

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

2018 Annual Use Estimate



Photo credit: Washington County

- 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

Averaged with previous three years to account for weather, flooding

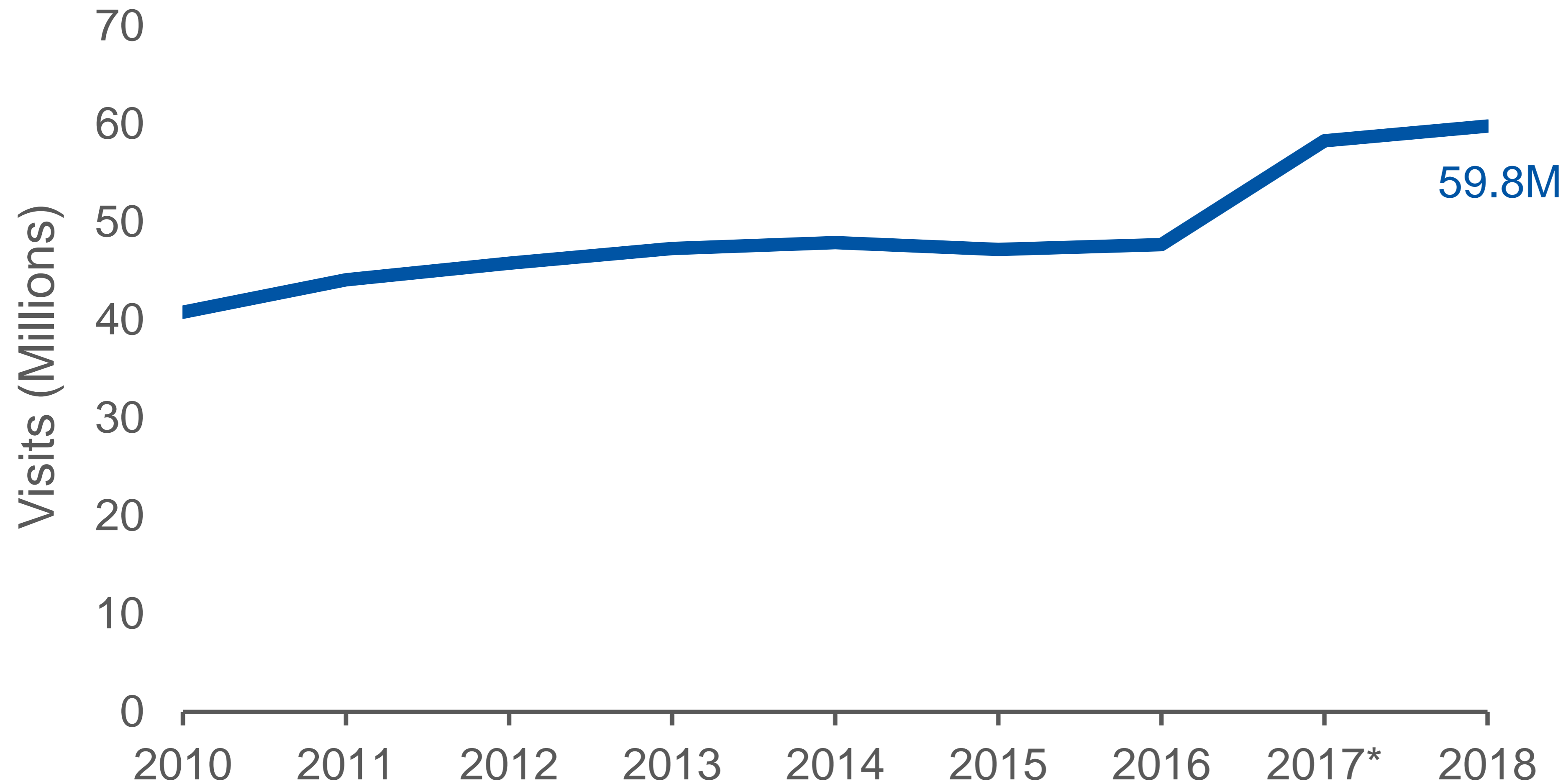
Counts are “expanded” to apply to all days and entrances.

