

METROPOLITAN COUNCIL

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DATE: January 24, 2013

TO: Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission

FROM: Jan Youngquist, AICP; Planning Analyst—Regional Parks & Natural Resources
(651) 602-1029

SUBJECT: (2013-xxx) Kingswood Special Recreation Feature Proposal—Amendment to the
2030 Regional Parks Policy Plan

INTRODUCTION:

The *2030 Regional Parks Policy Plan (Policy Plan)* was originally adopted by the Metropolitan Council in June 2005. As required by State Statute, the Metropolitan Council updated the *2030 Regional Parks Policy Plan* in 2010. Additionally, amendments to the Policy Plan were approved in 2006 and 2012. The next comprehensive review and update of the Policy Plan is anticipated to occur in 2014-2015.

Three Rivers Park District has proposed an amendment to the *2030 Regional Parks Policy Plan* for Metropolitan Council consideration. Three Rivers Park District has entered into an agreement with the Minnesota Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church to purchase the former Camp Kingswood in Minnetrista and is proposing to develop it as a special recreation feature. Three Rivers Park District has requested that the Metropolitan Council consider adding the proposed Kingswood Special Recreation Feature to the regional parks system as an amendment to the Policy Plan. Since the property is currently for sale, waiting for the 2014-2015 update to the Policy Plan to consider adding Kingswood Special Recreation Feature to the regional parks system is not feasible and may result in a lost opportunity to acquire the property.

AUTHORITY TO REVIEW:

Minnesota Statute 473.147, Subdivision 1, requires that the Metropolitan Council, after consultation with the Parks and Open Space Commission, municipalities, park districts and counties in the metropolitan area, and after appropriate public hearings, prepare and adopt a long-range system policy plan for regional recreation open space as part of the council's Metropolitan Development Guide (i.e., the *2030 Regional Development Framework*).

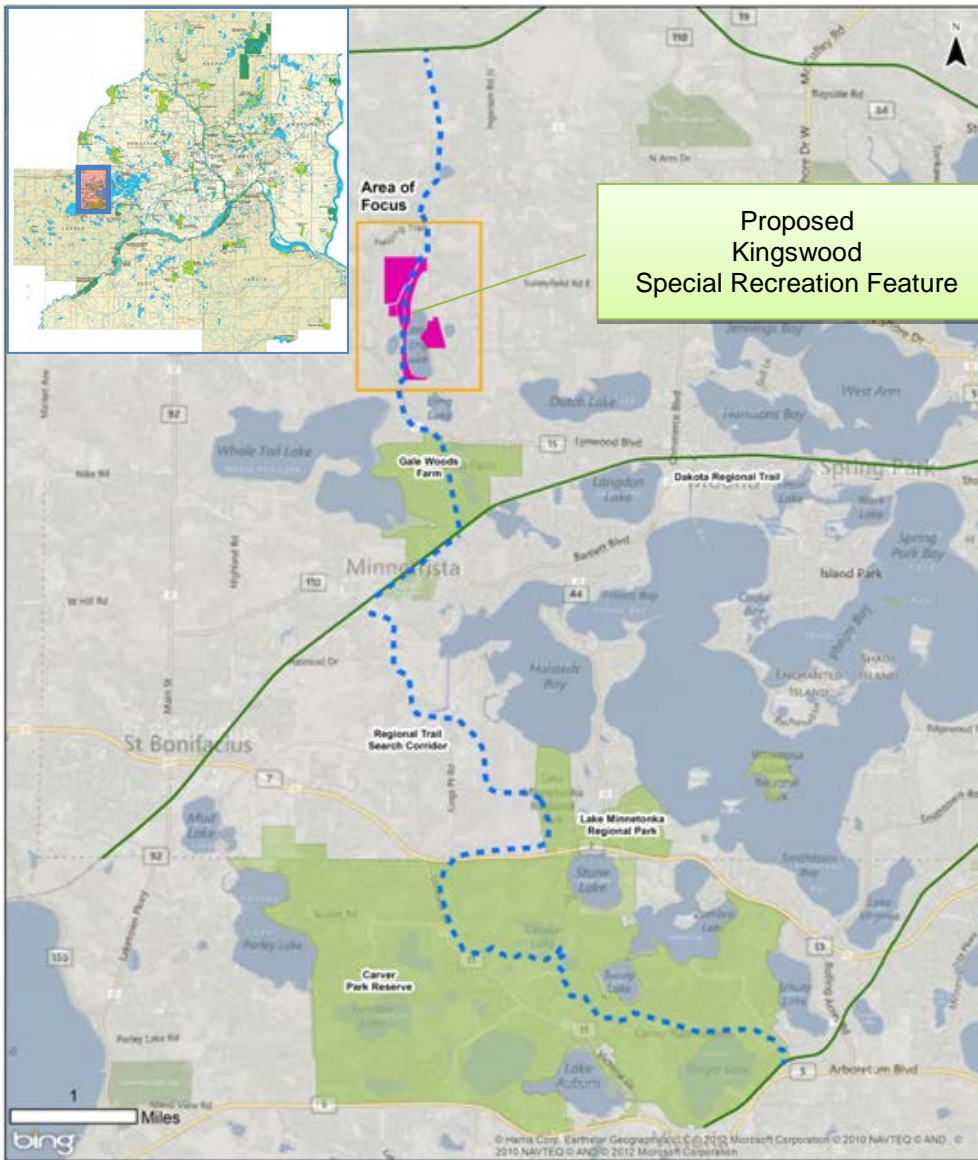
The Statute also requires that the policy plan identify generally the areas which should be acquired by a public agency to provide a system of regional recreation open space comprising park district, county and municipal facilities which, together with state facilities, reasonably will meet the outdoor recreation needs of the people of the metropolitan area.

Minnesota Statute 473.147, Subdivision 2, indicates that an amendment to the policy plan may be proposed by the Council or the parks and open space commission. Before adopting the policy plan, the Council shall submit the proposed plan to the parks and open space commission for its review and the commission shall report its comments to the Council within 60 days. The Council is required to hold a public hearing on the proposed policy plan.

