

# Information Item

Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission



Meeting Date: May 4, 2023

## Topic

Regional Parks and Trails System Historical Cultural Study Update

<b>District(s), Member(s):</b>	All
<b>Policy/Legal Reference:</b>	2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan, Chapter 9
<b>Staff Prepared/Presented:</b>	Jessica Lee, Senior Parks Planner (651-602-1621); Amanda Lovelee, Parks Ambassador (651-602-1375)
<b>Division/Department:</b>	Community Development

### Proposed Action

Information item; no action is proposed at this time.

### Background

The Regional Parks System Historical Cultural Study project began in Spring 2021 with a kick-off meeting between Council staff and Regional Park Implementing Agency leaders. Working together in partnership, this study seeks to establish a baseline understanding of the formation of the Regional Parks System. More importantly, the study focuses on highlighting the impacts of past inequitable practices and how these practices resulted in current day inequities within the system. This project will strive to find ways to acknowledge our past with a goal of building a more inclusive system moving forward.

The Council hired two consultants working together for this project: Hess, Roise and Company and Zan Associates. Hess, Roise is leading the historical research component of the project, while Zan has developed an integrated engagement approach for the project, with the goal of informing and deepening the historical research. Together they will weave together the stories shared and the history learned to create an interactive teaching tool. At the Commission meeting, Council staff will provide an update on the project and share accomplishments to-date.

### Rationale

The Regional Parks Policy Plan committed the Metropolitan Council to conducting a cultural-historical study that describes and documents the impacts that inequitable policies have had on the development of the Regional Parks System (Chapter 9, Table 9-1, 2020-2023 Workplan for the 2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan).

### Thrive Lens Analysis

The Historical Cultural Study seeks to advance the *Thrive MSP 2040* outcome of equity by informing the Council and Implementing Agencies about how some of the harmful policies of the past helped create the Regional Parks System of today. The development of a more comprehensive history will allow us to better understand past and current day inequities, share lesser-known stories, and build a more equitable regional parks and trails system moving into the

future.

### **Attachments**

- Internal Project Summary – for MPOSC Commissioners, Met Council Members, Council and Agency Staff
- External Project Summary – for advisory groups and focus group members.



# exploring truths

## A Historical-Cultural Study

The Metropolitan Council and park agencies want to create a more inclusive and welcoming Regional Parks and Trails System in the Metro Area.

**By centering the stories and histories of Black, Indigenous, and people of color, this project aims to understand how racism and racist practices have impacted people's experiences today.**

*"History is living, moving and dynamic. It comes alive through stories and experiences shared by people today and tapping into memories and experiences from the past."*



## Project goals

### Learn

About the history of racism and how racist practices have influenced communities' experiences in regional parks.

### Listen

To Black, Indigenous, and people of color about their experiences with parks and trails in the Metro Area, the barriers they've experienced, and how to create a more welcoming and inclusive parks system.

### Do something meaningful

With what's learned. The stories and historical context will aid Met Council and agency staff to create more equitable policies, programming, and planning.

### Build empathy

To cultivate a culture that prioritizes inclusivity and equity in parks planning, programming and policies.

## Project Outcomes

### Teaching Tool

- A visual, interactive website centering people's stories
- A collection of personal stories from BIPOC communities put into historical context
- A timeline of park acquisition and network development dates

## This project asks:

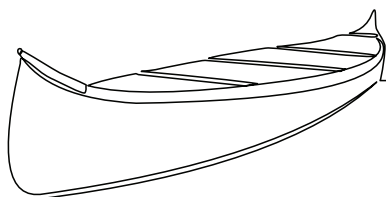
- How has racism and racist practices influenced where parks were built and who had access?
- How has racism and racist practices impacted Black, Indigenous, and people of color's experience interacting with parks? What barriers have they experienced?
- What ideas do people have to make parks and trails more inclusive and welcoming?

## Project Timeline

**Phase 1** Sep 2022-Feb 2023  
Stakeholder engagement and planning

**Phase 2** April 2023-Aug 2023  
Community listening and visioning

**Phase 3** Sep 2023-Dec 2023  
Sharing and reflection



## Regional Map



# exploring truths

Contact Met Council Project Managers: Amanda Lovelee [Amanda.Lovelee@metc.state.mn.us](mailto:Amanda.Lovelee@metc.state.mn.us)  
Jessica Lee [Jessica.Lee@metc.state.mn.us](mailto:Jessica.Lee@metc.state.mn.us)



# exploring truths

How racism influenced the Regional Parks and Trails and impacted the experiences of Black, Indigenous, and people of color

The Metropolitan Council and park agencies want to create a more inclusive and welcoming Parks and Trails System in the Metro Area.

**By centering the stories and histories of Black, Indigenous, and people of color, this project aims to understand how racism and racist practices have impacted people's experiences today.**

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## We Recognize

The fields and forests, lakes and rivers, bluffs and plains that make up the Regional Parks and Trails System are integral parts of American Indian homelands and were the sites of community stories long before Euro-American settlement.

Native American communities lived on and cared for these lands for thousands of years before they were forcibly removed and the land was taken from them. Many Native American people today continue to have a deep connection to these lands.

## Project goals

### Learn

About the history of racism and how racist practices influenced the current-day parks system, policies, and programming.

### Listen

To Black, Indigenous, and people of color about their experiences with parks and trails in the Metro Area, the barriers they've experienced, and how to create a more welcoming and inclusive parks system.

### Do something meaningful

With what's learned. The stories and historical context will aid Met Council and agency staff to create more equitable policies, programming, and planning.

### Build empathy

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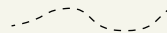
## Regional Parks Partners

- Anoka County Parks
- City of Bloomington Parks
- Carver County Parks
- Dakota County Parks
- Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board
- Three Rivers Park District
- Ramsey County Parks and Recreation
- City of St. Paul Parks and Recreation
- Scott County
- Washington County Parks

## The Regional Parks and Trails:



56 regional parks and park reserves on more than 54,000 acres



400 miles of interconnected trails



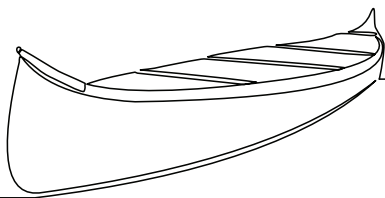
8 special recreation features, such as Como Park Zoo & Conservatory and Gale Woods Farm

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