Special Events/ Camping

Agency-submitted special event, camping use is added in

Estimated non-summer use based on Visitor Study multipliers

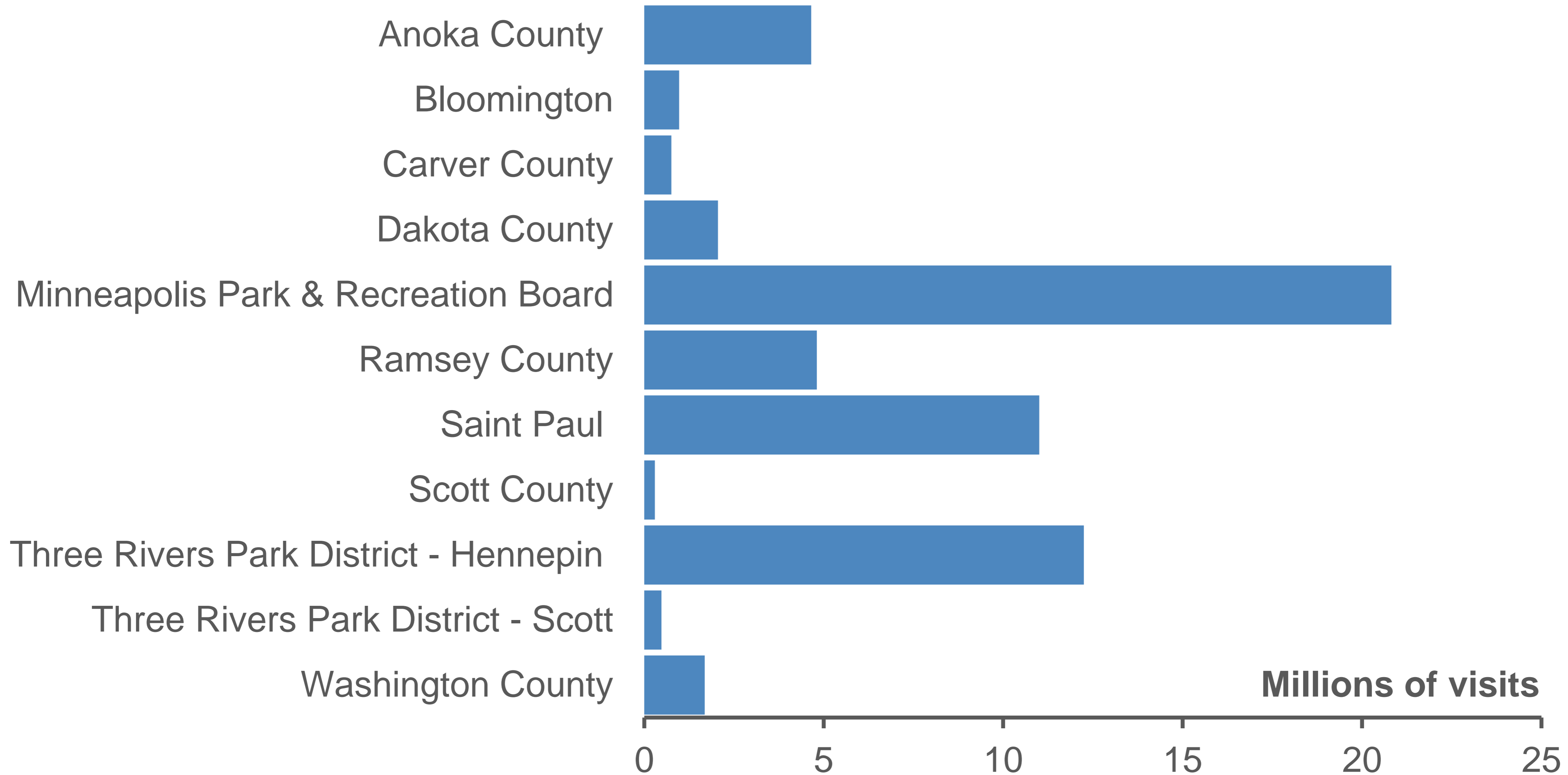
Regional Parks System Annual Visits



* Increase due to implementation of new visitor study multipliers



Visits by Agency

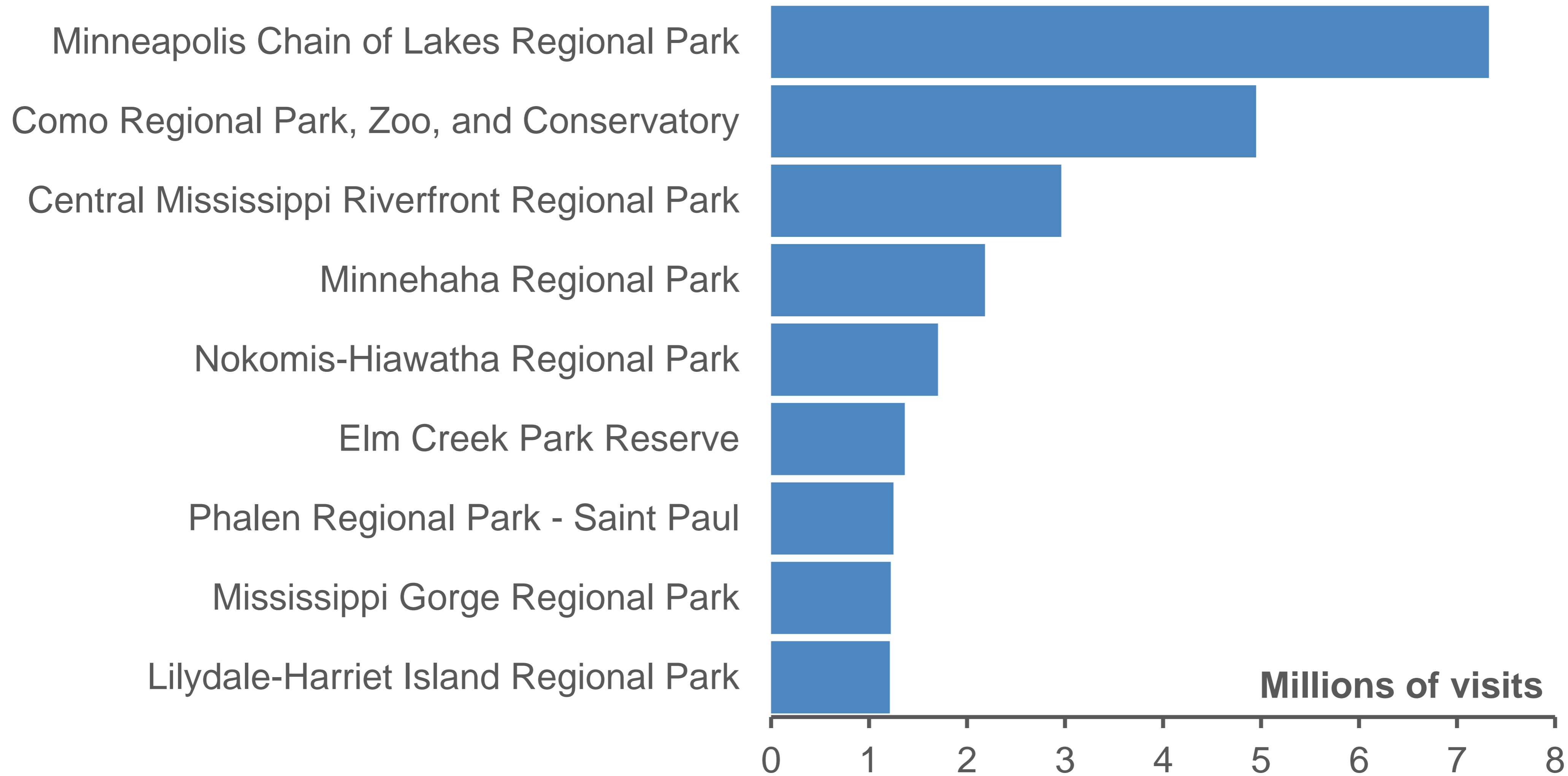


Millions of visits



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Highest Visitation Parks



Sharing data with the public



Regional Park System Visits in 2018

This report highlights the estimated number of visits to the Regional Parks System in 2018.

The Metropolitan Council produces annual estimates of visits to the Twin Cities Regional Parks System in collaboration with 10 partner agencies, including cities, counties, and special parks districts. Visitation data were collected within each park and trail during the summer (Memorial Day to Labor Day) and then expanded to produce an annual estimate. We've developed an interactive online tool—available at <https://metro council.org/parkestimates>—that describes how annual estimates are developed and provides usage statistics for each park and trail in the Regional Park System.

Key Findings

- An estimated 59.8 million visits were made to the Regional Parks System in 2018. This represents a 2.6% increase over 2017 and the most visits in any year on record.
- With approximately 20.8 million visitors in 2018, the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board had the highest visitation among the 10 park agencies in the Regional Park system. The most-visited regional park in 2018 was Minneapolis Chain of Lakes, with over 7 million visits.
- Anoka County Regional Parks showed the largest gain in visitation, with over 520,000 more visits in 2018 compared with 2017. Dakota County had the largest percentage increase in visitation, with a 14% increase over 2017 levels.

The Twin Cities Regional Parks System is nationally renowned for its beauty, size, and variety of features. As of December 2018, the Regional Parks System included 44 regional parks, 12 park reserves, 49 regional trails, and eight special recreation features. Two new trail segments joined the system in 2018: Point Douglas Regional Trail (in Washington County) and Nokomis-Minnesota River Bluffs Regional Trail (in the City of Bloomington).

An estimated 59.8 million visits were made to the Regional Parks System in 2018 (Figure 1). This represents a 2.6% increase over 2017 and the most visits in any year on record.

- Highlights in PlayFeatures published on the Council website.
- Data visualization with complete access to data and explanation of the process at www.metro council.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.



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