

Parks and Trails Legacy Advisory Committee Meeting February 25th, 2021

MINUTES PROVIDE A RECORD OF MINNESOTA'S PARKS AND TRAILS LEGACY ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETINGS. THESE MINUTES HAVE NOT BEEN APPROVED AND WERE APPROVED ON April 22nd, 2021.



Parks and Trails Legacy Advisory Committee Meeting

Thursday, February 25th, 2021

10:00 AM-2:00 PM

Minnesota Department of Natural Resources Host
WebEx

Updates and Announcements:

Next Meeting: April 22nd, 2021 10:00 AM-2:00 PM

Meeting Host: Greater Minnesota Parks and Trails Commission

Meeting Location: WebEx

Action Items:

- DNR staff will send the approved meeting minutes to be posted on the LCC Website
- DNR staff will follow up & send the PTLAC letter of support for the Parks and Trails Legacy Funding Recommendations to Minnesota State Legislators
- Lars Erdahl will follow up with the Governance & Inclusion Subcommittees and send the Draft Guidelines for Advisory Groups
- DNR staff will follow up with the PTLAC Subcommittees to schedule meetings before the April 22nd PTLAC Meeting.
- DNR Staff will follow up with notifying the PTLAC when the Outdoor Recreation Task Force's final recommendations become public

Minutes

Members: Alys Delgado, Andrea Christoffer, Cathy Jordan, Cecily Harris, Dolf Moon, Heather Stirratt, Janice Erickson, Jim Shoberg, Jon Oyanagi, Les Ollila, Margot Imdieke-Cross, Matthew Lindaman, May Yang, Poppy Potter, Randy Sorensen, Steve Dubbs, Sumbal Mahmud

Liaisons: Emmett Mullin, Erika Rivers, Laura Preus, Renee Mattson, Rick Anderson

Staff: Lars Erdahl, and Margaret Krueger

Jon Oyanagi opened the meeting and led the introductions. Welcome to all new & returning members, Liaisons, and staff to the first PTLAC Meeting of 2021! A special thanks to all those that are able to attend today's meeting.

The December 3rd PTLAC Meeting Minutes have been approved.

Introductions & Ice Breaker Activity:

In an effort to continue learning and connecting with each other in a virtual world, Jon Oyanagi led a brief "ice breaker" activity, known as "two truths and a lie." Thank you all for indulging in this casual activity as a means to connect, and to get to know each other more.

Implementing Agency Reports: Looking Forward with Legacy Funds

The Legacy Liaisons began by sharing their Agency's plans for Legacy Funds in FY 2022 & 2023.

Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission: Renee Mattson

Renee Mattson led the first presentation of this meeting by describing the future funding plans for Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails.

- Each year, the GMRPTC opens a competitive grant process beginning April- July
- All regionally designated systems are eligible to apply for this grant funding
- GMRPTC is made up of 64 Regionally Designated Parks and Trails across 80 Counties in MN
 - 21 Regional Trails
 - 31 Natural Resource Based Parks
 - 12 Special Recreation Feature Parks
 - Northland Regional Sports Park & Sandstone Robinson Park are good examples of these unique parks in Minnesota
- The recommendation selection process begins with determining eligibility, which is established by regional designation of a park, trail or other recreation feature
- Once a system has been regionally designated, they are eligible to apply for a grant, which is administered by GMRPTC
- GMRPTC receives 20% of the total Parks and Trails Legacy Fund each fiscal year
- This agency utilizes an Evaluation Team (ETeam) to provide general review and feedback to the Commissioners, which is based on a competitive scoring process
- The Commission reviews and discusses the applicants and determines final funding recommendations to the Legislature
- The Legislature has the final ability to review & approve these recommendations
- Highlight of current proposed projects for the upcoming fiscal years:
 - Sandstone Robinson Park
 - Olmstead County Oxbow Park and Zollman Zoo
 - Goodhue County Byllesby Park
 - Otter Tail County Perham to Pelican Rapids Regional Trail
 - Mesabi Trail
 - Lake County Mountain Bike Trails
 - Gull Lake Trail
 - Moorhead River Corridor Trail
 - Chisago County Sunrise Prairie Trail
 - Wright County Connecting People with the Outdoors
 - Luverne Loop & Blue Mounds Trail
 - Winona Bluffs Traverse

Metropolitan Council: Emmett Mullin

Emmett Mullin continued by sharing an overview of the Metropolitan's Regional Park System.

