

# **Parks and Trails Legacy Advisory Committee Meeting**

## **April 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2021**

MINUTES PROVIDE A RECORD OF MINNESOTA'S PARKS AND TRAILS LEGACY ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETINGS. THESE MINUTES HAVE BEEN APPROVED ON JUNE 24<sup>th</sup>, 2021.



## Parks and Trails Legacy Advisory Committee Meeting

Thursday, April 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2021

10:00 AM-2:00 PM

Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission Host  
WebEx

### Updates and Announcements:

**Next Meeting:** June 24<sup>th</sup>, 2021 10:00 AM-2:00 PM

**Meeting Host:** Metropolitan Council

**Meeting Location:** WebEx

### Action Items:

- DNR Staff will post the approved meeting minutes on the LCC Website.
- DNR Staff will follow up with the Statewide Trails Workgroup on scheduling a new meeting, and including Rick Anderson at future meetings
- Emmett Mullin will continue to follow up on the updates of the Streetlight Data project
- DNR Staff will continue to follow up on scheduling additional subcommittee meetings, as needed

## Minutes

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

**Liaisons:** Emmett Mullin, Erika Rivers, Laura Preus (absent), Renee Mattson, Rick Anderson

**Staff:** Lars Erdahl, and Margaret Krueger

Jon Oyanagi opened the meeting and led the introductions. A special thanks to all those that are able to attend today's meeting.

**The February 25<sup>th</sup> PTLAC Meeting Minutes have been approved.**

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

### 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, and everyone shared their favorite Earth Day memories. Thank you all for participating.

### Benchmarks Subcommittee Proposal:

Emmett Mullin continued the meeting by sharing a brief presentation of the Benchmarks Subcommittee's finalized set of shared measurements. This project has been continuing for a long time, in an effort to develop a universal method of project reporting for all three agencies.

This proposal focuses on the following pillars:

#### Acquire Land

1. Park acres acquired

2. Trail miles acquired
  - a. Report both trail mileage and trail acres acquired.

#### Create Opportunities

1. New recreational amenities developed
  - a. Focus summary reporting at a high level
2. Trail miles developed

#### Taking Care of What We Have

1. Existing facilities rehabilitated.
2. Existing trail miles rehabilitated
3. Acres of natural resources restored or actively managed
4. Cultural resources restored or actively managed - include narrative/story information

#### Connecting People and the Outdoors

1. Visitation
  - a. Create common approach to communicate visitation information.
2. Programming
  - a. This reporting may include information on programs, marketing, outreach, events, engagement, and/or communication efforts. It should have a narrative/tell a story.

#### Coordination Among Partners

1. Share coordination projects across our 3 systems, such as the Great Outdoors Website (<https://greatoutdoors.mn.gov/>), state trail idea, etc.).
2. Provide Legacy Advisory Committee activities and outcomes, sharing stories and narratives.
3. This pillar would benefit from additional Benchmarks Sub-Committee discussion and exploration.

#### Questions & Discussion:

- The Benchmarks Subcommittee has had a lot of conversation about how best to educate legislators, voters, and general parks/trails users on the use of Legacy Funds
- How do we move beyond the work that's already been done?
- How do we look at qualitative measurements that focus on "telling a story"?
- What other funds are used/leveraged in these specific projects? How can that be reported by each agency?
- How might the Parks and Trails Legacy Fund collaborate on this topic of project reporting with the other four Legacy Funds?
- How can this subcommittee collaborate with the Communications Subcommittee?
- Finally, how should the three agencies begin implementing these reporting methods into their next reporting cycles?
- This committee can use more members, and we encourage other PTLAC members to join
- Many systems in greater Minnesota use land that has already been acquired (like existing road right-of-ways), how would something like this be counted?
  - This could be captured in the "trail miles developed" category
- How will the variation in land prices and values be captured? (the differences in land prices vary so much between the metro region and greater MN)
  - This needs to be captured in the narrative, to help tell an important story, which will be unique to each specific project. Telling both the metrics, and the story is essential to improved project reporting

