

Rice County Parks and Recreation System Plan

County Board update

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Agenda

- 1. Progress Update**
- 2. Vision & Implementation Approach**
- 3. Recommendations for System Investments**
- 4. Next Steps**

Progress Update

Task	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep
Phase 1 NEEDS ASSESSMENT & BRANDING												
Review previous County park system plan												
Peer County comparison												
NRPA Metrics analysis/comparison												
Trends analysis												
Conduct online engagement -- general issues, opportunities, and priorities												
Update demographics and County context information												
General county-wide parks recommendations												
Staff workshops (2) and communication												
Develop branding elements (parks logo, signage concepts)												
Phase 2 TECHNICAL ANALYSIS & STRATEGIC PLANNING												
Level of service maps and gap analysis												
Parks and facilities inventory mapping, tables, and descriptions												
System tour and conditions assessment												
Park Facilities Maintenance and Replacement Plan												
Staff/Commission/Board workshop												
Refine and Prioritize parks recommendations												
High level cost estimates for key recommendations												
Funding options and sources												
Phase 3 DESIGN, IMPLEMENTATION & FUNDING PLAN												
Operations and maintenance analysis and planning												
Individual park concept plans												
CIP / Capital funding development												
Staff workshops (2)												
Planning Commission / County Board meetings (2)												
Assemble plan document (PDF)												

Progress Update\

Public Input Summary

- High interest in mountain bike trails at Caron Park
- Cannon River Wilderness Area is a popular and well-loved park
- Desire for more trail corridors and trail connections between parks
- Invasive species management is needed
- Wayfinding signage needed to provide direction to parks
- Year-round bathroom facilities desired
- Update and improve trash receptacles
- Improvements needed to boat launches and fishing accesses

- Social Pinpoint site was open from Jan 24 - Mar 16, 2022
- 662 total visits to the site
- 236 unique users
- 86 comments posted

Interactive Map Comments Summary
 Social Pinpoint is an interactive mapping tool that allows participants to provide comments directly on a map. Visitors to the website can also view comments, and like/dislike comments left by others on the map. Participants were encouraged to use color-coded markers to indicate whether comments were ideas, concerns, or requests for another topic. The tool was launched in January 2022 and was open for comment until March 16, 2022.

Participation
 The site had over 662 visits and 86 comments were left on the map, almost 70% of the comments proposed new ideas for the park system.

Mapping Results
 The Social Pinpoint map and map comments (below) illustrate a sampling of the feedback collected through the interactive map. A summary of comment themes and suggestions can be found on the following pages.

Map Comments

1. Need for more trail corridors and trail connections between parks
2. Need for more trail corridors and trail connections between parks
3. Need for more trail corridors and trail connections between parks
4. Need for more trail corridors and trail connections between parks
5. Need for more trail corridors and trail connections between parks
6. Need for more trail corridors and trail connections between parks
7. Need for more trail corridors and trail connections between parks
8. Need for more trail corridors and trail connections between parks
9. Need for more trail corridors and trail connections between parks
10. Need for more trail corridors and trail connections between parks
11. Need for more trail corridors and trail connections between parks
12. Need for more trail corridors and trail connections between parks
13. Need for more trail corridors and trail connections between parks
14. Need for more trail corridors and trail connections between parks
15. Need for more trail corridors and trail connections between parks

Comment Marker Key
 Like This, New Idea, Have a Concern

Legend
 Trail Types: Mountain Bike, Hike/Jog, Equestrian, etc.

Photo Caption: Boat launch at Cannon River Wilderness Area.

Vision

The Rice County Parks system provides access to **natural resource parks** and **corridor trails** that offer opportunities for **hiking, biking, camping, boating, fishing, swimming, and picnicking**.

Supportive amenities that contribute to a comfortable experience for county residents and visitors include **play equipment, restrooms, wayfinding and interpretive signage**.

The county parks and open space system is complemented by state, city, and non-profit parks, trails, and nature centers.



Implementation Approach

Incremental steps are recommended in order to improve the accessibility and functionality of existing parks, broaden the awareness, and increase funding.

The top priorities for the next 0-5 years (by 2027):

- 1. Branding/Logo and Marketing**
- 2. Update Restrooms**
- 3. Hire Parks Staff**
- 4. Increase county park funding**

Implementation Approach\ Branding/Logo and Marketing

The logo and branding should be updated on the following items within the next 5 years:

- **Online** – County website and social media
- **Print media** – newsletters, maps, brochures
- **Signage** – park signs at all parks, wayfinding signs, rules and etiquette signs (utilize sustainable sign fabrication methods, consider recycled/composite materials, consider including a solar powered light on the signs)



Implementation Approach\ Branding/Logo and Marketing



*Staff preferences
for updated logos*



Implementation Approach\ Update Restrooms

- **Replace non-functioning vault toilets**
- **Make improvements to functioning toilets**
- **Utilize portable toilets in the interim before funding is allocated for all restroom replacements**
- **Make additional updates to parking lots, picnic shelters, trail connections, etc. as necessary**



Park	Facility	Timeline	Budget Estimate
Cannon River Wilderness Area	Update portapotty enclosure at West Trailhead, expand the season that the portapotty is available	0-5 years	\$10,000-\$20,000
	Build new permanent restroom building at West Trailhead	0-5 years	\$100,000+
	Build new permanent restroom building at East Trailhead	5-10 years	\$100,000+
	Pave parking lot at East Trailhead	5-10 years	Coordinate with County Highway Dept.
Albers Park	Improvements to restroom building and accessibility	0-5 years	\$50,000
	Pave parking lot	5-10 years	Coordinate with County Highway Dept.
Falls Creek Park	Address ADA Accessibility requirements to meet previous DNR grant	0-5 years	\$50,000
	Build new permanent restroom building	0-5 years	\$100,000+
	Pave parking lot—add medians within the lot	5-10 years	Coordinate with County Highway Dept.
McCullough Park	Pave Co Rd 64 for dust control and improved park access	0-3 years	Coordinate with County Highway Dept.
Shager Park	Add permanent restroom building at beach	0-5 years	\$100,000+
Caron Park	Build new permanent restroom building	0-5 years	\$100,000+
	Picnic shelter—new roof and painting	5-10 years	\$50,000
Total investment of approximately \$520,000 over the next 5 years.			