BACKGROUND:

The former Camp Kingswood is located on Little Long Lake in Minnetrista, as shown in **Figure 1**. Camp Kingswood was operated by the Minnesota Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church (Minnesota Conference) for 65 years. Camp Kingswood offered a faith-based camp which included cabins, lodges, a dining hall, outdoor amphitheater, a ropes course and family campsites. In 2012, the Minnesota Conference decided to close the camp and contacted Three Rivers Park District regarding the potential sale of the property. After several months of internal discussions and subsequent negotiations with the Minnesota Conference, Three Rivers Park District entered into a purchase agreement for Camp Kingswood in December 2012.

FIGURE 1: Camp Kingswood Location Map



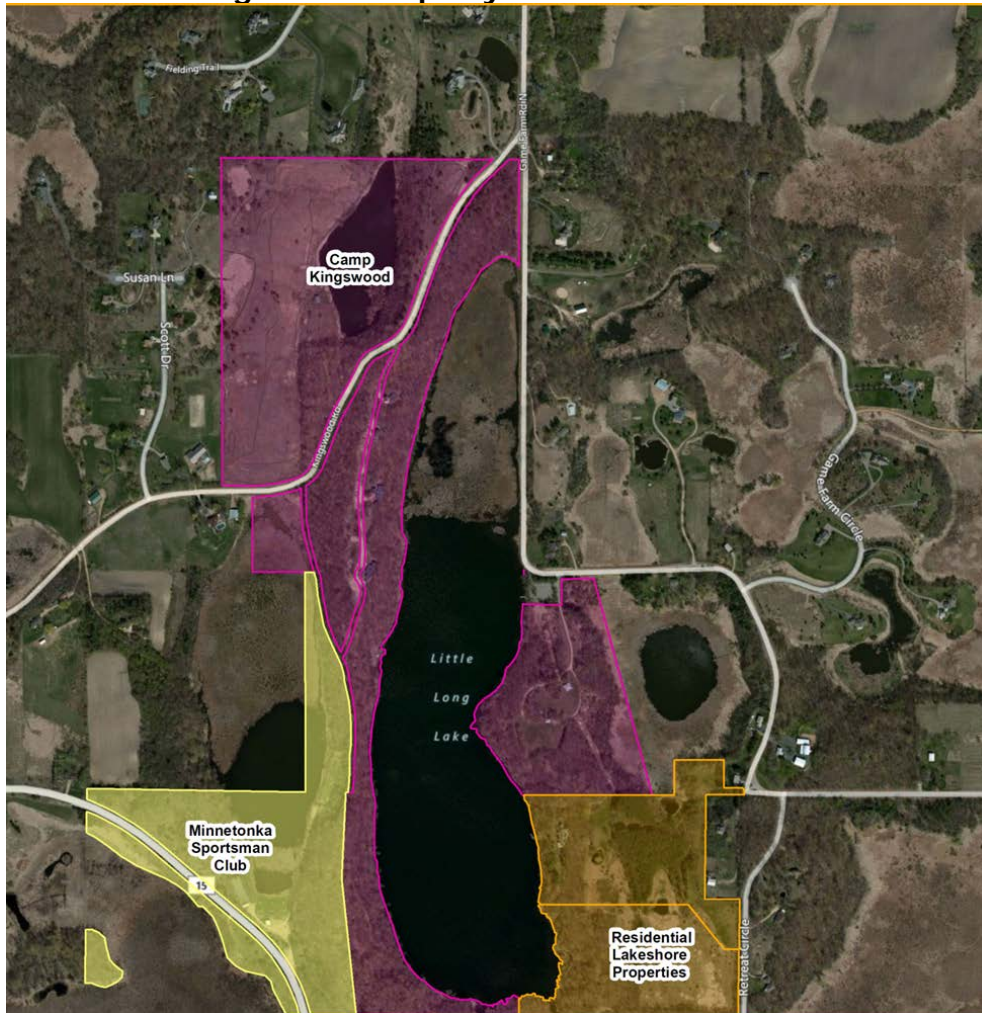
- Camp Kingswood
- - - Regional Trail Search Corridor
- Existing Regional/State Trail
- Park Boundary

Context Map



The Kingswood property is 106 acres in size and accounts for approximately 70 percent of the shoreline of Little Long Lake, with the remainder of the shoreline comprised of two large single family residential lots, as shown in **Figure 2**. In addition to the undeveloped shoreline, the property contains several unique high quality natural resources, including intact maple-basswood forest covering a glacial esker along the western shore, oak woodland along the eastern shore and a 25 acre managed prairie and rare tamarack bog in the northwest portion of the site.

FIGURE 2: Kingswood Property



Little Long Lake is one of the most pristine lakes in the metropolitan region. The Metropolitan Council began a comprehensive lake water quality monitoring program for the Twin Cities metropolitan area in 1980 to enable cities, counties, and watershed management organizations to make better informed lake management decisions. To date, the quality of 369 different lakes has been evaluated and tracked through the 2011 April-to-October monitoring season. Little Long Lake has consistently ranked within the upper 10th percentile of all metropolitan area lakes in terms of water quality characteristics.

The geology of the Kingswood property created a small and well-contained watershed of approximately 150 acres, which is one of the primary reasons for the excellent water quality of Little Long Lake. A tall and steep esker with slopes as much as 25 to 35 percent is located along the west side of the lake. The hills and slopes in the area resulted in limited farming and clearing of forested lands within the watershed, which benefits the water quality of the lake and has preserved historical vegetation.

Vegetation in the area prior to European settlement was characterized by Big Woods, which is scientifically defined as a mixed deciduous hardwood forest. Much of the Big Woods in Minnesota was cleared for lumber and farming; less than two percent of the Big Woods remain in the Minnesota landscape. The Kingswood property includes a large patch of Big Woods on the west side of the lake. The sugar maple and basswood Big Woods is contiguous to an adjacent native vegetation complex that includes tamarack swamp and cattail sedge marsh.

The vegetation surrounding Little Long Lake is one of the most diverse emergent communities found in Hennepin County. While hybrid cattail is present, it is not monotypic as it is elsewhere. Sedges and wetland wild flowers are common among the cattails. Wild rice grows on the lake margins when water levels are high. Additionally, the diversity of plant species attracts songbirds in summer and seed eating birds in fall.