**The Parks and Trails Legacy Advisory Committee approves these shared outcomes from the Benchmarks Subcommittee.**

**The Benchmarks Subcommittee will continue efforts to refine outcome measurements, and communicate results to collaborate with other Legacy Funds as appropriate.**

#### Statewide Trails Workgroup Presentation:

Les Ollila, Jim Shoberg, and Alysa Delgado continued this next portion of the meeting by sharing the proposed map of a statewide trail network in Minnesota. This work has been carried on for many years, and the Parks and Trails Legacy Advisory Committee can use this project to demonstrate that the three agencies can work together. The original goal of this project was to focus on a search corridor route that goes from north/south & east/west.

#### Parks and Trails Legacy Advisory Committee Statewide Trails Workgroup Vision

This map summarizes possible routes for the statewide trail by examining existing paved trail network and gap areas. This map is designed to be a framework for the trail vision, and further discussion and engagement would be necessary before proposing a specific route.

The following search corridors are general proposals for each system.

#### East/West Search Corridor A

- Starting in Moorhead this route generally follows the I-94 corridor into the metro area.
- Once through the Twin Cities the corridor generally follows the Mississippi River Valley down to the Iowa/Wisconsin border.

#### East/West Search Corridor B

- This corridor is proposed to begin in Big Stone County following the Minnesota River Valley into the Twin Cities.
- Once through the Twin Cities the corridor generally follows the Mississippi River Valley down to the Iowa/Wisconsin border.

#### North/South Search Corridor

- Starting at the Canadian border this corridor generally follows the North Shore of Lake Superior using a combination of on road and paved Gitchi Gami Trail ultimately passing through Duluth on the paved Lake-walk and Cross City Trail.
- From Duluth the corridor follows the established paved Munger Trail connecting into the Twin City's paved network of trails.
- Once out of the metro area the corridor generally follows the Mississippi River Valley down to the Iowa/Wisconsin border.

#### Questions & Discussion:

- Giving consideration to the south western region of the state is important, not only to include systems such as the Casey Jones State Trail (the first state trail of MN), but to also encompass all of Minnesota's environmental biomes and ecosystems.
- In SW Minnesota, the Friends of the Casey Jones trail is a very active group, and there are potential connections in Iowa and South Dakota.
- The Casey Jones Trails goes from Split Rock, to Pipestone, to Lake Shetek, to Walnut Grove.

- Rick Anderson has expressed interest in participating with the Statewide Trails Workgroup, and DNR Staff will follow up on this
- Does this proposal help in allowing other systems to prioritize the trails that have been authorized for development, specifically, the Casey Jones State Trail?
- Representing the various biomes and ecosystems of the state is important for public education opportunities, to educate people on the impacts of climate change on those specific biomes
  - The Aspen/Parkland region would be excluded in the current search corridor map
- Is this workgroup ready to submit this to the Parks and Trails Legacy Advisory Committee and Implementing Agencies for approval?
- The Statewide Trails Workgroup will continue to identify more search corridors in the specific areas of interest mentioned above
- DNR Staff will follow up on scheduling another Statewide Trails Workgroup meeting
- Having a general outline of ideas that agencies can give feedback on is helpful in getting this approved at all levels.
- What is the programming opportunities for trails?
- Including a summary on this mission will be essential
- Should the mission of this trail be focused on a singular route, or a network/system level proposal?
  - A system level approach might garner more support from Implementing Agencies

### Virtual Tour of Milford Mine Memorial Park

Renee Mattson gave a virtual tour of Milford Mine Memorial Park in Crow Wing County, which resides in the Cuyuna Iron Range.

