Information Item

2018 Regional Parks System Annual Use Estimate

July 9, 2019

Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission
Use Estimate Background

• Produced annually since 1995
• Used in formulas to calculate each regional park implementing agency’s share of Regional Parks System grant program dollars
• Allows for monitoring trends over time
• One of two ongoing research responsibilities: Other is Visitor Study
The estimate includes data from 113 regional parks, trails, park reserves and special recreation features.

Two new trail sections were in this year’s count:
- Point Douglas Regional Trail (Washington County)
- Nokomis-Minnesota River Bluffs Regional Trail (Bloomington)
Calculating the Annual Use Estimate

**Raw Counts**
- Parks staff count all people entering all parks and trails at designated locations.
- Schedule has randomized times, days, and entrances, Memorial Day to Labor Day

**Expansion**
- Counts are “expanded” to apply to all days and entrances.
- Averaged with previous three years to account for weather, flooding

**Special Events/Camping**
- Agency-submitted special event, camping use is added in
- Estimated non-summer use based on Visitor Study multipliers
Regional Parks System Annual Visits

*Increase due to implementation of new visitor study multipliers
Visits by Agency

- Anoka County
- Bloomington
- Carver County
- Dakota County
- Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board
- Ramsey County
- Saint Paul
- Scott County
- Three Rivers Park District - Hennepin
- Three Rivers Park District - Scott
- Washington County

Millions of visits
Highest Visitation Parks

- Minneapolis Chain of Lakes Regional Park
- Como Regional Park, Zoo, and Conservatory
- Central Mississippi Riverfront Regional Park
- Minnehaha Regional Park
- Nokomis-Hiawatha Regional Park
- Elm Creek Park Reserve
- Phalen Regional Park - Saint Paul
- Mississippi Gorge Regional Park
- Lilydale-Harriet Island Regional Park

Millions of visits
Sharing data with the public

- Highlights in PlayFeatures published on the Council website.
- Data visualization with complete access to data and explanation of the process at www.metrocouncil.org/parkestimates
2019-2020 Parks Research Underway

• Analyzing visitation using cell phone data (Streetlight)
• 2020 Visitor Study – a survey to ask visitors about park experience, set funding formula statistics, provide key data on equity, and Streetlight verification
• Participant Action Research study on youth and parks: Collaborative, participatory, subgroup-specific.