

Parks and Trails Legacy Advisory Committee Meeting June 22, 2023

MINUTES PROVIDE A RECORD OF MINNESOTA'S PARKS AND TRAILS LEGACY ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETINGS. THESE MINUTES HAVE BEEN APPROVED AND WERE REVIEWED ON AUGUST 24, 2023.



Parks and Trails Legacy Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

Thursday, June 22, 2023

10:00 AM – 2:00 PM

Oxbow Park & Zollman Zoo, Byron, MN
(and virtual via WebEx)

Updates and Announcements:

Next Meeting: Thursday, August 24, 2023

Meeting Host: Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission

Meeting Location: Hartley Nature Center, Duluth, MN

Attendance:

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

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 April 27, 2023 Meeting Minutes.

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

Karlin Ziegler, Olmsted County Parks Director, introduced the Oxbow Park and the new Nature Center

Jon Oyanagi opened the meeting and led ice breaker activity.

Legislative Session Outcomes

(Legacy Liaisons)

PLEASE NOTE: The following information and legislation were presented and discussed during the meeting and are summarized here to provide context to Legacy funding in the State of Minnesota. The text of the final **Legacy finance and policy bill** for fiscal years 2024 and 2025 as passed by the state legislature and signed by the Governor was shared during the meeting and is at the following link (*Legacy Parks and Trails Funds* appropriations are on lines 65.12 through 73.10):

https://www.revisor.mn.gov/bills/text.php?number=HF1999&type=bill&version=4&session=ls93&session_year=2023&session_number=0

The total *Legacy Parks and Trails Fund* appropriation for FY2024 is \$72,155,000 and for FY2025 is \$64,455,000.

By mutual agreement among parks and trails partner agencies and with legislative approval, the Legacy Parks and Trails appropriation is allocated 40% to the Metro Council, 40% to the MN DNR, and 20% to the Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission. For the FY24/FY25 biennium, the appropriation allocations are as follows:

Agency	Fiscal Year 2024 7/1/2023 – 6/30/2024	Fiscal Year 2025 7/1/2024 – 6/30/2025	Biennium Total
Metropolitan Council	\$ 28,572,000	\$ 25,524,000	\$ 54,096,000
MN DNR	\$ 28,572,000	\$ 25,524,000	\$ 54,096,000
GMRPTC	\$ 14,286,000	\$ 12,762,000	\$ 27,048,000
Partner Coordination	\$ 722,000	\$ 645,000	\$ 1,367,000
Legis Coordinating Commission	\$ 3,000		\$ 3,000
Totals:	\$ 72,155,000	\$ 64,455,000	\$ 135,240,000

Metropolitan Council Regional Parks – Emmet Mullin

When one of the three agencies benefits in a legislative session, we all benefit. Our partner agencies have established recognition for our collaborative efforts and impacts.

In addition to Legacy funding, which the Met Council distributes to the 10 metro area implementing agencies, the Met Council also received other funding from the recent legislative session.

- Modernizing regional parks and trails – update parks and trails amenities and adapt for climate change. Legislators appropriated \$9 million to Metro regional system for this governance initiative and our Met Council will match with \$6 million for a total of \$15 million. Different from bonding program – this effort is focused on accessibility, building and water, bathrooms and basic amenities to facilities that don't have it. And also to areas that suffer from floods and accelerated freeze/thaw cycles.
- Due to the lack of agreement on bonding bill and a surplus, there was an infrastructure bill funded by cash. Eventually there was also a bonding bill – the Met Council received \$16 million, which will be match with \$11 million.
- Although supposed to fund Met Council at 40%, Legislature has historically funded at a much lower level of 8%. The legislature increased this funding to 14%
- There was an increase in the Lottery in-lieu funds sales tax, now Met Council will receive \$1.5 million.
- Received \$1 million from the Emerald Ash Borer and Hazard Tree removal bill. This is for the entire system, will distribute it based on each agency's acreage.

Discussion/Questions:

- Question and discussion regarding the 40/40/20 allocation, where revenue is generated, etc.
 - The three parks and trails agencies have negotiated and agreed to the 40-40-20 distribution for the past several years. The distribution takes into account both sources of revenue to the Legacy Parks and Trails Fund and also equitable and strategic geographic considerations. So, although much of the sales tax revenue is generated in the metro area, many from the metro area participate in outdoor recreation throughout Minnesota.