- The Metropolitan Council receives an appropriated amount for each biennium, which is allocated based on a statutory formula
- The estimated funding for the 2022/2023 biennium is approximately \$38 million.
- 10% of the Parks and Trails Legacy Fund is set aside for the Park Acquisition Opportunity Fund
- The Metropolitan Council doesn't own or operate any of the regional parks/trails; the 10 Implementing Agencies operate their respective regional system independently

- The 25-Year Parks and Trails Legacy Plan's 4 pillars frame much of the work of the Metropolitan Council:
 - Connecting People to the Outdoors
 - Acquire Land, Create Opportunities
 - Taking Care of What We Have
 - Coordination Amongst Partners
- Thrive MSP 2040 and the Regional Parks Policy Plan are strategic documents that also guide the Metropolitan Council's work
- Stewardship, Prosperity, Livability, Sustainability and Equity are outcomes that were introduced in 2014
 - Equity means connecting all residents to opportunity, including ensuring equitable access to regional parks and trails
 - Equity is a central focus for much of the Metropolitan Regional Parks System's work
- Fiscal year 2022/2023 Project by Legacy Pillar:
 - 21 projects are devoted to Taking Care of What We Have
 - 15 are working on Acquiring Land, Creating Opportunity
 - 13 are focused on Connecting People and the Outdoors
- Equity Highlights:
 - Anoka County: Rice Creek Chain of Lakes
 - Bloomington: Bush Lake Piers
 - Carver County: System-wide Outreach work
 - Dakota County: System-wide Outreach work
 - Minneapolis: North Mississippi Regional Park
 - Ramsey County: System-wide Outreach and Programming
 - St. Paul: Lake Phalen East Shore Trailhead
 - Scott County: Spring Lake Regional Park
 - Three Rivers Park District: Mississippi Gateway Regional Park
 - Washington County: Point Douglas Regional Trail & Park Building Improvements

Minnesota Department of Natural Resources: Erika Rivers

Erika Rivers continued the discussion by sharing the plans for 2022/2023 Legacy Funds within the Minnesota DNR's State Parks and Trails System.

- Minnesota State Parks and Trails System Overview:
 - 75 State Parks and State Recreation Areas
 - 5,000 camping and lodging units
 - 240,000 acres of land managed
 - 25 State Trails
 - 1,500 miles of developed state trails
 - 3,600 miles of hiking, biking, horse and motorized trails
 - 24,600 miles of Grant-in-Aid Trails (snowmobile, OHV, and ski)
 - 43 State Forest Campgrounds
 - 12 state forest horse campgrounds
 - 29 forest day-use areas
 - 35 State Water Trails

- 1,700 public water accesses
 - 360 fishing piers
- 10-Year MN DNR Parks and Trails Legacy Appropriations (by Legacy Pillar)
 - 17% Connect People to the Outdoors
 - 26% Acquire Land, Create Opportunity
 - 56% Take Care of What We Have
 - 1% Coordinate Among Partners
- Fiscal Year 2022/2023 MN DNR Parks and Trails Legacy Proposal (by Legacy Pillar)
 - 21.5% Connect People to the Outdoors
 - 17.5% Acquire Land, Create Opportunity
 - 61.0% Take Care of What We Have
 - Funding for the Coordination Among Partners is appropriated separately from the DNR's Legacy Budget
- Coordination Among Partners (approx. 1%)
 - Parks and Trails Legacy Advisory Committee
 - Provides guidance on Parks and Trails 25-Year Plan
 - Guides collaborative efforts toward joint outcomes
 - Joint Projects for Shared Outcomes
 - Connecting people to a seamless system- MN Great Outdoors Website & maintenance
 - Research:
 - Collaboration with University of MN
 - Developing joint research efforts based on new technologies
 - Restoration Evaluations:
 - Legislatively mandated to ensure effective natural resources restorations
- Connecting People to the Outdoors (21.5%)
 - I Can!- outdoor skills programs for beginners
 - Over 50% of BIPOC participating in this program
 - Urban Outreach Program
 - Focused marketing and content placement
 - Multi-cultural competence building among Parks and Trails Division Staff
 - Mutually beneficial, multi-cultural partnerships across all 10 districts
 - New: Updated Wayfinding/Point-of-Arrival
 - New: Social Media Influencer Pilot
- Acquire Land, Create Opportunities (17.5%)
 - Acquire Land (36%)
 - Create Opportunities (64%)
 - Cuyuna State Recreation Area & Trail development , Itasca State Park safety improvements, and Whitewater State Park accessibility improvements
- Taking Care of What We Have (61%)
 - General natural resource management projects
 - Prescribed Burning Program to restore native prairies and control invasive species
 - Rehabilitation of existing facilities
 - Hiking trail sustainability & erosion control

