# Equity Nudge & 2022 Annual Use Estimates

Darcie Vandegrift, PhD, Principal Researcher

Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission

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# To understand people's relationships with the regional system, use multiple data sources: Part 1

## Use Estimates

- Show visitation patterns across types of units
- No information is known about who visitors are, preferred activities, barriers to use

## Visitor Study

- Provides detailed demographics, activities, some information on barriers
- No detailed stories; not a holistic understanding; no unit level data

## Qualitative research

- In-depth understanding of young people and nonusers' motivations, needs, concerns.
- Doesn't generalize; requires significant time investment.

# To understand people's relationships with the regional system, use multiple data sources: Part 2

## Streetlight or LBS

- LBS = Location-Based Services data
- Inferred demographics for individual units and entire region.
- Uncertain reliability and validity
- No data after 2022

## Park Agency Engagement

- Provides detailed information about community needs, including potentially nonusers and prioritized groups.
- Less widely shared; questions are guided by long-range planning requirements.

## Council Engagement

- Focus on needs of prioritized groups, focuses on how users experience park/trail visitation
- Limited capacity; does not replace on the ground expertise of park agencies or rigor of research-based efforts.

# Research to support equitable use

## Needs:

- A variety of approaches
- Ongoing check-ins about research frameworks with policy makers, community
- Connection with community experts
- Time and intention to share widely
- Opportunities for community experts to speak to policy makers directly
- A commitment to high-quality research design
- Guidance from policy makers about research priorities
- Compliance with statutory research requirements
- Commitment and enthusiasm to learn from the work of others

# Use Estimates Background

- Produced annually since 1995.
- Used in formulas to calculate each implementing agency's share of Regional Parks & Trails System grant program dollars
- Allows for monitoring trends over time
- One of two ongoing research responsibilities: Other is Visitor Study, approximately every 5 years

# 2022 Annual Use Estimates

- The estimates include data from 128 regional parks, trails, park reserves and special recreation features.

- Second year of multipliers from the 2021 Visitor Study

- Annual estimated visitation is one way to demonstrate the value of the Regional Park System. Others include climate mitigation and public health benefits

# Calculating Annual Use Estimates

## 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

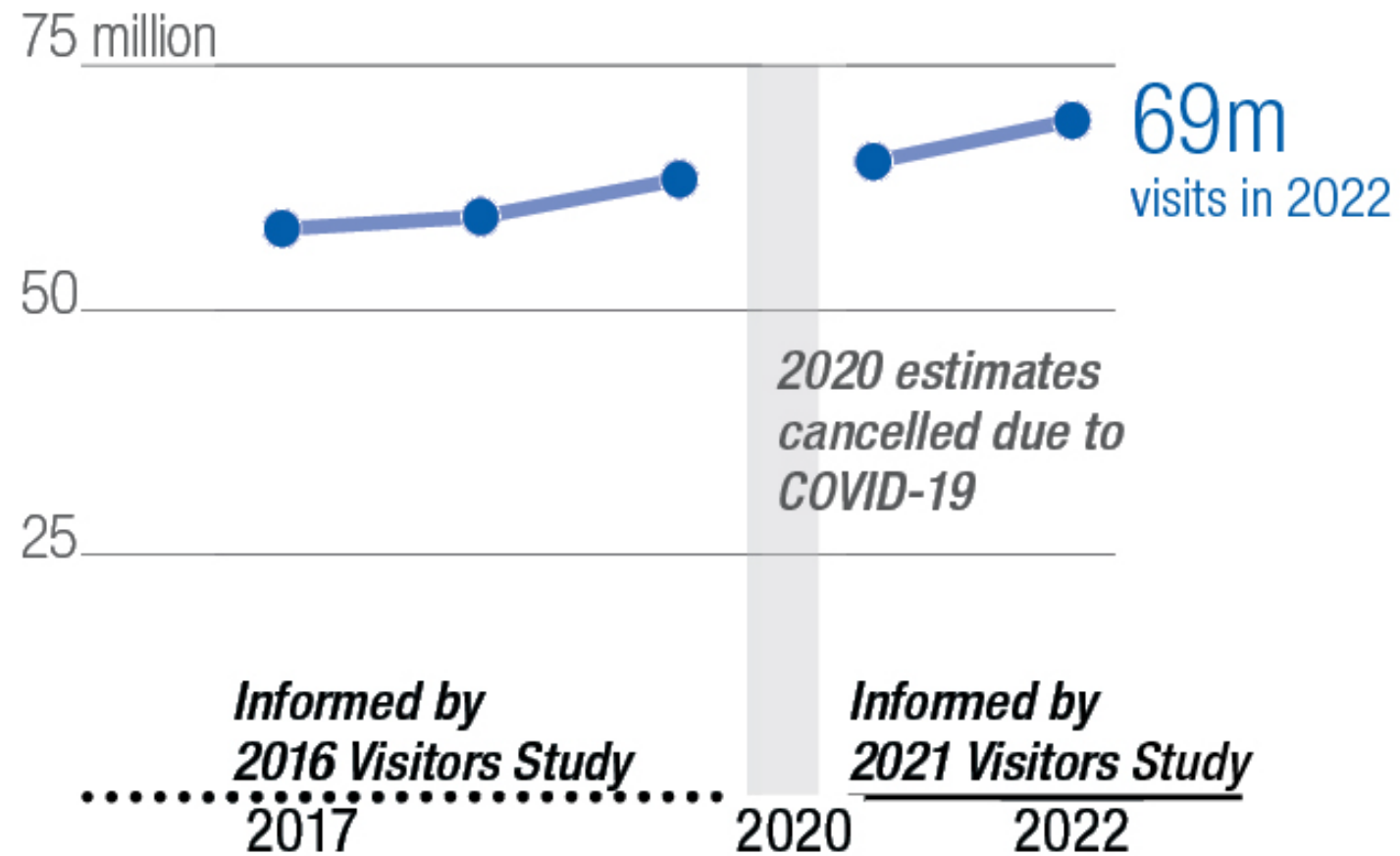- Counts are "expanded" to apply to all days and entrances