- “How closely does that align with proportion of assets and facilities managed between the 3 entities, has anyone calculated that?”
 - Done some of that work but it is a little bit of a challenge because DNR’s system has a significant number of facilities (75 state parks and recreation areas, 25 state trails, and other significant units) and programs.
- “It’s important to understand what’s coming next, so that we can make those compelling arguments to receive additional funding.”
 - It’s difficult to compare our three systems, DNR has more acreage and mileage like regional tourism, Metro regional parks are going to have super high visitation, GMRPTC is going to receive high numbers of regional visits. They are important in different ways, so that is a challenge of using that to form a base or monetary distribution.
- “You could instead compare each agency to the four pillars and look at the numbers and see which one makes the greatest compelling argument or need.”
 - The three systems function in different ways and are at different stages of growth, development and renovation.
 - GMRPTC was formed after the Legacy amendment was approved by voters in 2008. It was created to better represent greater Minnesota and to realize the opportunity for growth and development and the beneficial investment in a regional system that serves both local communities and the state.
- Partnership between our three systems is a success story, and now we should start planning for the next iteration. We should build relationships with Legislators well in advance, before a session.
- In a future meeting, identify key talking points and identify key representatives and committees to talk to? Consider legislator meetings scheduled so that advisory committee members can connect with them. Maybe this could happen for a metro meeting. Perhaps join with other partners for a ‘Day at the Capital’ event.
- What’s a micro engagement strategy that we could do for PAT to best illustrate our needs to legislators and maybe the public?
- Continue to connect with communities to ensure that they understand the importance of outdoor recreation.
- Connect with Legislators to build understanding for the importance of Legacy, since there is a lot of turnover, we need to keep well-informed. Many may not remember or were not around when Legacy was passed.

MN DNR – Ann Pierce and Laura Preus

- Received \$43,580,000 (2024) and \$38,931,000 (2025) in appropriations (includes funds that pass-through to provide funding and grant admin for GMRPTC).
- In need of funding, especially for the Parks and Trails division, for maintenance and to keep the system going. The results of this session is going to give them that opportunity.
- New language added to statutes that includes funding for I Can! programming for underserved youth and youth who identify as LGBTQ the opportunity to experience the outdoors with similar peers. The DNR will reflect on new language and how best to implement in programs.

“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 youth who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer the opportunity to experience the outdoors with similar peers.”

- New statute wording for reporting that includes:
“an assessment of whether the funding celebrates cultural diversity or reaches diverse communities in Minnesota, including reaching low- and moderate-income households.”

In addition to Legacy funding, the MN DNR also received other additional funding from the recent legislative session:

- Received additional funding that will help with infrastructure upgrades and modernize old facilities. Working on identifying those highest priority infrastructure improvements in the system to distribute the funds. Improvements include enhancing access, modernizing camping, and modernizing boat access.
- Received some ongoing funding for operational adjustment to allow DNR to catch up on inflationary areas, like salary increases etc.
- Finally received water craft registration increase, has not been raised since 2006.

Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission – Renee Mattson

- Have a \$2 million balance to give out in grants
- \$14 million available for FY25. \$357,000 is taken out of that for DNR grant administration, and also \$475,000 for GMRPTC administration.
- Was unsuccessful in receiving direct appropriation for our operating expenses, will continue to try in future sessions.
- Received Natural Resource funds from the lottery, about \$1 million.
- Statute language change: calls for grants to cities, not townships or private entities. Will work with Tribal entities to explore what grants to sovereign nations would look like. As well as cooperating with nonprofits.

“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 85.536, to Tribal governments and for expanding cooperation with nonprofit organizations, including any necessary statutory changes.”

Discussion/Questions:

- Does coordinating with nonprofits mean they are potential recipients of grants from GMRPTC?
 - Not yet sure, the language was somewhat vague. There needs be a designated facility and some sort of designated partner within the system to receive funding, but perhaps there is some cooperation with nonprofits to achieve outcome. Lots of opportunity to explore potential options.
- Is there potential for a meeting at the Capitol next February? Ideally when a session is not going, so to have the opportunity to meet the legislators. And attempt to get public awareness.
 - Might help to have a one page summary document that highlights what is spent with Legacy when we meet with people that have tangible numbers and graphics.
 - Maybe do this in the December meeting? (not sure how many Legislators would be in St. Paul at the time)
 - Also good to meet with legislative staff, they could be influential.

Oxbow Park & Zollman Zoo Overview

(Karlin Ziegler)

Karlin Ziegler, Olmsted County Parks Director, gave a brief introduction to Olmsted County Parks and the Oxbow Park & Zollman Zoo facility.

- 4 parks in Olmsted County Parks system, Oxbow Park is the 2nd largest.
- Nature Center is opened in spring 2023 and received funding as a GMRPTC Legacy project. New building is three times bigger than the old building.
- Serves school groups and education programs
- Parks attracts people from a 100 mile radius
- Interactive exhibits and a few small animals in indoor interpretive area
- Zoo has only Minnesota native animals, specifically south east MN region.
- Park and zoo receive a lot of support from their friends group, much of the Nature Center and Zoo was built with donations and volunteer work.