In 2003, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources and Metropolitan Council conducted a landscape scale assessment of the metropolitan area to identify ecologically significant terrestrial and wetland areas. The area including and surrounding the Kingswood property was designated a Regionally Significant Ecological Area of outstanding quality.

Proposed Special Recreation Feature

Three Rivers Park District is proposing to create the Kingswood Special Recreation Feature (SRF) on the site and has requested that the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission and the Metropolitan Council consider amending the *2030 Regional Parks Policy Plan* to add the proposed Kingswood Special Recreation Feature to the regional parks system. (See **Appendix A**, Request Letter from Jonathan Vlaming, Three Rivers Park District)

The long range vision of Kingswood SRF is to:

Promote environmental stewardship of Kingswood SRF's high-quality natural resources through instructor-led education and recreation programs focusing on public involvement in the enjoyment, study and management of the resource.

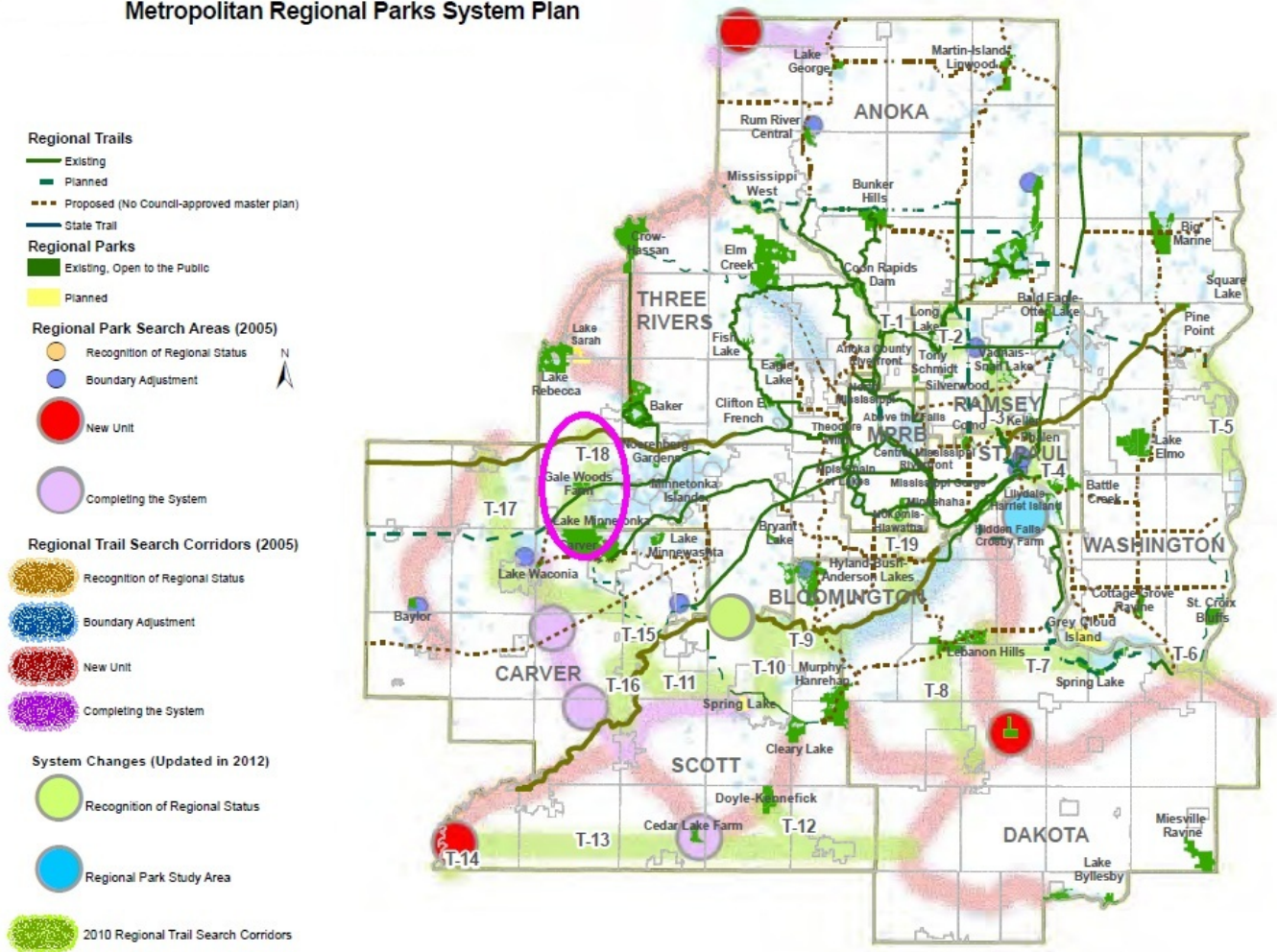
Kingswood SRF will include a service learning program that will educate and involve the public by using volunteer groups for projects that help monitor, manage and enhance the unique natural resources of the park. Qualified Three Rivers educators will lead service learning projects focusing on shoreline improvement, water quality studies, invasive species management, forest resources management, native species protection and aquatic species enhancements.

The special recreation feature will include a Water Resources Learning Center to provide hands-on learning opportunities regarding water resources and watershed management. Currently, there are no park-based environmental learning centers dedicated to water resources in the metropolitan area, making the programming at Kingswood SRF unique. Three Rivers Park District hopes that the facility will positively impact the region's water resources and will help advocate for sustainable lake management through demonstration, engagement and science.

In addition to the special recreation feature, the Kingswood property would also include a regional trail. The *2030 Regional Parks Policy Plan* identifies the Minnetrista Regional Trail Search Corridor, which will connect the Luce Line State Trail, Gale Woods Farm Special Recreation Feature, the Dakota Rail Regional Trail, Lake Minnetonka Regional Park, Carver Park Reserve and the Lake Minnetonka LRT Regional Trail as it travels through Independence, Minnetrista and Victoria. The regional trail search corridor is labeled "T-18" and circled in

pink on **Figure 3**. The Kingswood property will provide a critical link for the proposed regional trail.