## Special Events / Camping

- Agency-submitted special event, camping use is added in

- Estimated non-summer use based on 2021 Visitor Study multipliers

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**Number of estimated visits**



**69m** visits in 2022

2020 estimates cancelled due to COVID-19

Informed by 2016 Visitors Study
2017

Informed by 2021 Visitors Study
2022

2020

Note:
We caution against making direct comparisons across sets of estimates.

*Source: Metropolitan Council's annual parks use estimates (July 2023).*

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7

# Special events are rebounding

- Special events increased by 676,000 in 2022

- Not yet equal to pre-pandemic levels

**Number of special events visits (in millions)**

4

2021-22
Special event visits rose **28%**.

2019: 3.5
2020
2021: 2.4
2022: 3.1

Source: Metropolitan Council's annual parks use estimates (July 2023).
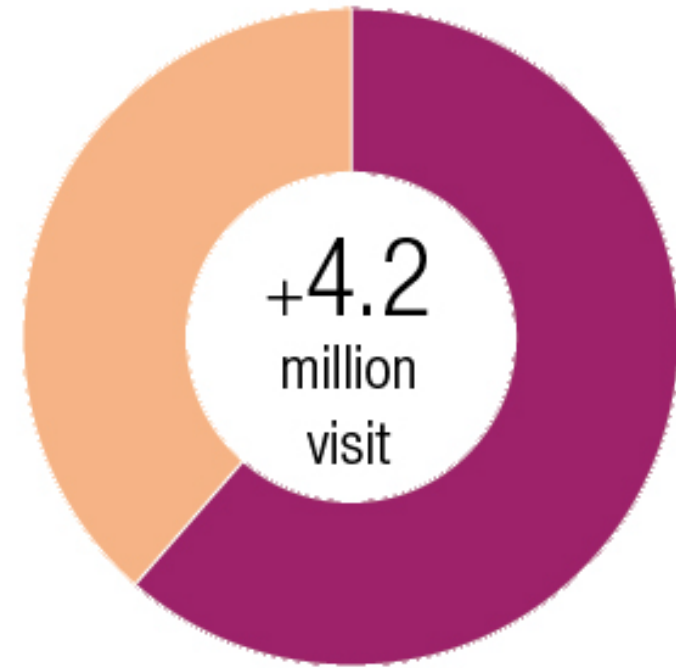
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8
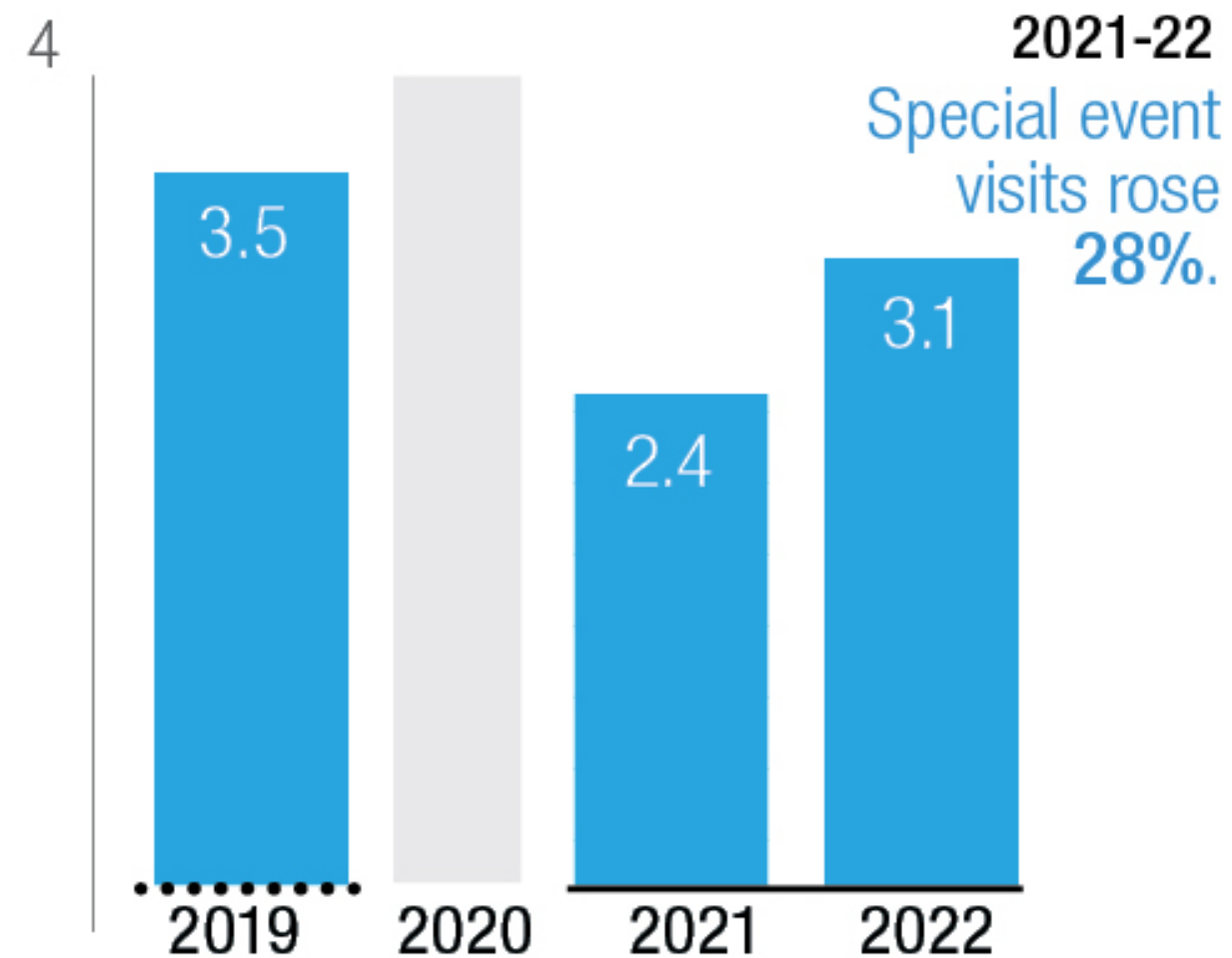
# Visits at trails drive visitation increases

- 15 miles of trail added since 2019; now over 400 miles, up from about 350 miles in 2016.

- Trail visits grew by **14%** between 2021 and 2022, while the change in visits at parks increased by just **3%.**

