

## Conclusion

This report is a blueprint of what is needed to provide the same access to Regional Parks for outstate Minnesotans that residents in the Metropolitan area enjoy. By identifying the need for and the locations of Outstate Regional Parks, decision makers are now able to prioritize land acquisition expenditures and adopt plan on how the needed facilities will be developed.

Parks are a lasting infrastructure investment that provide recreational opportunities, environmental services like clean water and clean air, human health benefits, improve quality of life, enhance the desirability of an area, create economic opportunity, attract investment, protect the viability of working lands, maintain habitat, etc. Parks are essential to our well-being and the acreage recommendations in this report will provide the necessary park lands to protect that well-being in Minnesota's new urban complexes.

There is something special about the developing outstate urban complexes that is uniquely Minnesotan. Whether it is the lakes dotting the landscape, the majestic pines, the undulating vistas of different colored crops, or the winding rivers, people are migrating to these areas of scenic value in unprecedented numbers. Unless we plan how these areas are to be developed and take steps to ensure that their scenic value is not degraded, these unique Minnesotan gems will be lost. Regional Recreation Resources Districts are a concept of how these areas can be developed while maintaining and enhancing the natural assets that make them such attractive places.

## Next Steps

Now is the time to begin prioritizing how and what lands will be maintained as open space in the outstate urban complexes. The populations projections call for rapid growth in the study areas, and this growth will inevitably make parkland acquisition and green infrastructure planning more expensive and difficult. To provide for the needs of present, and future Minnesotans, progress must be made in the following areas:

- Prioritize land acquisition expenditures to focus on the highest amenity areas in the most rapidly growing outstate urban complexes as identified in this report.
- Acquire the needed acreage.
- Develop and enact an agency/council/board that has authority over Regional Recreation Resource Districts.
- Identify Regional Recreation Resource District boundaries.
- Develop and enact policy that governs land use within the Regional Recreation Resource Districts.
- Periodically review to ensure that the open space needs of Minnesotan's are being met and adapt to meet changing needs.