FIGURE 3: Minnetrista Regional Trail Search Corridor
Metropolitan Regional Parks System Plan



ANALYSIS:

Special Recreation Features

The *2030 Regional Parks Policy Plan* outlines the following criteria for special recreation features. Staff analysis is *italicized*.

Siting and Acquisition Strategy 4: Special recreation facilities must enhance services and facilities already offered, not compete with or duplicate them.

To qualify for regional status, a proposed special recreation feature must meet the following criteria:

- 1. Be unique and complement or enhance the services already offered by the regional parks system.**

The 2030 Regional Parks Policy Plan places priority on land with high-quality natural resources and/or access to water for inclusion in the regional parks system. The Kingswood property

contains unique high-quality natural resources and provides access to one of the most pristine lakes in the metropolitan area. The vision of Kingswood SRF to promote environmental stewardship by educating and involving the public in the management of these natural resources is unique and complements other environmental education programs provided at nature centers within the regional parks system.

2. Be capable of functioning within the existing management structure of the regional parks system.

Three Rivers Park District is one of the ten regional park implementing agencies as defined in the 2030 Regional Parks Policy Plan. The Park District would own and operate Kingswood SRF; therefore the special recreation feature would function within the existing management structure of the regional parks system.

3. Not duplicate or complete with recreation facilities adequately provided by the public or private sector.

The concept of a park with a service learning center focusing on water quality and water resources management is unique in the metropolitan area; therefore, Kingswood SRF would not duplicate or compete with other recreation facilities.

4. Not drain funds from other facilities in the system either because they have an existing or committed financial base or because a prior agreement for a public subsidy has been reached that is in the public's interest.

Kingswood SRF will not drain funds from other facilities. If the Metropolitan Council amends the 2030 Regional Parks Policy Plan to add Kingswood SRF to the regional parks system and approves a master plan for the park, Three Rivers Park District plans to seek a grant from the Land Acquisition Opportunity Fund to purchase the property. Grants from the Land Acquisition Opportunity Fund are not competitive and are awarded on a first-come, first-served basis. Three Rivers Park District maintains an acquisition-matching program, with money set aside each year to fund the required local match associated with the Land Acquisition Opportunity Fund program. After the Metropolitan Council approves a master plan for the park, Three Rivers Park District will be eligible for development funds through its allocated portion of the Regional Parks Capital Improvement Program (CIP).

5. Demonstrate the existence or potential for drawing a sizable number of people from throughout the metropolitan area.

Three Rivers Park District expects that the majority of visitors to Kingswood SRF would live in Hennepin, Carver, Scott and Ramsey counties, based on population density and the distance visitors are willing to travel to a regional park. Estimates of future use are based on the current use of other special recreation features within the regional parks system. Of the seven special recreation features, Three Rivers indicates that Kingswood SRF is most comparable to Square Lake, which offers similar outstanding quality water in a semi-rural setting; and to Gale Woods Farm, which offers instructor-led programs in a semi-rural area. Based on these comparisons, Three Rivers estimates that Kingswood SRF would host 55,000 to 100,000 annual visits.

Information submitted by Three Rivers Park District also estimates that Minnetrista Regional Trail, which is proposed to travel through the Kingswood SRF, would generate approximately 138,000 annual visits.

6. Be approved through the master plan process.

Three Rivers Park District is in the process of preparing an acquisition master plan for the Kingswood SRF, which they anticipate submitting to the Metropolitan Council for review in Spring 2013. Approval of the master plan would entitle Three Rivers Park District to seek regional parks funding for acquisition of Camp Kingswood. Three Rivers intends to

subsequently prepare a comprehensive development master plan for Metropolitan Council approval after purchasing the property.

Amending the Policy Plan

The *2030 Regional Parks Policy Plan* states that the Metropolitan Council will amend the Policy Plan only if a substantial revision is proposed. A substantial revision is defined as (1) a proposed revision that is intended to or could have the effect of changing the direction or intent of adopted Council policy; (2) addition or deletion of a policy; or (3) addition or deletion of a system element. A Council decision to amend the plan will be preceded by a finding that a substantial revision is proposed.

The request from Three Rivers Park District to consider adding the proposed Kingswood Special Recreation Feature to the regional parks system is considered a substantial revision to the *2030 Regional Parks Policy Plan* because it consists of the addition of a system element.

The proposed changes to specific pages of the 2030 Regional Parks Policy Plan to add the proposed Kingswood Special Recreation Feature to the regional parks system are shown in **Appendix B**. Proposed text deletions are shown in red with a strike-through; proposed additions are highlighted in yellow.

PUBLIC HEARING PROCESS/SCHEDULE:

State Statute requires the Council to hold a public hearing to amend its *Regional Parks Policy Plan*. The Council's procedures regarding public hearings require the Council to establish a public hearing date 45 days prior to holding the public hearing. The public input period remains open for 10 calendar days following the hearing. Based on this process and the schedule of Community Development Committee and Metropolitan Council meetings, a public hearing could be scheduled for Monday, April 15, 2013, as part of the Community Development Committee meeting. The hearing record would remain open 10 calendar days (until 4:30 pm April 25, 2013). A hearing report, which summarizes the testimony and recommends action, would be considered by the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission on May 7; by the Community Development Committee on May 20; and by the Metropolitan Council on June 12, 2013.

REVIEW BY OTHER COUNCIL DIVISIONS:

Transportation Planning (Ann Braden 651-602-1705) – No comments.

Environmental Services – Sewers (Roger Janzig 651-602-1119) This Regional Parks Policy Plan Amendment does not propose regional wastewater service; and therefore, will not have an impact on the Metropolitan Disposal System.

Environmental Services – Water Supply (Lanya Ross 651-602-1803) A Council analysis to evaluate the relationship between surface waters and the regional groundwater system suggest that Little Long Lake in Minnetrista is likely to be connected to the regional groundwater flow system. The subsurface geology and water table suggest that groundwater flows into and out of the lake, making it relatively vulnerable to increased groundwater pumping in the area. Protecting and enhancing the quality of water in Little Long Lake will also protect and enhance the region's groundwater, the source of drinking water for all Minnetrista residents and visitors.

