

Parks and Trails Legacy Advisory Committee Meeting August 24, 2023

MINUTES PROVIDE A RECORD OF MINNESOTA'S PARKS AND TRAILS LEGACY ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETINGS. THESE MINUTES WERE REVIEWED AND APPROVED ON OCTOBER 26, 2023.



08/24/2023

Parks and Trails Legacy Advisory Committee Meeting

Thursday, August 24, 2023

10:00 AM – 2:00 PM

In person at the Hartley Nature Center, Duluth

And virtual via WebEx

Updates and Announcements:

Next Meeting: Thursday, October 26, 2023

Meeting Host: Department of Nature Resources

Meeting Location: TBD

Action Items:

- DNR Staff will post the approved meeting minutes on the LCC Website.

Meeting Minutes:

Members: Lynnea Atlas-Ingebretson, Steve Dubbs, Janice Erickson, Gina Hugo, Matthew Lindaman (Absent), Dolf Moon (Absent), Jon Oyanagi, Jim Shoberg, Heather Stirratt, Dan Trudeau

Liaisons: Emmett Mullin (Met Council), Renee Mattson (GMRPTC), Ann Pierce (DNR), Laura Preus (DNR, Absent)

Staff: Lars Erdahl (DNR), Kaci Warneke (DNR)

PTLAC approved meeting agenda, reviewed the conflict of interest statement, and member expectations/roles.

Approved June 22, 2023 Meeting Minutes

Tom O'Rourke introduced Hartley Nature Center and gave a brief background of the park.

Jon Oyanagi opened the meeting and led ice breaker.

Duluth Park System Overview

(Jim Shoberg)

Jim provides background on Duluth parks and the Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Special Feature designations.

- Hartley was Duluth's first designation. Now there are four (Hartley Nature Center, Duluth Traverse, Spirit Mountain Recreation Area, Waabizheshikana Trail).

Hartley

- The area was a farm field before it was before it was a park. Lots of work was needed for it to become a park.

- Many public meetings were held to gather public opinions and help create a park plan. Received robust feedback.
- Plan focused on the nature center building, natural resources and landscape management. Trying to balance built environment with the natural environment.

Duluth Traverse Master Plan

- Became a Greater Minnesota regionally significant trail in 2018.
- Single-track, natural surface multi-use trail, 110 miles long.
- Involved huge community engagement to create trail plan. Connects every neighborhood across town.
- Close to being done, and building in the trail gaps to better connect the whole trail system.

Spirit Mountain Rec Area Plan

- Downhill skiing and snowboarding in winter, mountain biking and Adventure Park in the summer.
- Epicenter of six regional trails. A Cross Town Snowmobile, Superior Hiking Trail (North Country Trail), Duluth Traverse Trail, Waabizheshikana (Marten Trail), Munger Trail, Lower Spirit Nordic Center.
- 50 year old Chalet building needs to be replaced.
- A future goal is to connect the property to the estuary.

Waabizheshikana Heritage Trail

- The St. Louis River was once a superfund site.
- \$250 million in investments over the years in cleanup efforts.
- The quality has improved so much that now the water can be touched and fish can be eaten from the river.
- There are two trails, one land and one on the water. The water trail is a designated National water trail.
- Worked closely with Fond du Lac band to achieve the success in this process, they do a lot of the restoration work and other programs using traditional ecological knowledge.
- Project focus is on people and community of west Duluth. The trail connects so many neighborhoods that did not have access to the river before.

Discussion/Questions/Feedback:

- More about the natural resource work that was part of the master plan and the funding sources?
 - After it was used as a farm, there was an attempt to restore the land by densely planting pine stands. Currently working to thin those out. Fortunate to have a lot of understory still intact, so don't have to introduce that much after taking out buckthorn. There are many volunteer groups that come and help remove invasive plants.
 - State, federal, and local sources that have contributed.
 - Have also hired organizations to help with conservation efforts.

- Encourage involving children in the work, since there is a lot of work to be done, since these are the future stewards of the land we have to build a strong foundation on what that means and evolves.
- Because the Tischer Creek runs into Lake Superior, coastal restoration funds could help with restoration of the dam/pond. Could be a great demonstration project for other communities that are in a similar circumstance.
- How can we, as a collective across the state, provide consistent messaging that fosters sense of stewardship and desire to take care of the outdoors?
- Children play with purpose, how do we add land stewardship ethic into that?
- What does Legacy funds mean to Duluth parks?
 - Without Legacy Funds, this facility wouldn't be here, or any of the improvements made for it or any of the signage or parking for the trail infrastructure. Would be behind in Traverse project as well.
 - Without Legacy, Duluth parks would look how they did in the 70's and 80's. They would still exist and maybe maintained but no new facilities.
- How does parks and trails integrate into the city and quality of life in Duluth?
 - It's not as integrated as you may think. Many struggle financially, who are not able to participate in the outdoors. There are many parks throughout the city that are easily accessed by walking.
- Time may also be a barrier of access to the outdoors. Those who work multiple jobs do not have time to go on a trip.
- It's nice to see a project meant to benefit the local communities and not just for tourism.

Lunch

Legacy Partner Shared Outcomes Reporting

(Liaisons)

Lars Erdahl walks through the LCC Website, and its features. Users can search using filters to find Legacy projects by fund, agency, subject, and county on the website. There is also a GIS map that shows where most of the projects are located that is color coded by fund.