- DNR Parks and Trails Legacy Investment Process
 - Review Outcomes & Alignment (March-June)
 - Set New Priorities & Objectives (June-September)
 - Develop Project List (September-November)

Comments & Questions from PTLAC Members:

- What other trends, aside from Equity, are all three systems looking at?
 - Understanding what is a fad, vs. what is a trend is important
 - When there are new fads, which are (or are not) appropriate for outdoor recreation facilities?
 - Example: Frisbee golf
 - Mountain Biking is a current trend, that all systems are working on accommodating
 - Mountain biking trends have increased over the years for all three systems, especially since the development of Cuyuna's Trail System
 - In terms of equity, access to mountain biking equipment is becoming more and more expensive, making this trend financially inaccessible to many
 - Focusing on different types of trails, from beginner to expert level, is a priority for Greater Minnesota
 - In Greater Minnesota's system, the Commission relies on their regional systems to determine these trends & make project proposals accordingly
 - Climate change is another important trend, especially for the Metropolitan Council's systems, and it carries implications for managing parks systems
 - Parks and Trail systems are engaged in difficult water management conversations across the 10 Implementing Agencies
- How can the work of the PTLAC Subcommittees best serve the Implementing Agencies in *their* work?
 - Being intentional, and giving space and time for PTLAC members to begin working on & finalizing Subcommittee work products
 - Focusing on practical, tangible recommendations for the Benchmarks Subcommittee is a specific goal
 - This discussion will be continued at the Subcommittee Work Planning Session, later this afternoon

Virtual Tour of Lake Vermillion Soudan Underground Mine:

Erika Rivers shared a brief overview of the virtual tour of Lake Vermillion Soudan Underground Mine State Park, which was acquired with Legacy Funds.

- Margaret Krueger briefly shared a quick video-tour of Soudan Underground Mine before moving onto the rest of the tour
- Soudan Mine is one of the many unique jewels in Minnesota's Parks and Trails System, which many people don't know about
- In 2010, a piece of property (Lake Vermillion) that was held by the mining company, was acquired, which was near Soudan Mine
 - This land that was acquired was combined with Soudan Mine State Park, which is now known as Lake Vermillion Soudan Mine State Park

- This land was acquired with Parks and Trails Legacy Funds
 - Together this park is about 6,000 acres, with 10 miles of protected shoreline
- The Underground Mine housed a neutrino experiment, led by the University of Minnesota
 - This laboratory experiment has since been concluded
 - This project involved sending neutrinos underground from the University of Illinois, and finding subatomic particles at this location in Minnesota
 - Arts to Parks investments were a major focus of this project, and a commissioned painting was on display throughout the duration of this project.
- The Lake Vermillion Visitors Center is within a historical dry house, and will hopefully be updated in the future
 - “touch & see” exhibit developments are on pause right now due to the spread of COVID-19
- Soudan Mine is also home to many bats, which are being negatively affected by white-nose syndrome
 - Hundreds of thousands of bats were found to be dead, which led to the discovery of this syndrome in Minnesota’s bat populations
- Lake Vermillion Soudan Underground Mine is home to about 130 historical boat houses, which were built in the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s
- Lake Vermillion is culturally, and archeologically, significant, based on the establishment of centuries-old indigenous trade routes
- The DNR consults heavily with the Boise Forte Band of Ojibwe to preserve this traditional knowledge & ensure best cultural practices are valued
 - The DNR hosts an annual “Pontoon Ride”, which is held in partnership with the Boise Forte Band of Ojibwe
 - This is a chance for indigenous elders to offer cultural blessings to significant areas of Lake Vermillion
 - This area was mined for many centuries, and chert was one of the products that indigenous communities held as culturally significant
 - A fire ring site was also found, which has deposits of obsidian; this is evidence of early trade established between what is now Minnesota, and the Yosemite/Glacier National Park area of the country

Funding Workgroup Updates:

- Governor Tim Walz released his budget proposal on Jan 26th, which outlined the same funding allocations for the Parks and Trails Legacy Fund: 40% to DNR, 40% to the Metropolitan Council, and 20% to GMRPTC
- The current Legacy Bill for FY 2022 & 2023 can be found online:
https://www.revisor.mn.gov/bills/text.php?number=HF1079&version=0&session=ls92&session_year=2021&session_number=0
- The PTLAC has been asked to draft a letter of support for these funding recommendations, which will be sent to leadership on the Senate and House Legacy committees in the Minnesota State Legislature.
- Is it outside of our purview for this group to recommend more funding for Greater Minnesota?