Implementation Approach\ Hire Parks Staff

Add 1.0-2.0 FTE in the next 3-5 years.
Currently, there is a 1.0 FTE (0.2 FTE actually goes to parks duties) parks lead and 3 seasonal workers.

Recommended model:

Position	Duties
1.0 FTE Parks Supervisor	Organize and manage parks operations and maintenance staff; Meet with other state and local agencies to discuss partnerships for programs and facilities; Set department budget; Identify and seek grant and other alternative funding to implement park improvements; Advocate to the County Board for parks, recreation, and trail funding; Assist with operations and maintenance tasks as needed; Coordinate volunteer groups regarding off-road bicycle trail design and construction and natural resources management
1.0 FTE Parks Maintenance worker	Operate and maintain county parks, facilities, campgrounds, trails, restrooms, picnic facilities
2 seasonal workers	Work with Parks Supervisor and Parks Maintenance worker to complete seasonal tasks related to parks and facilities maintenance and operations

Implementation Approach\ **Increase County parks funding**

- **Current revenue is \$98,000; Current parks budget is \$100,000**
- **Recommend parks budget increase to \$350,000 per year**
- **Place increased effort on seeking grants and other funding sources (support capital costs)**
- **Utilize Park Facilities Asset Management Schedule**
- **Plan for major facility repairs (dam, bridges)**
- **Increase fees (shelter rental)**

Recommendations for System Investments

Timeline

- **Short-term (0-5 years)** Highest Priority
- **Mid-term (5-10 years)**
- **Long-term (10+ years)**

Category

- **Staffing**
- **Funding**
- **Trails**
- **Parks and Facilities**
- **Acquisition**
- **Programming/Marketing**



Category	Timeline	Investment Recommendations	Budget Estimate
Staffing	0-5 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hire 2.0 FTE dedicated to parks: 1 Parks Supervisor, 1 Parks Maintenance worker, and 2.0 seasonal workers 	\$100,000 - \$200,000 / annually
	5-10 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create full-time County Parks and Recreation Director position Consider hiring a Park Naturalist/Programmer to work with staff and the public on natural resources management projects and planning/ coordinating programs and events 	
	10+ years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> County Parks Department has 4.0-5.0 FTE and several seasonal workers to maintain growing parks system 	
Funding	0-5 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Achieve Regional Designation for Cannon River Wilderness Area Seek potential grants for identified park projects Current County parks budget includes annual revenue of \$98K, with an additional \$100K budgeted for operational and capital expenses. Recommendation to increase this to \$300K-350K annually in order to fulfill near-term investments Achieve regional designation for Caron Park and Falls Park Increase fees for shelter rentals 	
	5-10 year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to increase annual funding allocation for parks and trails to maintain existing and proposal facilities 	
	10+ years		
Trails	0-5 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Achieve regional designation for proposed county trail corridors (Ironhorse Regional Trail, trail from Faribault to Zumbrota) Participate with partnership organizations (SMART, MN DNR) in order to implement proposed state and regional trail corridors (Prairie Wildflower State Trail) Coordinate with County Highway Dept. on trail construction along county roads 	staff time
	5-10 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Urge and support the MN DNR to build Mill Towns State Trail 	
	10+ years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Achieve full build out of county trail network that connects Sakatah State Trail, Mill Towns State Trail, Prairie Wildflower State Trail, Ironhorse Regional Trail, etc. 	

Category	Timeline	Investment Recommendations	Budget Estimate
Parks + Facilities	0-5 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update restrooms at Cannon River Wilderness Area, Caron Park, Albers Park, Shager Park, and Falls Creek Park Update and improve ADA accessibility in the system Work with Cannon River Off-road Cycling and Trails (CROCT) to build 7-mile loop at Cannon River Wilderness Area McCullough Park access Co Rd 64 paving Address invasive species at parks; work with volunteer groups to schedule events 	\$520,000
	5-10 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Utilize park concept plans to make incremental improvements to parks; update the park concept plans as items are constructed 	
	10+ years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update the County Park System Plan 	
Acquisition	0-5 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Purchase properties adjacent to existing parks as opportunities arise and with willing sellers Evaluate Kalina Park for disposal/sale Evaluate former gravel pit for development or disposal/sale Evaluate Boat Launch at Hirdler Park for transition to natural shoreline 	TBD
	5-10 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus on acquisition or easement of trail corridors according to trail master plans 	
	10+ years		
Programming/ Marketing	0-5 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update parks logo Update signs at all County parks Work with local partnership organizations and the state DNR to promote natural resources programming Partner with River Bend Nature Center Increase online and print media outreach, promotion, and marketing of parks 	\$250,000 - \$500,000
	5-10 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Add natural resources programming and events 	
	10+ years		

Next Steps

- **Complete initial application for regional designation for Cannon River Wilderness Area**
- **Late Summer/Fall**
 - Identify funding strategy; align grant opportunities
 - Phase 2 Public Engagement survey to review draft recommendations
 - Prepare County Park System Plan document

