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DEVELOPMENT & ACQUISITION STATUS

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Monson Lake
State Park



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MINNESOTA STATE PARK SYSTEM

The mission of the Division of Parks and Recreation is to provide a state park system that perpetuates Minnesota's scenic beauty and its natural and cultural resources, while being responsive to public needs and expectations, and providing a diversity of recreational opportunities.

The Division of Parks and Recreation manages 64 state parks across Minnesota. The state park system is vital to Minnesota's tourism, an industry that is becoming the backbone of many economies in greater Minnesota. Our most unique and valuable cultural and natural resources are found within state park boundaries. It is the Division of Parks & Recreation's responsibility to acquire, protect and interpret these unique resources.

Prior to the 1989 legislative session, funding constraints and increasing visitor use seriously eroded the Division of Parks and Recreation's ability to provide quality recreational experiences and services. Since then the Governor and state legislators have responded to the need for increased funding for the operations budget. However, financing the maintenance of existing facilities and new development in the face of increasing visitor use remains a problem. This will be addressed during the 1990 legislative session when a capital bonding bill is considered.

The state park system has the Department of Natural Resource's (DNR) largest physical plant with over 2,800 major facilities requiring major rehabilitation. The Division of Parks & Recreation has identified more than \$55 million in capital budget needs. These projects include land acquisition, resource management, major rehabilitation or replacement of existing facilities and a few new facilities. Legislative funding requests to meet this need will be spread throughout future bienniums.

A recent study conducted by the Minnesota Historical Society identifies 515 historic structures located in the state park system. These structures are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Most of these structures are of Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) and Work Progress Administration (WPA) vintage. The CCC/WPA structures were constructed in the 1930's. These facilities are over 50 years old and many are in need of major rehabilitation which includes the electrical, sewage, and water systems associated with these buildings.

Many years of intensive use is also a consideration when looking at the current condition of campgrounds, picnic areas, group camps and trail systems. Lack of development and rehabilitation of these and other state park facilities will reduce park use. A reduction in state park use will adversely impact the economic development of adjacent communities and Minnesota's effort to improve tourism.

As capital development funds have become available we have completed the highest priority projects. As additional needs are identified, they are reviewed and placed on the statewide priority list for future completion.

In 1991, Itasca, Minnesota's oldest state park, will be 100 years old. For 100 years Minnesota has had a park system to be proud of. The present challenge is to manage the park resources and recreational development to ensure that Minnesotans will be proud of their state park system for another hundred years.

AN OVERVIEW OF MONSON LAKE STATE PARK

Monson Lake State Park is located four miles north of Sunberg and about twenty miles north of Willmar in Swift County. The park was established in 1937 as a memorial to the Brobergs, a local pioneer family who lost their lives in the Dakota Conflict of 1862.

Monson Lake State Park encompasses 187 gently rolling acres on Monson and West Sunberg Lakes in what is called the Alexandria Glacial Moraine Complex, a series of glacial moraines deposited over 30,000 years ago by retreating ice sheets. The park is situated along the Glacial Ridge Trail which follows the spectacular scenery provided by extensive moraines, comprised of enormous accumulations of sand, gravel and rock debris. Monson and West Sunberg were formed when huge ice blocks broke from the glacier, melted, and filled depressions left by the retreating ice sheet.

Forests of oak, ash and basswood dominate the park's landscape providing important habitat for woodland wildlife in a region of intense agriculture. The park is a birdwatcher's paradise with over two hundred species of birds known to use the park area as residents or seasonal migrants. These include the bald eagle, golden eagle, osprey, northern harrier, common loon, great-blue heron, belted kingfisher, great horned owl, numerous song birds and shore birds, and over twenty species of waterfowl. Twenty-two species of animals also inhabit the park. These include white-tailed deer, red and grey fox, coyote, raccoon, mink, beaver and white-tailed jack rabbit.

Monson Lake State Park offers visitors recreation experiences in a peaceful, secluded setting. Monson and West Sunberg Lakes provide opportunities for fishing, swimming and canoeing. Historical interpretation is available at the park. Other popular activities include camping, hiking, and birdwatching.

Monson Lake State Park

TRAILS

Hiking

FACILITIES

Information

Picnic Area

Historic Site

Boat Ramp

Campground

SCALE

0 100 200 300 400 500 FEET

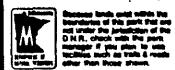


Monson Lake

West Sunburg Lake

Monson Wildlife Area

To KERKHOVEN
11 miles
To SUNBURG 4 miles



EXISTING FACILITIES

The following is an inventory of the existing physical plant of Monson Lake State Park.

Acres in Statutory Boundary - 187

Acres of state land - 187

Campsites

Drive in - 20

Miles of Trails

Hiking - 1.0

Miles of Road

Gravel - 1.0

Open Picnic Shelter

Number of Picnic Tables - 25

Water Accesses - 1

Number of Buildings

Over 100 sq.ft. - 3

Under 100 sq.ft. - 3

Miles of Posted Boundary - 2

Park Utilities

Number of Septic Tanks - 2

Number of Wells - 1

Number of Individual

Water Distribution Systems - 1

Miles of State Owned Power Line - .3

PROBLEMS FACING MONSON LAKE STATE PARK

There are many public recreational facilities in Monson Lake State Park to maintain. Many are in need of replacement or major rehabilitation. Most were constructed in the 1930's, and are now in need of rehabilitation.

The parks natural and cultural resources are also in need of protection and management to perpetuate Monson Lake's resources. In the past, facilities were developed in prehistoric and historic use areas. These areas must be protected and interpreted.

Of most importance at Monson Lake is the rehabilitation of the existing structures. No development or rehabilitation funding has been available to the park over the past few years. Very few of the goals identified in the ten year old management plan have been achieved.

RECENT DEVELOPMENT IN MONSON LAKE STATE PARK

No development has occurred at Monson Lake State Park in the last few years.

MONSON LAKE STATE PARK CAPITAL NEEDS

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Natural Resources Assessment - \$5,000

An assessment of the park's natural resources, including plot studies and inventories, to facilitate resource management decisions.

Prairie Establishment - \$10,000

Reconstruct an example of native prairie in an area that still contains some prairie elements.

Subtotal \$15,000

MAJOR REHABILITATION

Rehabilitation - \$50,000

Project includes rehabilitation of existing buildings and related utilities and facilities.

Subtotal \$50,000

TOTAL DEVELOPMENT NEEDS \$65,000

PARK POTENTIAL

What efforts will the completion of resource management, rehabilitation and new development projects have on Monson Lake State Park? These projects along with the acquisition of private lands within the park will assure the preservation of these unique resources and facilities for future generations. Active management will be required to maintain and regenerate existing plant communities. These will ensure that future visitors will be able to experience the diverse nature of Minnesota's prairies and forests.

Some improvements will not only increase park use but will greatly increase the quality of the visitors experience. Many of the rehabilitation projects will increase staff efficiency and cut the costs of maintaining facilities.

New facilities will improve service while giving the visitor a greater opportunity to learn about Minnesota's natural and cultural resources.

The acquisition of private lands within the park will assure that private and commercial development do not detract from the natural beauty of Monson Lake State Park.

A stable funding source is essential for effective long term resource management and capital budget planning for the Minnesota State Park system and Monson Lake State Park.

SUMMARY

Currently, statewide capital needs for development and acquisition are \$55,000,000. The mission of the Minnesota State Park System can be achieved by funding support to meet this need over the next several bienniums.

**Monson Lake State Park
development needs - \$65,000**

**Help us celebrate the 100th anniversary of the
Minnesota State Park System in 1991!**