Community Development – Environment and Surface Water Management (Jim Larsen 651-602-1159) The Metropolitan Council began a comprehensive lake water quality monitoring program for the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area in 1980 to enable cities, counties, and watershed management organizations to make better-informed lake management decisions. Data from this program are frequently used to determine possible trends in in-lake water quality, estimate expected ranges in water quality of unmonitored lakes, examine intra- and inter-regional differences, and investigate the relationships between landscape and water quality.

To date, the quality of 369 different lakes has been evaluated and tracked through the 2011 April-to-October monitoring season. Little Long Lake has consistently ranked within the upper 10 percentile of all Twin Cities Metropolitan Area lakes in terms of water quality characteristics in the program. As is typical of a significant portion of the TCMA's "above-average" lakes, Little Long Lake has larger than average maximum and mean depths, and a relatively small contributing watershed when compared to its surface area.

The Park District's plan to designate this proposed facility as a Special Recreation Feature for use in a Service Learning role where District educators will work with other organizations to provide hands-on learning opportunities on water resources and watershed management will be of significant value to the Council and the region. Staff concurs with the Park District's determination that this proposed facility will heighten their ability to positively impact the region's knowledge and understanding of its water resources, and advocate for sustainable lake management through the opportunities it will offer through on-site demonstration, engagement, and science education.

CONCLUSIONS:

1. The proposed Kingswood Special Recreation Feature meets the criteria outlined in the *2030 Regional Parks Policy Plan* for special recreation features. The site contains unique high quality natural resources which would be protected as part of the park. The concept of developing a Water Resources Learning Center at Kingswood will help maintain the water quality of Little Long Lake and will positively impact the region's knowledge of its water resources. Therefore, Kingswood Special Recreation Feature should be considered for addition to the regional parks system.
2. The request from Three Rivers Park District to consider adding the proposed Kingswood Special Recreation Feature to the regional parks system constitutes a substantial revision and requires an amendment to the *2030 Regional Parks Policy Plan*. The Council must hold a public hearing for an amendment to the *2030 Regional Parks Policy Plan*. The public hearing date can be scheduled for Monday, April 15, 2013.
3. Approval of this amendment to the *2030 Regional Parks Policy Plan* would acknowledge the proposed Kingswood Special Recreation Feature as part of the regional parks system. Council approval of a master plan for the special recreation feature would be necessary in order for regional parks funding to be used for acquisition and development.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the Metropolitan Council:

1. Conduct a public hearing on April 15, 2013 as part of its Community Development Committee meeting regarding amending the *2030 Regional Parks Policy Plan* to recognize the proposed Kingswood Special Recreation Feature as a component of the regional parks system. The hearing record shall remain open until 4:30 p.m., Thursday, April 25, 2013.
2. Direct staff to publish public hearing notices and distribute copies of the proposed amendments to the *2030 Regional Parks Policy Plan* under the Council's administrative procedure for public hearings.

APPENDIX A—Request Letter from Jonathan Vlaming, Three Rivers Park District



Three Rivers
Park District
Board of
Commissioners

January 14, 2013

Sara Wyatt
District 1

Jan Youngquist
Regional Parks and Natural Resources Unit
Metropolitan Council
390 North Robert Street
St. Paul, MN 55101

Marilynn Corcoran,
District 2

RE: Request to amend the 2030 Regional Parks Policy Plan to include a proposed Kingswood Special Recreation Feature located in the City of Minnetrista, Hennepin County, Minnesota.

Joan Peters
District 3

Dear Jan:

Three Rivers Park District respectfully requests the Metropolitan Council to amend the system plan of the 2030 Regional Parks Policy Plan to include and recognize the Kingswood property on Little Long Lake as a proposed Special Recreation Feature of the Metropolitan Regional Parks System.

Dale Woodbeck,
Vice Chair
District 4

The property is located in the City of Minnetrista, Hennepin County, Minnesota (Reference Map 1). An acquisition Master Plan for Kingswood Special Recreation Feature (Kingswood SRF) is currently under development. Kingswood SRF acquisition will focus on the 106-acre Camp Kingswood property. The property accounts for nearly all of the privately owned land around Little Long Lake, and has land on both the west and east sides of the lake (Reference Map 2). The property provides the land resources required to meet the vision of Kingswood SRF. At this time, no additional land resources are expected to be included in the Acquisition Master Plan.

John Gibbs
District 5

The Kingswood property offers a unique natural resource landscape that protects the excellent water quality of Little Long Lake, rare geological features, and the associated rare types of vegetation that flourish in this type of landscape. As a proposed Special Recreation Feature, the property offers a unique programming-based education opportunity that would directly involve the public in managing and improving the lake and landscape resources.

Larry Blackstad, Chair
Appointed

Barbara Kinsey
Appointed

Kingswood Natural Resources:

Cris Gears
Superintendent

Little Long Lake: This lake has long been recognized by Hennepin County Environmental Services, the Metropolitan Council and the State of Minnesota as an environmental gem due to its superb water quality. Little Long Lake possesses an average summer water clarity exceeding 4 meters and summertime phosphorous concentrations between 10 and 15 ug/l, which are significantly better than any other lake within the current Three Rivers Park District system. It is on par with Square Lake in Washington County - another Regional Special Recreation Feature. The Metropolitan Council has given water quality in Little Long Lake a grade of "A" for virtually every year for which data is available and has identified it as a Priority Lake because of its outstanding water clarity.

Administrative Center, 3000 Xenium Lane North, Plymouth, MN 55441-1299

Geology: Camp Kingswood is geologically comprised of the Superior and Des Moines Lobes of the Wisconsin Age. Unusual to western Hennepin County, a small band of the Superior Lobe - generally the width of the Kingswood SRF property in the form of a tall and steep esker- comprises much of the west side of Little Long Lake. The Des Moines Lobe comprises the east side of the property and extends to much of the surrounding context within the City of Minnetrista. Because of its geologic history, the land within the SRF exhibits abrupt peaks and sharply dropping hills and ridges - as much as 25 to 35 percent along the north/south esker along the west side of Little Long Lake. The geology of the area is one of the primary reasons for the excellent water quality of Little Long Lake. The esker and hills have created a well-contained watershed of about 150 acres at the interface of Minnehaha Creek and Pioneer/Sarah Creek Watersheds. In addition, the hills and slopes limited farming and clearing of forested areas within the watershed, which benefits the lake quality and has preserved historical vegetation remnants.