Streetlight Wrap-Up – Location-Based Service Data Research Project

(Emmett Mullin)

- Two-year research project, that gathered and analyzed location based services data. (see attached: *Information item: Joint research project on Minnesota's parks and trails*)
- Location-Based Services Research Project website:
 - <https://minnesota-parks-and-trails-metrocouncil.hub.arcgis.com/>
- Project results were presented by Raven McKnight and Ellen Esch in 4 webinars in May – webinars were recorded and can be viewed on the project website.
- Evaluated 3 park systems, 200 parks and 175 trails
- Detail is available on this website on specific parks, trails, visitors etc.
- Includes recommendations on what was learned in this process and potential question for further consideration
- Note that after April 2022, location-based data were no longer available, so although some alternative applications might develop in the future, no data has been collected or available after that date.
- Liaisons have been considering possible uses of this data and potential next steps.
- Future work could involve exploration of the definition of a park and trail and get clarity on a singular definition across the three systems.

Emmett opens the conversation for the committee's insights on this project, what to do next, how to use this data, and other comments:

- "There was not a motorized component on the trails included in the research project, would be interesting data to collect" (note: location-based service data was not available for motorized trails)
- "Is the goal to continuously gather data, or occasionally gather it?"
 - Perhaps conduct a study like this every 4-5 years, to look at trends over time
 - Periodic update would be good, maybe every 3-5 years. It would be good to track on how this data is collected since moving forward, there might be changes to that technology.
 - Methods were developed after the project started because components were not yet defined.

- It would be good to get a group of people from the metro area, and greater Minnesota to explore options for park and trail definitions and how to understand them.
- What was the liaison's reactions to the 'recommendations' part? How will you respond to that? And is there a role for this group to maybe help decide possible next steps?
 - We'll have to go through this info more and explore it. We can share this with everyone so that they can explore it too.
- Any conversation with other agencies like MnDOT about Streetlight?
 - Yes, the contact about this project was with MnDOT and we have a workgroup that meets often with them, staff from our agencies are in this group.
 - Streetlight has a state contract, so we have been cooperating with MnDOT

Lunch

GMRPTC Designation Process Overview

(Renee Mattson)

Renee gives a brief overview on the Commission's designation process and on their newly release Mountain Bike Trail Guide.

- Commission does funding applications every year.
- In the process of taking FY25 funding applications, opened on April 1st close on July 31st.
- Expect 20 – 21 applications this year for about \$16 million dollars.

Mountain Bike Trail Guidelines

- Project started in 2019.
- As more and more trails are planned and built, wanted to give people guidelines on how to build them in a sustainable, environmentally responsible way.
- 2017 was the last big update that was done in the industry.
- Over time the guide became more robust and expanded in many areas, began as a 100 pages and ended as 200+ pages.
- It is available to everyone in Minnesota, free on the Commission's website as a PDF download. It is available on the IMBA website:
 - <https://www.gmrptcommission.org/mountain-bike-guidelines.html>
- Next steps include adding three chapters regarding: (1) adaptive trail development; (2) types of standardization for certain features on trails, what to expect when building, and expected cost; and (3) guidelines for more specialized trails.
-

Updates

(Liaisons, PTLAC Members)

Met Council

- In the middle of plan 'Thrive 2050', long range plan for the region. It is an involved process that is helping with natural resources department, natural system with climate resilience outreach. Focusing around equity, welcoming environment, climate resilience, and natural systems.

DNR

- Working on what came out of this legislative session final budget to start addressing priorities.
- Partnership between DNR Economic Development Agency and Iron Range Resources Agency, and Department of Tourism. Meetings between them will be held soon, and revolve around the importance of healthcare recreation in Minnesota.
- Climate framework that the state of MN has been working on put out recommendations. Laura is on an action team, and will share what she learns about where things are at in the Minnesota process.
- DNR is in the process of transferring the Upper Sioux Agency State Park lands to the Upper Sioux Community. There will be future work sessions, in person and online, that people are welcome to go to and connect. These sessions will discuss topics related to outdoor recreation opportunities in that area, and thinking about how to do this transfer respectfully while acknowledging the people who are currently using that space, and how it is no longer a place of public access.

Heather Stirratt

- NOAA has climate resilience funding available, focused on coastal communities. In Minnesota that would be parks and trails along Lake Superior. It is the largest amount of funding that NOAA has released.

Gina Hugo

- What would it look like if we had another designation that is cultural, another designation that has a different operating model than public use parks? Space that is set aside for cultural use and protection.
 - Parks and trails systems have been reflecting on topics related to this, there are still many questions like what this means and looks like.
 - There are many green spaces out there that are protected and can't access because of some environmental significance. A culturally significant area could be similar to this.
- Maybe this could be an ongoing discussion, and be brought up again in future meetings.

Action Items:

- Any suggestions or ideas, please connect with Lars Erdahl or the Liaisons.
- **Next PTLAC meeting:** Thursday, August 24 at Hartley Nature Center, Duluth, MN

Adjourn

Site Tour – Oxbow Park

(Karlin Ziegler)

Legacy Advisory members were lead around the inside of the Nature Center, pointing out the couple small animals that are kept indoors, and highlighted the educational play space for children. They were also shown the offices, storage, and maintenance rooms. Next, they walked next store to the zoo section. The old nature center building will be demolished soon, and in its place a new zoo entrance will be built. Special thanks to Karlin and the staff of Oxbow Park & Zollman Zoo for their hospitality.