesota Sports is hosting program titled "Adapted Sports: A Growing Opportunity for Minnesota" from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Friday, June 3 at the Hyland Hills Chalet in Bloomington.

Whether you are adapting a mainstream sport or hosting an adapted sports competition, this program will help you identify resources and opportunities and answer your questions to support these opportunities. The program is offered free to parks and recreation professionals, community education, school athletic departments, sports event organizers and others active in promoting sports events and tournaments in Minnesota.

More information about this program is event online at <http://www.mnrrpa.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/MN-SPORTS-INVITE-2016.pdf>.

## Legislative Session Wrap-Up

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### OTHER – DNR Related

Over the last several months, the DNR has drawn attention to the challenges of maintaining and operating its parks and trails with limited funds. The supplemental finance bill that passed in the legislature included nearly \$6.5 million in funding for the DNR. Some of these funds are dedicated to specific purposes, such as \$1.15 million for strategic park acquisition, but a significant portion will be used for operations.

During legislative hearings, many state representatives raised the question of whether the DNR could work with volunteer groups to maintain trails. The House included a provision that would have clarified members of nonprofit organizations working with the DNR to maintain trails would not

become employees for purposes of workers' compensation laws.

The conference committee changed the language so that the DNR, in coordination with the Department of Labor and Industry and the Workers' Compensation Advisory Council (WCAC), would make a recommendation on how to clarify the state's liability for workers' compensation with respect to these volunteers. This change was not surprising. It is an unwritten rule at the legislature that all changes to workers' compensation laws must first be approved by the WCAC, a task force made up of representatives from business and labor.

### Stay Tuned...

The GMPT will work to keep members informed if there is any news regarding a special session. Be sure to check our website at [greatermnparksandtrails.org](http://greatermnparksandtrails.org) for updates.

## Message from GMRPTC Executive Director Mattson

*Below is a message from Renee Mattson, Executive Director of the Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission:*

Thank you for the opportunity to update the membership on the initiatives underway at the Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trail Commission.

But first, on behalf of the GMRPTC, let me extend our gratitude and thanks to Elizabeth Wefel on her outstanding work and leadership at the Minnesota Legislature this past session. And thanks to the members of GMPT for the time and effort many of you dedicated to this session as well.

It's been another flurry of activity at the Commission these past months and good work and planning is happening. Most recently, the designation application cycle for 2016 closed on April 29, and I'm pleased to report we have 42 applications from a wide geographical representation. Our first ETeam meeting to review applications will take place May 27.

The Funding Application Portal will open on Monday, June 6, with funding applications for

designated parks and trails taken until Friday, Sept. 2.

The NEW Master Plan Portal is open to anyone wishing to create a Master Plan for their park or trail, and has been thoughtfully designed to make this process less burdensome. We will soon have an instructional video available to help take users through the process.

We have also added a News and Information page to the [GMRPTC website](http://gmrptcommission.org). On this page you will find a variety of research and reports relevant to parks, trails and outdoor recreation. Visit the website at [www.gmrptcommission.org](http://www.gmrptcommission.org) and check out the new features. While you're there, sign up to receive instant updates via our News and Information Blog.

And finally, the 2016 System Plan and Work Plan update is in process and undergoing final draft revisions. The new System and Work Plan will be available by the end of June; look for the announcement via our Blog.

Hope you can all get outdoors and enjoy the amazing parks and trails we are so fortunate to have in Minnesota. Happy Summer!

**For recent news and more information about  
Greater Minnesota Parks & Trails, visit us online at  
[greatermnparksandtrails.org](http://greatermnparksandtrails.org).**

## Featured Park or Trail of the Month: Cascade Lake Park, Rochester

The Cascade Lake Park project, located just outside of the St. Marys Hospital Campus in Rochester, consists of 225 acres with a water body encompassing approximately 100 acres. There are also 60 acres of public waters adjoining the park. The park currently has a 2.4 mile paved trail looping the lake along with a sand beach (both completed in 2015) and some interim turf sports fields. The park ties directly into Rochester's vast citywide trail/path network and lies at the southerly extension of the DNR Douglas Trail linking Rochester to Pine Island.

The Cascade Lake Park project just became much more exciting as a result of a \$2 million grant from the J.A. Wedum Foundation (an abutting property owner)! This funding will go a long way toward the initial development of the \$18 million+ project. Project coordinators hope to begin implementation of the Phase I portion (a \$6 million project), located at the southeast portion of the park, this fall and finish the Phase I over the next three to four years.

Approximately half of the park's shoreline has been restored to native habitat as part of the creek relocation & restoration and wetland creation project that occurred several years ago. A shoreline restoration project is currently underway (scheduled to conclude by 2023) on approximately 1,200 feet of additional shoreline to help provide a stable shoreline left over from historic mining areas and to create habitat for fishing. These natural /habitat amenities, including the relocated creek/wetlands will help keep the ground water fed lake cleaner and more sustainable.

Cascade Lake Park is a state-identified "Regional Park" and is intended to have a nature-based focus while still providing amenities for the urban community. Visitors and community members are already heavily utilizing the park and trail because of its proximity to Rochester's downtown area.

While most of the higher intensity activity will focus on approximately 30 acres in the southeast corner of the park, the remaining park is definitely a great getaway into nature. Future amenities in the park will include:

- Beach House
- Visitor Pavilion
- Amphitheater
- Picnic shelters
- Natural play areas
- Landscaped Gardens
- Paved and grass parking
- Internal trails and bridges for internal and external connectivity
- Fishing pier
- Boat rental and boat launch

Information provided by Michael Nigbur, Rochester Park & Forestry Division Head.



*The Cascade Lake Park Master Plan details the future plans for this key Regional Park located in close proximity to downtown Rochester. Picture provided by Michael Nigbur.*