Some of the original Legacy targets and goals have been accomplished early. For example the DNR and Metro Council Regional parks surpassed their 2035 visitor goals in 2020 and 2021. The three agencies are ahead of schedule, but that doesn't mean that they are done. There is an opportunity to make sure the telling of Parks and Trails Legacy story is better. More visitors means more people to spread the word.

GMRPTC- Produced an Annual Policy & Planning Report to tell story in an engaging way. Think the story telling aspect is important.

Metro – Created a Metropolitan Regional Parks and Trails Legacy Fund report, that reported just what Legacy funds achieved in Metropolitan Regional Parks and Trails system. Thinking about how to tell a higher level story for a legislative audience. Goal is to create a report every two years.

DNR –A Parks and Trails Legacy Fund Strategic Directions report is created every other year. Includes a lot of background info.

Goal is to come up with a combined high level, compelling report that we can share with stories that we want to tell as a collective.

Potential overall story themes or messages:

- Parks and Trails were a lifeline for Minnesotans during the pandemic.
- They are important to Minnesotans and benefit health and quality of life. They also value the history, present and future of parks and trails.
- Legacy funds matter, game-changer for Minnesota parks, trails and residents.

Discussion/Questions/Feedback:

- General public would love to give input and participate in what we are doing, if they knew that was an option.
- The public may see Legacy signs but don't know what it means.
- The funding should be more known, the 'story' should be told in a good way to get people are excited about this and want to participate.
- Any funds being used for communication and promotion?
 - Not yet, this is something that should be built up in the coming years.
 - General public awareness is an important undertaking, and what we have learned is that we need to be more targeted in how we do it. We have to think a lot on how to communicate what we have done, to the Legislators. And we do need to tell a better story, and more detail does not equal better, keep it simple.
- A lot of people feel that they shouldn't have to pay to go on land that belonged to their ancestors. In a way all of our taxes pay for the parks as well, so the land belongs to all of us.
 - The Minnesota Great Outdoors website, was supposed to be a tool that for telling this story. And there was a communications plan around that.
 - Funding is also not the only barrier, we don't need funding to spread this info through word of mouth.
- We could coordinate with the other Legacy funds, and combine our resources.
 - Maybe develop a joint committee.
 - It was mentioned that other Legacy Funds have already begun to develop initial planning/strategies to increase Legacy awareness – we should learn more about these efforts.

Legislative Language Updates

(Liaisons)

Changes geared around being more inclusive. Agencies will make a plan on how to implement these changes while some of these changes are already being carried out.

HF1999 – Legacy Finance & Policy 2023 (lines 67.1 – 67.8)

“The commissioner may spend money appropriated under paragraph (a) on I Can! Programs, including but not limited to programs designed to provide underserved youth and you who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer the opportunity to experience the outdoors with similar peers.”

HF1999 – Legacy Finance & Policy 2023 (Lines 70.24 – 70.26)

(LANGUAGE ADDED TO ALL 4 LEGACY FUNDS)

“an assessment of whether the funding celebrates cultural diversity or reaches diverse communities in Minnesota, including reaching low- and moderate-income households.”

HF1999 – Legacy Finance & Policy 2023 (Lines 72.3 – 72.7)

“Free park days. And Implementing agency, county, or city that charges an entrance fee or requires a vehicle permit must provide free access to all its parks at least four days each calendar year in order to be eligible for money appropriated from the parks and trails fund. The implementing agency, county, or city must publicly announce the date when entrance will be free at least 30 days in advance of the date it occurs.”

HF1999 – Legacy Finance & Policy 2023 (Lines 73.2 – 73.10)

“By January 15, 2024, the commissioner of natural resources, in cooperation with the Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission, must submit a report to the chairs and ranking minority members of the legislative committees and divisions with jurisdiction over the parks and trails fund with recommendations for expanding eligibility of parks and trails fund grants under Minnesota Statutes, section 85.538, to Tribal governments and for expanding cooperation with nonprofit organizations, including any necessary statutory changes.”

- Is this something the Liaisons are going to coordinate to talk about? How we are going to do this? I want to make sure we do it the same way.
 - We have an easy-to-work with reputation so the more we coordinate on this, the better.

Member and Agency Updates

PTLAC Recruitment

- Have seven vacancies, so far four applicants.
- Please spread the word that Parks and Trails Advisory Committee applications are open, and are due by September 22, 2023.

GMRPTC

- 22 applications, back to pre-pandemic levels
 - 36 million dollars in requests, 17 million to grant
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- Any suggestions or ideas, please connect with Lars Erdahl or Legacy Liaisons.
 - **Next Meeting:** October 26, 2023, DNR host, location TBH.

Adjourn

Hartley Nature Center Site Tour

Tom O'Rourke

Hartley Regional Park encompasses 660 acres of recreational opportunities. The 7500 square feet Nature Center provides environmental education, public programing, and field trips. Tom leads the members around the Nature Center, highlighting the new addition to the building that increased the amount of classrooms to accommodate the growing number in students. Outside, we toured the nature play area, outdoor classroom, and their Yurt. Special thanks to Tom and the staff at the Hartley Nature Center for their hospitality.