

# **Parks and Trails Legacy Advisory Committee Meeting October 26, 2023**

*MINUTES PROVIDE A RECORD OF MINNESOTA'S PARKS AND TRAILS LEGACY ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETINGS. THESE MINUTES WERE REVIEWED AND APPROVED ON DECEMBER 7, 2023.*



# Parks and Trails Legacy Advisory Committee Meeting

Thursday, October 26, 2023

10:00 AM – 2:00 PM

In person at the Sibley State Park, New London  
And virtual via WebEx

## Updates and Announcements:

**Next Meeting:** Thursday, December 7, 2023

**Next Meeting Host:** Metropolitan Council Regional Parks

**Next Meeting Location:** Como Park Zoo & Conservatory Visitor Center

## Action Items:

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

## Meeting Minutes:

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

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

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

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

Approved August 24, 2023 Meeting Minutes

**Jon Oyanagi opened the meeting and led ice breaker.**

## Get Out MORE (Modernize Outdoor Recreation Experiences)

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Ann Pierce, Laura Preus

Ann Pierce gives an overview of the DNR's "[Get Out MORE](#)" investment.

DNR is currently engaging internally, and externally with other systems on how to coordinate with this money, and project prioritizing. Focusing around the "Taking Care of What We Have" pillar. A team consisting of people from different DNR divisions was created to help with project progress.

Laura Preus highlights DNR's [Capital Assets](#) reports, which shows what needs taking care of or investing, in efforts to modernize the system.

Additional information about the *Get Out MORE* initiative: [www.dnr.state.mn.us/aboutdnr/get-out-more/](http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/aboutdnr/get-out-more/)

## Comments, questions, suggestions:

- Request more information about enhancing a sense of welcome, and enhancing access to parks and trails and what that includes".

- Accessibility could be picnic areas with picnic tables, and assessable parking lots. With interpretation, thinking about how people learn differently and incorporating those different practices. As well as thinking about how interpretation can be done differently.
- Signage plays a big part in welcoming new visitors. Thinking about how to create signage understandable to a wide audience, which includes different languages, symbols, QR codes, etc.
- Land acknowledgments tie in with modernizing efforts. Accurate history is the first step in building a strong relationship. Dakota language and Ojibwe language are the original languages spoken here, if we can teach our children friendly words like “hello” or “thank you” that is engaging in friendship building. When we talk of modernizing, think of Traditional Ecological knowledge.
  - DNR is working to incorporate Ojibwe language in new displays, and partnering with tribal communities to tell more holistic stories in their interpretation.
  - DNR has developed a Traditional Ecological Knowledge team with Bradley Harrington, DNR Tribal Liaison and Tribal Office Director to incorporate that into all aspects of work the department is doing.
- Since *Get Out MORE* is engaged in the Taking Care of What We Have pillar, does it include conservation work and forest health?
  - *Get Out MORE* does include natural resource management work. It’s a part of Taking Care of What We Have. Conservation is included in everything DNR does, even if it might not be listed directly in the document.
  - This money helps free up time for park staff to focus on NR management projects.
- Does DNR’s Natural Resource plan identify deferred maintenance or where to put resources focused on natural resources? Do you have guidance on how to approach?
  - It might be worth it to have a broader discussion on the natural resource management being done, and its future plans. Field staff are for sure doing burns and butterfly introductions. It could be worth inviting someone from the natural resource management to a future meeting to have a more informed discussion.
- Where are we renewing State Trails?
  - DNR did put in a separate request specifically for trail funding, received 1 Million.
- There is an understanding that DNR controls all land and water, and there’s not room for an open relationship working with the public and other agencies. We need to find a way to allow people to utilize these lands.
  - Contact Ann or Laura if you have pushback on using public lands. Those are for the public to use and you should not be barred from using them. Insufficient funds might be a part of not being allowed to use public lands.

## 2022 State Park Visitor Survey Results

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Darin Newman, Gratia Joice

Gratia provided background about the [State Park Visitor Survey](#). It is completed every five years, and helps DNR PAT understand the demographics, activities, frequency of use, barriers, and satisfaction for park visitors.

Partnered with Wilder Research, part of Wilder Foundation, for the 2022 Survey.

There are three parts:

1. Visitor Survey
2. Focus Groups
3. Economic impact assessment

Differences since last survey, five years ago:

- Moved away from paper surveys to onsite digital surveys using a tablet
- Worked with a vendor (wilder Research), past years has been done in-house
- Hired dedicated seasonal staff to conduct surveys

The number of survey responses increased from 1,000 completed in 2017, to 2,100 completed in 2022.

Darin shared the results of the survey, giving the demographics along with improvements suggestions given by the visitors.

The second phase of the State Park Survey was gathering data from Focus Groups. There were two types of focus groups:

- Two self-service groups
- Five creating inclusive spaces groups

Barriers that limit visitation to parks include affordability, availability, and distance.