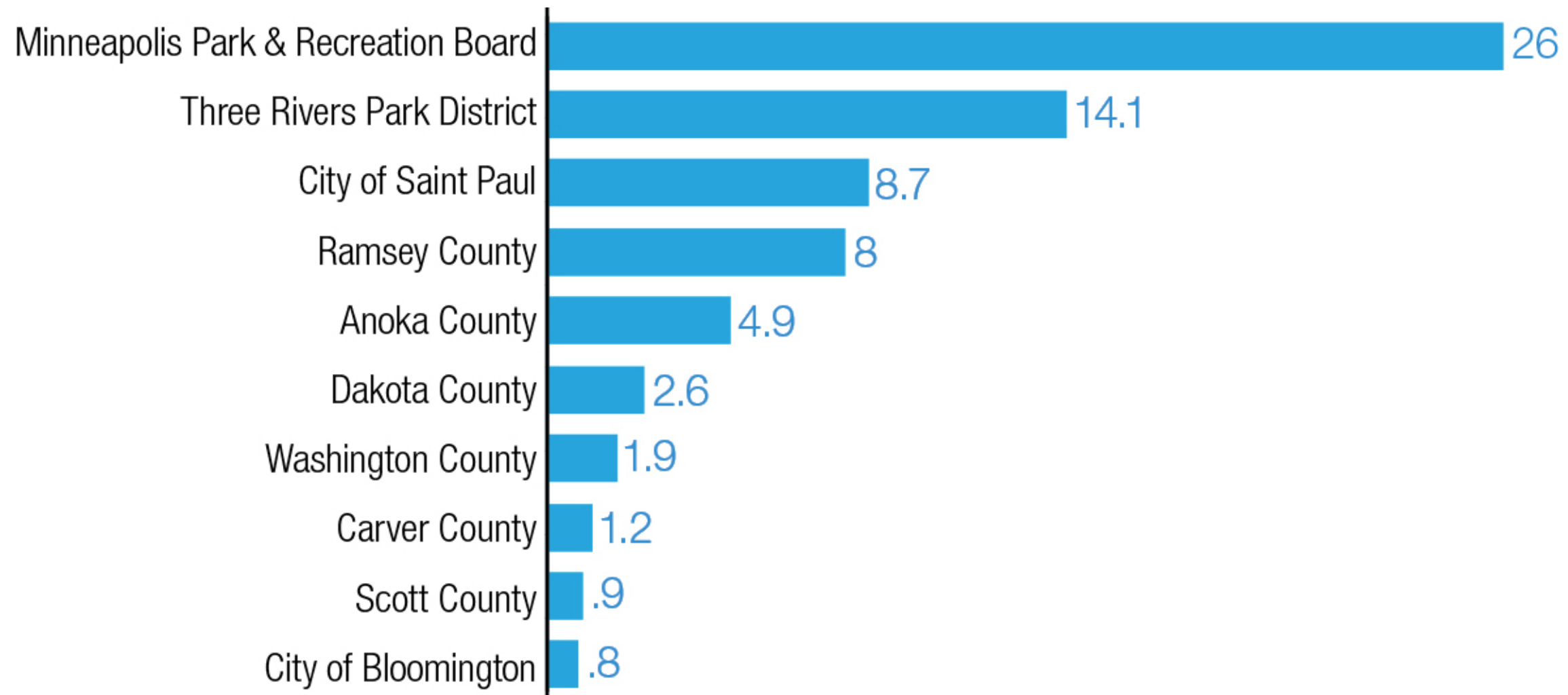Trail visits are **24%** of all estimated visit increase between **2017 and 2019.**
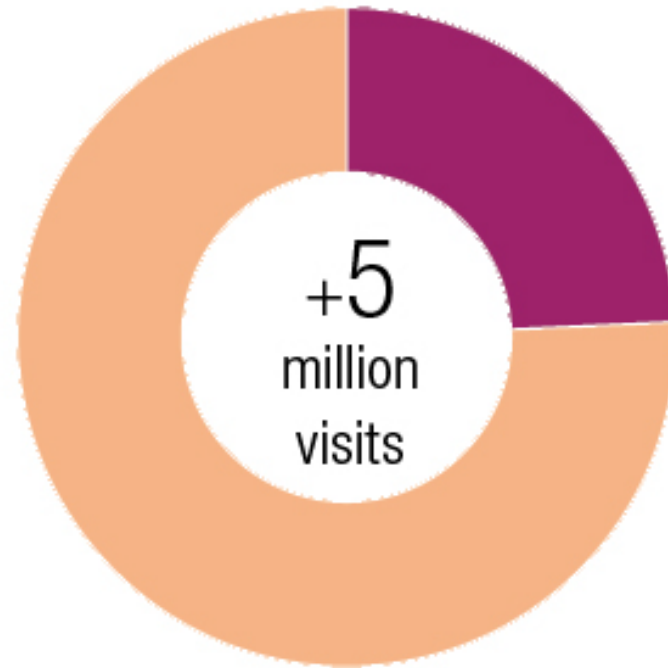
+5 million visits

Trail visits are **61%** of all visit growth between **2021 and 2022.**

+4.2 million visit

*Source: Metropolitan Council's annual parks use estimates (July 2023).*

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# 2022 Visits by Parks Agency



(in millions)

Source: Metropolitan Council's annual parks use estimates (July 2023).