- In 1924 George Crosby's Milford Mine was shipping 70,000 tons of iron ore from the Cuyuna region of the state.
- On Feb. 5<sup>th</sup>, 1924 the worst mining disaster in the history of Minnesota took place
- 41 miners lost their lives, and the mine was completely flooded by nearby Lake Foley.
- Seven miners survived the flood waters
- There are a few accounts of the experiences of the miners that survived, and some miners felt a rush of warm air when the flooding began
- It took over 9 months to fully recover all 41 bodies of the lost mine
- Milford Mine Memorial Park is dedicated to the 41 miners that lost their lives, and the 7 that survived
- Legacy Funds were used to build this park, which includes a boardwalk, memorializing all the names and personal stories of the miners
- Many miners were working in these mines to provide better financial opportunities to their families
- 38 of the 41 miners were married, and together they left more than 80 children without fathers
- This park is very scenic, with many beautiful views of the lake
- One of the eye witness accounts:
  - *I was working not near anybody, and then the wind hit me. I fell down and the lamp went out. I lit it, it went out again. It was dark and cold. The wind hit me again. I knew what it was. I was in a time like that once before in Michigan. I knew if we lost a minute,*

*it was too late. I yelled... We can't save our life no more if we don't run, I know. So I run. No time for gates, no time for the cage. No time for anything. I just run and fall down, and run some more. I get to the ladder. I reach for it. I miss it. I grab it and start up. I am all in...*

- This is a truly beautiful park, and the setting captures this tragic part of history in Minnesota
- It took several years for Crow Wing County to acquire the funds necessary to complete this project
- This story would never have been told had it not been for the 2008 Clean Water, Land, and Legacy Amendment

### Pillar Highlight: Acquire Land, Create Opportunity

The Legacy Liaisons each gave a brief presentation on the specific projects that focus on Acquire Land, and Creating Opportunity.

### Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission: Renee Mattson

Renee Mattson continued by sharing the project highlights of the Oxbow Regional Park and Zollman Zoo.

- This is the only park of its kind in the state of Minnesota, which is a mid-sized natural features park, with a zoo.
- The nature center is easily congested with an overflow of visitors
- Since 2012, there has been an annual increase of nearly 25,000 visitors per year
- New space will increase the classroom space, and a new septic system will accommodate future campgrounds
- Total square footage of the new center will expand: from 3,400 to 13,500
- Oxbow Park serves more than 125 schools and youth groups from within a 100-mile radius
- Construction of a larger facility will accommodate the explosive visitor growth
- This will be completed in multiple phases:
  - Phase 1: Construct new septic field
  - Phase 2: Construct new Nature Center
- Project Funding:
  - Total Cost: \$5,445,990
  - Greater Minnesota Legacy: \$2,135,000
  - Olmsted County: \$3,260,990
  - Friends of Oxbow: \$50,000
  - Non-Eligible Match: \$1,237,650
- How many animals are at the zoo?
  - The exact number is unknown, but the zoo does have raptors, bears, reptiles, and many more types of animals
- During the COVID19 Pandemic, the zoo was doing virtual programming, but now is beginning to open again to the public

### Minnesota Department of Natural Resources: Erika Rivers

Erika Rivers continued the presentations by describing the development projects of Minnesota's State Parks' shower and bathroom facilities, specifically Whitewater State Park.

- The Division of Parks and Trails has 172 shower buildings, which receive many highly important upgrades
- Of the 172, 35 (or 15%) of the facilities are reported to be either in poor, or unacceptable working condition
- About 30% of the facilities are reported to be in average working condition (meaning they are not in good condition, but are still in working condition)
- The design process for shower and bathroom facilities has become more standardized, which examines the following improvements:
  - Size/function
  - Operational Efficiency
  - Accessibility
  - Standardization
  - Visitor Amenities
  - Energy Efficiency
- This new Standard Plan includes the following features:
  - Family assist
  - Outdoor wash station
  - Individual showers
  - Easy-clean surfaces
  - Staff access to maintenance equipment
  - Optional:
    - Add-on overhang
    - Finishes
- Erika shared a series of before and after photos which included many improvements:
  - Increased accessibility and entrance ramps outside of the buildings
  - Solar arrays on new building
  - Accessible sinks and bathroom features
  - Low energy light fixtures
  - Easy-to clean surfaces and finishes
  - Waterless urinals
  - Improved storage spaces
- Improvements have been made at 8 facilities:
  - McCarthy Beach, Cascade River State Park, Whitewater State Park, Buffalo River State Park, Temperance River State Park, and Myre Big-Island State Park
- Parks and Trails will continue development at the following facilities:
  - Maplewood State Park, Scenic State Park, Bear Head State Park, Fort Rigley State Park, Frontenac State Park, and St. Croix State Park
- Under the current COVID-19 CDC Guideline, much of these facilities will be open to near full capacity this coming summer season