Esker running along the west side of the lake



Slope from Esker to the lake

Vegetation: The pre-European settlement vegetation (pre-1800s) of the Kingswood SRF property was characterized by Big Woods, defined scientifically as a mixed deciduous hardwood forest (oak, maple, basswood and hickory). Much of Minnesota’s Big Woods was cleared to encourage farming and drive the lumber industry. By the 1930s, farmers had converted most of the Big Woods to cropland leaving a patchwork of widely scattered wood lots. Today, less than 2 percent of the Big Woods remain within the Minnesota landscape.

The Kingswood SRF property includes a sizable patch of Big Woods, extending south along the west side of Little Long Lake. This sugar maple and basswood Big Woods patch is contiguous with an adjacent native vegetation complex to the south and southeast that includes tamarack swamp and cattail sedge marsh.



The emergent vegetation surrounding the Little Long Lake is one of the most diverse emergent communities found in Hennepin County. While hybrid cattail is present, it is not monotypic as it is elsewhere. Sedges and wetland wild flowers are common amongst the cattails. Wild rice grows on the lake margins when water levels are high. The diversity of plant species attracts a number of songbirds in summer and seed-eating birds in fall.

The northwest corner of the property has been undergoing prairie restoration efforts. The vegetation composition of the managed prairie is a mix of both exotic species and native grasses and forbs.

The Vision and Need for Kingswood Special Recreation Feature

The long-range vision of Kingswood SRF is:

Promote environmental stewardship of Kingswood SRF's high quality natural resources through instructor-led education and recreation programs focusing on public involvement in the enjoyment, study, and management of the resource.

As a designated regional Special Recreation Feature, Kingswood will serve a unique role within the regional park system through a Service Learning program that focuses on educating and involving the public in the direct management of the park's natural resources.

For Kingswood, "Service Learning" is defined as the use of volunteer groups for projects that help monitor, manage and enhance the unique natural resources of the park. Qualified Three Rivers educators will lead service learning projects focusing on shoreline improvement, water quality studies, invasive species management, forest resources management, native species protection, and aquatic species enhancements.

The Vision for Kingswood SRF is driven by two identified needs, discussed below, couple with the opportunity to address those needs in a high-quality natural resources setting.

The Importance of Clean Water

The importance and impact of water quality and aquatic invasive species is a growing local, state, nation, and even global phenomena. All life and economies depends on water, particularly clean water, and it is at risk of continued degradation due to development, poor business (i.e. agricultural) practices, and the introduction and spread of invasive species.

Currently, there are no park-based environmental learning centers dedicated to educating about water resources in-depth within the metropolitan area. Kingswood SRF would provide a Water Resources Learning Center, in conjunction with a strong programmatic element, to provide hands-on learning opportunities on water resources and watershed management. This facility would serve a wide variety of user groups from school groups to girl scouts to elected officials to individuals.

The pristine condition of the lake, amount of public access points, amount of the lake's watershed within the property's boundary, and general undeveloped nature of the watershed create an ideal situation for long-term preservation and protection of the resource. There are no comparable situations within the Twin Cities area. Locating the Water Resource Learning Center on a lake with poor water quality or in which the Park District does not have sufficient control of the watershed, will not yield the same results and will not provide the desired user experience.

This facility will heighten the Park District's ability to positively impact the region's water resources and advocate for sustainable lake management through demonstration, engagement, and science. In addition, this facility and its proposed programming will position the Park District to aggressively work with other organizations to expand water resource protection within and beyond the property.

The Rise of Volunteerism

The **Corporation for National and Community Service** is a federal agency that engages four million Americans in service through Senior Corps, AmeriCorps, and the Social Innovation Fund programs. Each year this organization tracks and publishes a report on volunteerism trends. Their 2012 Report on Volunteerism indicates that:

- Americans are increasing their commitment to volunteering and civic engagement and volunteers.
- In 2011, the number of volunteers **reached its highest level in five years**.
- Minnesota ranks 4th in the nation in volunteerism, with 38 percent of adults volunteering.

Within Minnesota, the **Minnesota Association for Volunteer Administration** (MAVA) also tracks trends. Trends on "Who is volunteering" identified by MAVA include:

- The traditional core of stable retired volunteers is aging and Baby-Boomers are seeking different volunteer experiences.
- Students (and non-students) are seeking experience from internships.
- Job seekers are volunteering to gain employability.
- Corporate volunteering is on the rise.
- Volunteers from immigrant communities are increasing.
- Millennials are volunteering in record breaking numbers.

Three Rivers has a very large and active volunteer corps of 1,800 individuals. While much of this base is composed of Baby-Boomers, there has been a significant rise in youth volunteerism (the Millennials), and in particular, in service learning projects as part of a formal school (high school and college) curriculum. Over the last five years, integrated service/education opportunities at Three Rivers have increased over 30 percent.

In addition to these volunteerism trends, leisure research literature has long identified the looming Baby-Boom retiree population as a source for significant demand for environmental education programs and for environmental service programs.

The demand for volunteerism is growing significantly on the national, state and local levels, and has documented significant growth at Three Rivers as well. As envisioned, Kingswood SRF is well positioned to serve the growing demand for more volunteerism opportunities.

Qualifying as a Special Recreation Feature

The Metropolitan Council's **2030 Regional Parks Policy Plan's Siting and Acquisition Strategy 4** provides guidance on the qualifications for inclusion of a park unit in the regional parks system as a Special Recreation Feature (SRF). In general, a proposed SRF must enhance services and facilities already offered, not compete with or duplicate them.

Specifically, special recreation facilities proposed for inclusion in the regional parks system must:

- 1. Be unique and complement or enhance the services already offered by the regional system.**

The natural resource base of Kingswood SRF is unique within the metropolitan area. The property protects the shoreline of one of the most pristine lakes within the metropolitan area, constitutes the majority of land within the watershed of that lake, contains a glacier esker with a healthy Big Woods ecosystem, and provides

one of the most diverse emergent vegetation communities found in Hennepin County.

