



## *Greater Minnesota Regional Parks & Trails Commission*

January 15, 2014

Respectfully delivered to:

### **Minnesota House of Representatives Legacy Committee**

Representative Phyllis Kahn – Chair  
Representative Leon Lillie – Vice-Chair  
Representative Dean Urdahl – Republican Lead

### **Minnesota Senate Finance Committee Sub-Committee on Legacy**

Senator Richard Cohen – Chair  
Senator Bobby Joe Champion – Vice-Chair  
Senator Michelle L. Fischbach – Ranking Minority Member

Leaders:

On October 28, 2013 in State Capitol Room 105 the first meeting of the Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission convened. The Commission works to carry out its duty, outlined in Minnesota Statutes, Chapter 85.536:

“to undertake system planning and provide recommendations to the legislature for grants funded by the parks and trails legacy fund to counties and cities outside of the seven-county metropolitan area for parks and trails of regional or state-wide significance,”

This report is in fulfillment of one of the tasks given to the Commission;

“submit a report by January 15 each year listing its recommendations under subdivision 7, in priority order, to the chairs and ranking minority members of the committees of the Senate and House of Representatives with primary jurisdiction over legacy appropriations.”

**At Large Member**  
Anita Rasmussen  
– Sartell

#### **District 1**

Keith Nelson  
– Eveleth  
LuAnn Wilcox  
– Finlayson

#### **District 2**

Rita Albrecht  
– Bemidji  
Bryan Pike  
– Brainerd

#### **District 3**

Michael Hulett  
– Moorhead  
Al Liefkort  
– Alexandria

#### **District 4**

Marc Mattice  
– Eden Valley  
Barry Wendorf  
– Zimmerman

#### **District 5**

Rick Anderson  
– Balaton  
Tom Schmitz  
– New Ulm

#### **District 6**

O. William Bruins  
– Rochester  
Thomas Ryan  
– Byron

Donald 'Al' Liefkort, Chair

Rita Albrecht, Vice-Chair

## **Recommendations pursuant to MS 85.536, sub 7:**

The newly organized Commission recognizes and understands that the appropriation from the Parks & Trails Legacy Fund for the biennium of 2014 and 2015 was made to the Department of Natural Resources (DNR). The grant responsibility resides with the Commissioner of Department of Natural Resources for this biennium.

The Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission support the rankings and recommendations made by the DNR for grants from the Parks and Trails Legacy Fund in 2014.

### **Other Commission Progress Information:**

Organization: The primary task of the Commission; to create a state-wide system plan for regional parks and regional trails, is underway. Organizational procedures for the Commission are nearly complete. Preparations for six District Planning Committees and a project review and ranking process are progressing well.

Our goal; to prepare a statewide regional park and regional trail master plan that details critical information regarding ownership, regional context and proximity to other facilities, public participation and hearings, ecological stewardship, baseline and ongoing research, and responsibilities for operations and maintenance, will be implemented through the District Planning Committees.

Budget: A budget for executive direction for the Commission and for updating the Greater Minnesota Parks and Trails Strategic Plan are urgent needs identified in the early Commission meetings. Plans are being developed to support these functional priorities.

It is the intention of the Commission that we build an organization fully capable of distributing future Parks and Trails Legacy Fund appropriations with a minimum level of support from the DNR.

Funding: The Commission supports the continuation of the 40/40/20 funding allocation resulting from the *"Parks and Trails Legacy Funding Work Group Recommendation"*. The great promise of the Parks and Trails Legacy Plan;

"In 2035, our world-class parks and trails connect everyone to the outdoors...reinforcing our identity as an outdoor culture"

cannot be realized without a stable funding source.

Local Parks: The Commission believes re-instatement of funds to the Outdoor Recreation Grant program, a program for local park projects serving a vital interest in municipal neighborhoods across Minnesota, is important. Bond funds to the DNR for this critically underfunded grant program in the 2014 legislative session would be welcome.