#### Metropolitan Council: Emmett Mullin

Emmett Mullin continued the discussion by sharing the development projects at Battle Creek Regional Park, in Ramsey County

- Ramsey County is currently proposing a new cross country skiing and winter recreation area

- This would be the first and only snowmaking facility in the eastern metro area
- Project includes planning, design, engineering, construction, permitting, and administrative costs
- Project Assets:
  - World-class ski trails for beginner through competitor levels
  - Programming and skill development in racially and economically diverse area of region.
  - Snowmaking system capable of producing 18 inches of snow, 20 feet wide, for a 2.5 kilometer trail, and snow cover for a sledding and tubing hill
  - Providing reliable snow with goal to extend season to 100 days
- \$5.3 million total estimated project costs.
- Ramsey County:
  - Will use portion of FY2022-2023 Parks and Trails Legacy allocation
  - Dedicated \$1 million in Ramsey County bonds
  - Received \$3.1 million in state bonding as a matching grant
  - Battle Creek Community will help raise necessary remaining funds through private funding (ski clubs, schools, fundraisers, and more) for the required non-state funding match.
- This is a great resource for local high schools and ski teams in Minnesota

#### Subcommittee Updates:

The following is a summary of updates and action items from each of the PTLAC's Subcommittees and Workgroups.

#### Benchmarks:

This subcommittee will continue to work on implementing the finalized set of shared measurements, given the PTLAC's recent approval.

#### Communications:

The Communications Subcommittee will follow up with Benchmarks on the next steps for the shared outcomes. Any PTLAC Members are encouraged to join this subcommittee if they are interested.

#### Governance:

The Governance Subcommittee is examining different models and tools that can be applied to this group. This Subcommittee is using a model known as "Awake, to Woke, to Work" which is a race equity tool, and will be explored by this subcommittee while examining the PTLAC's charter and bylaws.

#### Inclusion:

The Inclusion Subcommittee has been working on developing a goal and work plan. The current goal is: "by December 2022, equip Minnesota Parks and Recreation Agencies with good information from under-represented groups, who are experiencing barriers to outdoor recreation, participation, and access." Specifically, this subcommittee will invite one of the Minnesota Diversity Councils to PTLAC meetings, and be prepared to have a panel discussion.

#### Statewide Trails Workgroup:

This workgroup will continue to follow up on finalizing a map of search corridors, and DNR staff will schedule the next workgroup meeting.

### Final Updates:

#### Streetlight Data Updates:

- A data scientist position is in the process of being hired to oversee a research project, which examines visitation data from anonymous cell phone data
- This position will be hired and begin in June 2021
- This data will be used to identify gaps in visitation, and will help all three implementing agencies to learn more
- Emmett Mullin will continue to follow up on the updates of the Streetlight Data project

#### Next Meeting Details:

- The next meeting is **June 24<sup>th</sup>, 2021 from 10:00 AM-2:00 PM**
- **Meeting Host:** Metropolitan Council
- **Meeting Location:** WebEx
- Currently, the State-wide emergency orders are continuing, and the return to an in-person meeting will not begin at the next meeting
- Minnesota is at a very serious point in the pandemic, and the Legacy Liaisons encourage PTLAC members to continue social distancing practices

**The meeting was adjourned.**