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# 2022 Most Visited Units in the System

**(in millions)**

| Unit | Visits (millions) |
|---|---|
| Minneapolis Chain of Lakes Regional Park | 7.5 |
| Como Regional Park, Zoo & Conservatory | 3.8 |
| Central Mississippi Riverfront Regional Park | 3.6 |
| Mississippi Gorge Regional Park | 3.6 |
| Minnehaha Regional Park | 2.8 |
| Minnehaha Parkway Regional Trail | 2.5 |
| Nokomis-Hiawatha Regional Park | 2.3 |
| Hyland-Bush-Anderson Park | 2 |
| Elm Creek Park Reserve | 1.7 |
| Lake Links Regional Trail | 1.3 |
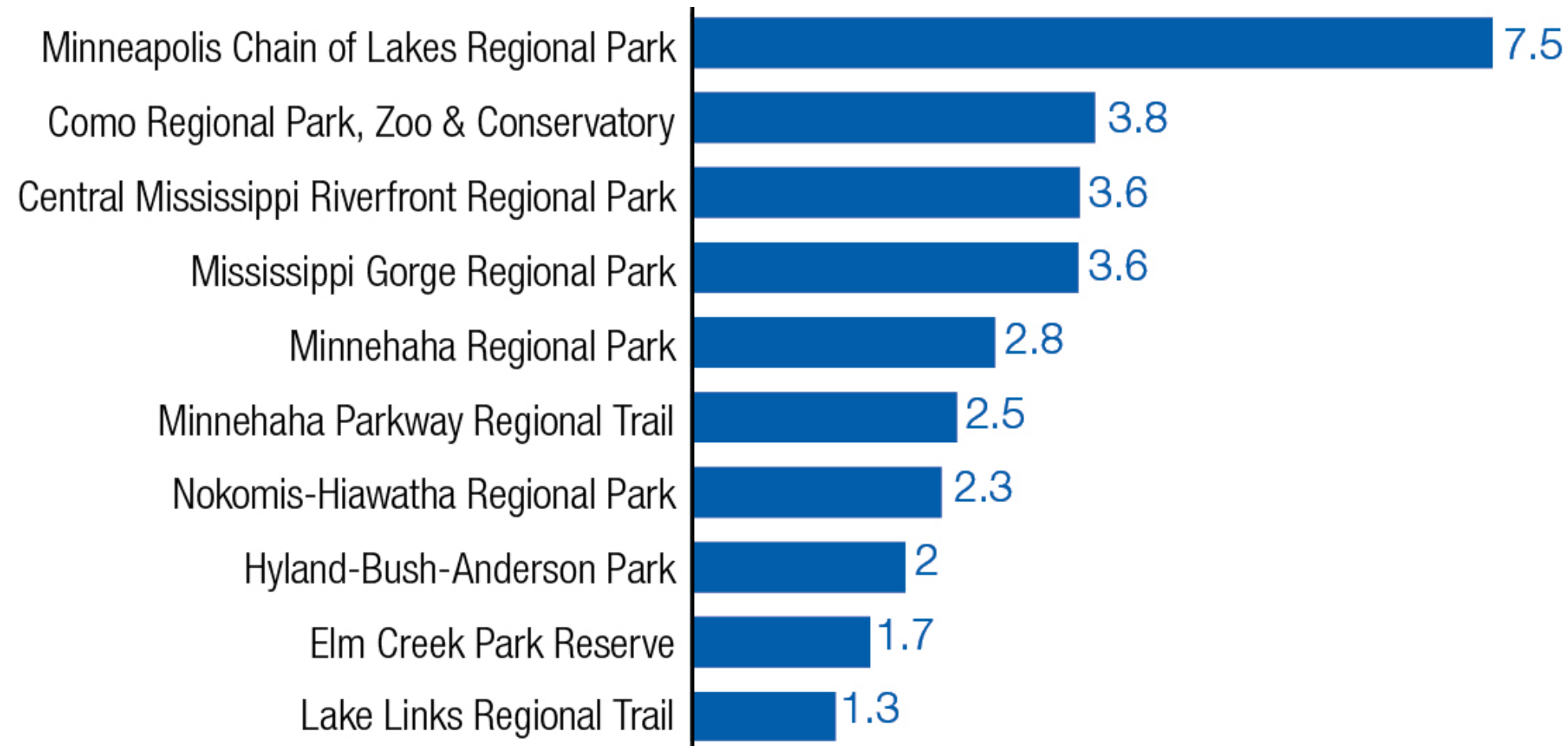
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**THANK YOU**

**Darcie Vandegrift, PhD**

Principal Researcher
darcie.vandegrift@metc.state.mn.us