Three Rivers is nationally recognized for its environmental education programs, natural resources management and volunteer programs. Three Rivers operates five nature centers and four Special Recreation Features. Special Recreation Features focus in-depth on an important environmental education aspect, such as sustainable farming at Gale Woods, and arts and the environment at Silverwood.

As envisioned, Kingswood SRF would enhance environmental education services to the entire metropolitan area by providing an on-site water resources learning center that educates and engages volunteers through service learning opportunities.

Kingswood SRF both compliments and enhances environmental education

2. Be capable of functioning within the existing management structure of the regional parks system.

Three Rivers Park District is one of the ten regional park implementing agencies, and would own and operate the Kingswood SRF. Three Rivers has Department of Natural Resources Management, a Department of Outdoor Education, professional staff for each, and an active and successful Volunteer program as well.

Three Rivers is in the process of finalizing an Acquisition Master Plan for the park in accordance with the Metropolitan Council's 2030 Regional Parks Policy Plan requirements. Prior to any significant development with the park, Three Rivers would seek Metropolitan Council approval of the more comprehensive Development Master Plan in accordance with Council requirements.

3. Not duplicate or compete with recreation facilities adequately provided by the public or private sector.

There are no similar public or private parks specializing in educating the public through hands-on learning about water quality and water resources management within the metropolitan area.

The envisioned Water Resources Learning Center would focus on all things 'water' as they relate to Little Long Lake, its watershed, and the greater aquatic ecosystem. Educational displays and programs could include opportunities to sample and monitor water quality, gain a greater understanding of the water cycle and its impact on water quality, learn about aquatic invasive species and their detrimental impacts on the region's water bodies and aquatic wildlife, and obtain information on how to improve water quality at the individual level.

4. Not drain funds from other facilities in the system either because they have an existing or committed financial base or because a prior agreement for a public subsidy has been reached that is in the public's interest.

Kingswood SRF will not "drain" funds from other facilities in the system. However, the addition of a new park to the system does have inherent costs. Acquisition for Kingswood SRF, as proposed, would be financed in part through the Metropolitan Council's Acquisition Opportunity Fund, which maintains healthy funding levels with significant amounts of funding available for this and many other acquisitions. Three Rivers maintains an acquisition-matching program, with money set aside each year to fund the full 25 percent local match associated with the Council's acquisition

opportunity fund program. Acquisition of Kingswood would use money that has been designated for acquisition of regional system park lands.

Resource management costs associated with Kingswood SRF would largely be mitigated by the use of volunteer labor through the proposed service learning structure of the SRF. Operational costs of Kingswood are estimated at \$120,000 to \$190,000 each year, when fully developed. Three Rivers employs a Cost-Recovery model that requires operational costs for education-based programs to be funded at approximately 50 percent through user fees. For 2013, the Operating Budget of Three Rivers is approximately \$34 million. The total impact in the budget for Kingswood is estimated at 0.1 to 0.3 percent of total budget. That amount may be covered through increased revenues, or through shifting of existing resources within Three Rivers.

There are no prior agreements for funding associated with Kingswood SRF.

5. Demonstrate the existence or potential for drawing a sizable number of people from throughout the metropolitan area.

Service Area

By definition, Special Recreation Features are to serve the entire seven-county metropolitan area. As proposed, Kingswood SRF will offer a unique setting and recreational/educational component to metro residents. Based on population density, and the effects of distance as a barrier to participation, the majority of visitors are expected to live within Hennepin, Carver, Scott and Ramsey Counties.

Estimating future use of Kingswood SRF

Forecasting demand for special recreation features provides a unique challenge. The Metropolitan Council requires that Special Recreation Features do *"not duplicate or compete with recreation facilities adequately provided by the public or private sector"*. Consequently, since what is proposed is, by definition, unique, comparative model data for projecting use is very limited.

One approach for estimating demand is to examine current use at the Metro system's seven existing Special Recreation features. There are currently seven SRFs within the system (see table). Of those seven, Square Lake and Gale Woods Farm are the most comparable to Kingswood, with Square Lake offering similar outstanding water quality in a semi-rural area, and Gale Woods offering instructor-led programs in a semi-rural area. Using this approach, when fully developed, Kingswood SRF should experience between 55,000 to 100,000 visits each year, not including visits associated with the regional trail (see below).

Existing Special Recreation Feature	SRF Focus	Annual Use (2011)
Gale Woods Farm	Farm education	99,300
Noerenberg Gardens	Gardens	55,100
Square Lake	Water clarity	55,100
The Landing	History	Not known
Silverwood Park	Environment and the Arts	266,000
Como Zoo	Zoo	Not applicable
Como Conservatory	Gardens	Not applicable

A second approach would be to examine visitor use of the five nature centers within the Three Rivers' system. On average, each nature center has approximately 30,000 visitors each year. Visits to the adjacent interpretive trails are not tracked on a regular basis, though spot studies conducted by Three Rivers' research staff

have indicated that interpretive trail visits roughly equal program visits at most nature centers. Under this approach, a conservative annual use estimate for Kingswood SRF, when fully developed, would be 45,000 to 60,000 visits.

Additional Use: Regional Trail

A Regional Trail is proposed to travel through Kingswood SRF on the west side of the park. That trail will connect Lake Minnetonka LRT Regional Trail, Carver Park Reserve, Lake Minnetonka Regional Park, Dakota Rail Regional Trail, Gale Woods Farm SRF, Kingswood SRF and the Luce Line Regional Trail. When the regional trail corridor is fully constructed from Luce Line State Trail to Lake Minnetonka LRT Regional Trail, research estimates that it will generate approximately 138,000 annual visits. This number was generated based upon the regional trail's location in rural western Hennepin County, the number and quality of termini, recreational amenities at destinations, greenway aesthetic qualities, and additional looping opportunities to the Dakota Rail and Lake Minnetonka LRT Regional Trails. Judging from experience with the Dakota Rail, this is a conservative use estimate.