Visitors feel safer and more welcome when:

- there is BIPOC representation on park staff, many BIPOC visitors feel more comfortable in that space. As well as having signs with different languages, including tribal land acknowledges, etc.
- parks have higher visitation and are close to urban areas.
- park staff are visible, accessible and diverse.

**Comments, questions, suggestions:**

- Are these surveys taken inside the park?
  - Yes, these are intercept surveys, and it is done in two parts. The first being the baseline questions that people responded to on the spot about that specific trip. They also received the second part of the survey that is completed after they finished the trip, back home.
- Majority of the users are white, so you're not getting the input of the BIPOC users.
  - The survey does include BIPOC responses, the report looks into it more. And that was the point of the focus groups, to get the perspectives of these marginalized communities.
- This survey didn't include any input from those who have never been to a park, I think that is really important to include.
  - This is true, the scope of this study focused on current park users. There have been surveys of the general population to assess park use and It would be interesting to conduct more of that research.
- One part of DNR's modernizing initiative, is freeing up staff time so that they can engage with visitors more.
- Do you have a threshold you were trying to reach for the survey?

- The survey is randomized; we can't pick or choose who takes it. The methodology reflects the current visitors and visitation patterns.
- With the Focus Groups, more people were invited, but it is difficult to control who actually shows up. For the Native Group, there was a big dialogue online and those perspectives were collected and included in the summarized responses.

## Lunch

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## 2024 State Trail Visitor Survey Plan

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Darin Newman, Gratia Joice

Darin and Gratia are preparing for the 2024 DNR State Trail Survey.

The intentions of this survey:

- Gather baseline info about state trail visitors
- Understand economic impact of state trail use
- Gather opinions on relevant state trail issues; user conflicts, priorities for trail maintenance and develop, DEI, other emerging issues.

Possible Research issues for Multi-use trails:

- Connectivity across trail systems
- How to address diversity, equity, and inclusion on trails?
- Understanding priorities for trail maintenance and development
- What other topics should be considered?

### **Comments, questions, suggestions:**

- The term "user conflicts" emphasizes the conflicts between people that might not have anything to do with the mission of PAT, whereas "USE conflicts" focus on behavior that are divergent from PAT. Is that word choice intentional?
  - It refers to user groups. Conflicts come from different user groups who are sharing the same corridor or different travel speeds and have different intentions for doing that.
- Do these trail systems require a fee?
  - No, there is no fee or trail pass for state trails. Except for specialized user groups, like snowmobilers, equestrians, cross country skiers.
- E-bikes, and other electronic modes of transportation require different infrastructure than traditional bikes.
- What can we do more of, for trails? How do we bring more people into the space? Adding benches, picnic tables, pickle ball courts, etc. could be options. If we create a destination, then maybe more people will find trails attractive... or nodes along trails.
- Is there value in investing in development and maintenance in some trail connections?
- This is just one part of the information gathered, getting the perspectives of the users. There is also data from trail counters, so there's quantitative and qualitative data being gathered.
- Trails that have destinations or economic nodes, are popular.
- Consistent quality of trails throughout the state, so users will know what to expect of a trail.

- Is this survey going to be contracted out again? Or keep it internal?
  - Yes, plan to work with a contracted research vendor again.

If you have any advice or suggestions for the 2024 State Trail Survey, feel free to contact Darin and Gratia.

## Agency and Member Updates

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### GMRPTC

- Finalizing FY25 Legacy Grant recommendations.

### Met

- In the middle of 2050 planning, the new name for this is “Imagine 2050”.
- Now have a Metropolitan Council funded equity grant program. Opening up with \$2.4 Million dollars for their park implementing agencies.

### DNR

- Prioritizing *Get Out MORE*

Gina Hugo noted that we should be aware of what the names of cities, parks, area, etc. because in some cases, the history of those names bring trauma. For example, General Henry Sibley, the namesake of the park we are meeting at, was instrumental in pushing the treaties through that triggered the war of 1862 and the ethnic cleansing of Indigenous lives.

- DNR has been undertaking an analysis of their own system and understanding where their names come from, and a process to change them to something more appropriate.

### Action Items:

- Jon Oyanagi is stepping down from his role as PTLAC Chair. ***Next year’s Chair and Co-Chair will be determined next meeting. If interested in a leadership role, please contact Lars Erdahl.***
- For PTLAC appointment process, received 44 applications, in the process of working with agency liaisons to determine recommendations for PTLAC appointments.
- Next Meeting: **Thursday, December 7, 2023, at Como Park Zoo & Conservatory, St. Paul.**

## Sibley State Park Site Tour

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Jeremy Gehrke

Jeremy began the tour by leading the group outside the Interpretive Center. Giving the history of the building and park along the way. We were shown the newly redone amphitheater, a project funded by Legacy. Jeremy then brought us to Mount Tom, one of the highest points in a 50-mile radius. We would like to thank Jeremy Gehrke and the staff at Sibley State Park for hosting us.

## Adjourn