- Currently, the recommendation of leadership from all implementing agencies (including GMRPTC) is that the funding allocations remain the same (40-40-20)
- The operating budget of the Commission is taken out of the 20% of Legacy Allocations that are available for granting to Greater Minnesota's regionally designated systems, who does not receive any additional sources of funding.
- GMRPTC is hoping that this operating budget will be absorbed as a line-item in the Governor's budget proposal, (a total of \$900,000) which would free up more funds to be available for Legacy projects in GMRPTC's system in the future
- The draft letter of support has been approved by group consensus
- DNR staff will follow up & send the letter of support to leadership on the Senate and House Legacy committees in the Minnesota State Legislature.

Subcommittee Updates:

The PTLAC continued by completing small-group breakout meetings for each subcommittee. The following is a summary of these breakout sessions.

Benchmarks Subcommittee:

- This subcommittee is close to finalizing a template, which outlines reporting templates for the Implementing Agencies
- This template will be used in time for the next reporting cycle: 2022
- A focus on the quantitative methods of reporting is also a priority for this group
- This subcommittee should meet within the coming months to finalize this work further

Communications:

This subcommittee did not meet today, because other members were attending other subcommittee breakout sessions. DNR staff will follow up on scheduling another meeting for this subcommittee.

Governance:

- This subcommittee discussed their work plan for this year:
 1. Explore past work of previous Governance Subcommittee work
 2. Review the charter, policies and procedures and update anything needed
 3. Review the charter, policies and procedures with an equity lens
- Reviewing the membership recruiting process and making sure this is an equitable and fair process for all
- Reviewing agency governance issues, and providing advice as appropriate on the issues mentioned above
- Lars will follow up with the Governance & Inclusion Subcommittee and send the Draft Guidelines for Advisory Groups, which the DNR uses to provide guidance on equity issues within advisory groups
- This subcommittee will meet before the April 22nd PTLAC meeting

Inclusion:

- This subcommittee will focus their efforts over the next *two* years on the following goals:

- By December, 2022, provide Minnesota Parks and Recreation Agencies with information directly from underrepresented groups that are experiencing barriers to outdoor recreation
 1. Strategy: hosting a series of meaningful dialogue with these groups & pairing this information with qualitative & quantitative research methods (focus groups, surveying, demographics research etc)
 2. End goal: Providing a complete report on the barriers that are currently being experienced, and a suite of recommendations based on these findings for the Implementing Agencies & their partners
- This subcommittee will meet before the April 22nd PTLAC meeting

Statewide Trails:

- The Statewide Trails workgroup has been very active in their current work, whose goal is to complete a statewide trail in Minnesota
- The mission statement has been reviewed by the Legacy Liaisons, and the next step is to seek final approval from the PTLAC at the April 22nd meeting
- The workgroup is currently drafting search corridors to define a general trail route, which is an ongoing process
- This workgroup will meet again in the coming weeks, before the April 22nd PTLAC meeting

Final Updates:

Legislative & Agency Updates:

- A number of presentations have been given by the Implementing Agencies to the Legislature; topics included:
 - COVID-19 Impacts on Parks and Trails
 - Impact of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Parks and Trails Systems
 - 2022/2023 Budget Plans

Outdoor Recreation Task Force Updates:

- The Minnesota Outdoor Recreation Task Force completed a first draft recommendations document on the issue of opening a Minnesota Office of Outdoor Recreation
- These draft recommendations have been made public, and the task Force opened a period for public comments, which closed on Feb. 15th
- Thank you to all PTLAC members that took the time to comment on these draft recommendations
- The Task Force will meet again in March to finalize these recommendations and complete this work
- DNR Staff will follow up with notifying the PTLAC when these final recommendations become public

Next Meeting Logistics:

- The agenda for the next meeting will include a final review & discussion on the Statewide Trails Workgroup's Purpose Statement
- Next Meeting: **Thursday, April 22nd 10:00 AM-2:00 PM** (online)

- Next meeting host: Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission

The meeting was adjourned.