Additional Use: Service Learning Campground

Kingswood SRF contains a simple campground with a dozen sites on the east side of the lake. As envisioned, the campground would be primarily used by participants in the service learning on-site programs.

Demand for metro area camping is well documented, with public campgrounds across the seven county metro area being at capacity nearly every weekend in the summer, and often during the weekdays as well.

Assuming a 12-site Service Learning Campground at Kingswood SRF, along with an average camping group size of 2.5 people and an 80 percent occupancy rate over a five-month season, there should be an additional 3,600 visits to Kingswood SRF.

Total forecasted use:

Taken altogether, the projected visitation to Kingswood SRF ranges from 187,000 to 241,000 annual visits.

6. Be approved through the master plan process.

Three Rivers is in the process of developing an Acquisition Master Plan for the park in accordance with the Metropolitan Council's 2030 Regional Parks Policy Plan requirements. That plan will likely be presented to the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission for consideration at their May 2013 meeting. Prior to any significant development with the park, Three Rivers would seek Metropolitan Council approval of the more comprehensive Development Master Plan in accordance with Metropolitan Council requirements.

Time is of the essence

It is understood that the preferred time to submit proposals for new park units would be as part of the planned 2014 update of the Metropolitan Council's Regional Parks Policy Plan. However, the property owner has recently decided to sell their property, creating urgency for acquisition of the land required to meet the vision of the special recreation feature.

At the Three Rivers Board of Commissioners meeting on December 20th, 2012, the Board voted unanimously to enter into a purchase agreement of the Kingswood property (Reference 3). That purchase agreement is contingent upon several factors including: 1) successful inclusion of the Kingswood Special Recreation Feature in the 2030 Regional Parks Policy Plan; 2) Metropolitan

Council approval of the Kingswood Special Recreation Feature Acquisition Master Plan; and 3) Metropolitan Council approval of 75 percent funding of the acquisition and related costs through the Council's Acquisition Opportunity Fund. These contingencies must be met prior to closing on the property.

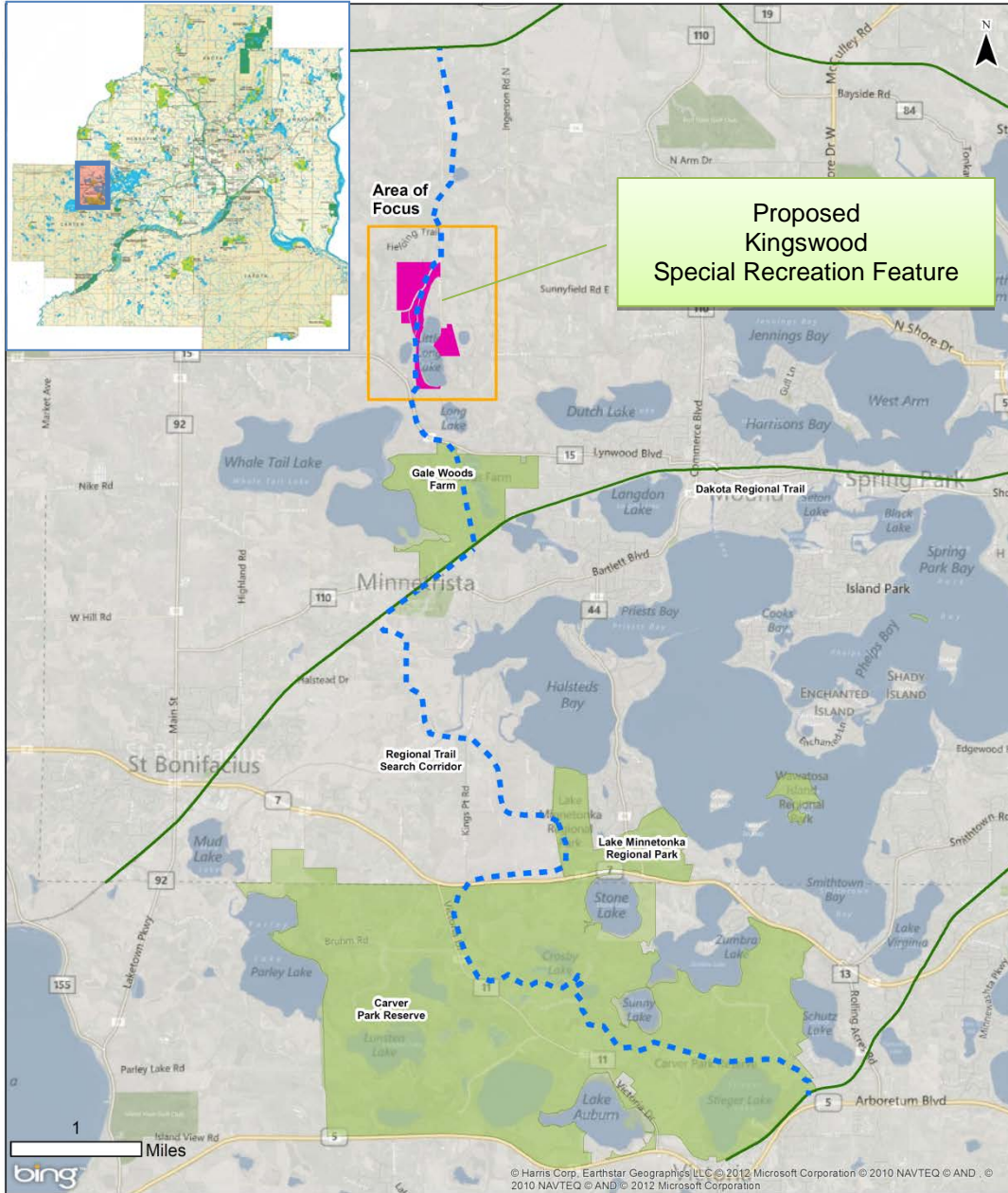
Thank you for your consideration of this request. Please contact me if additional information is needed.

Respectfully,



Jonathan Vlaming
Associate Superintendent
Planning, Design and Technology

Reference Map 1: Location of Little Long Lake, Minnetrista, Minnesota



- Camp Kingswood
- Regional Trail Search Corridor
- Existing Regional/State Trail
- Park Boundary

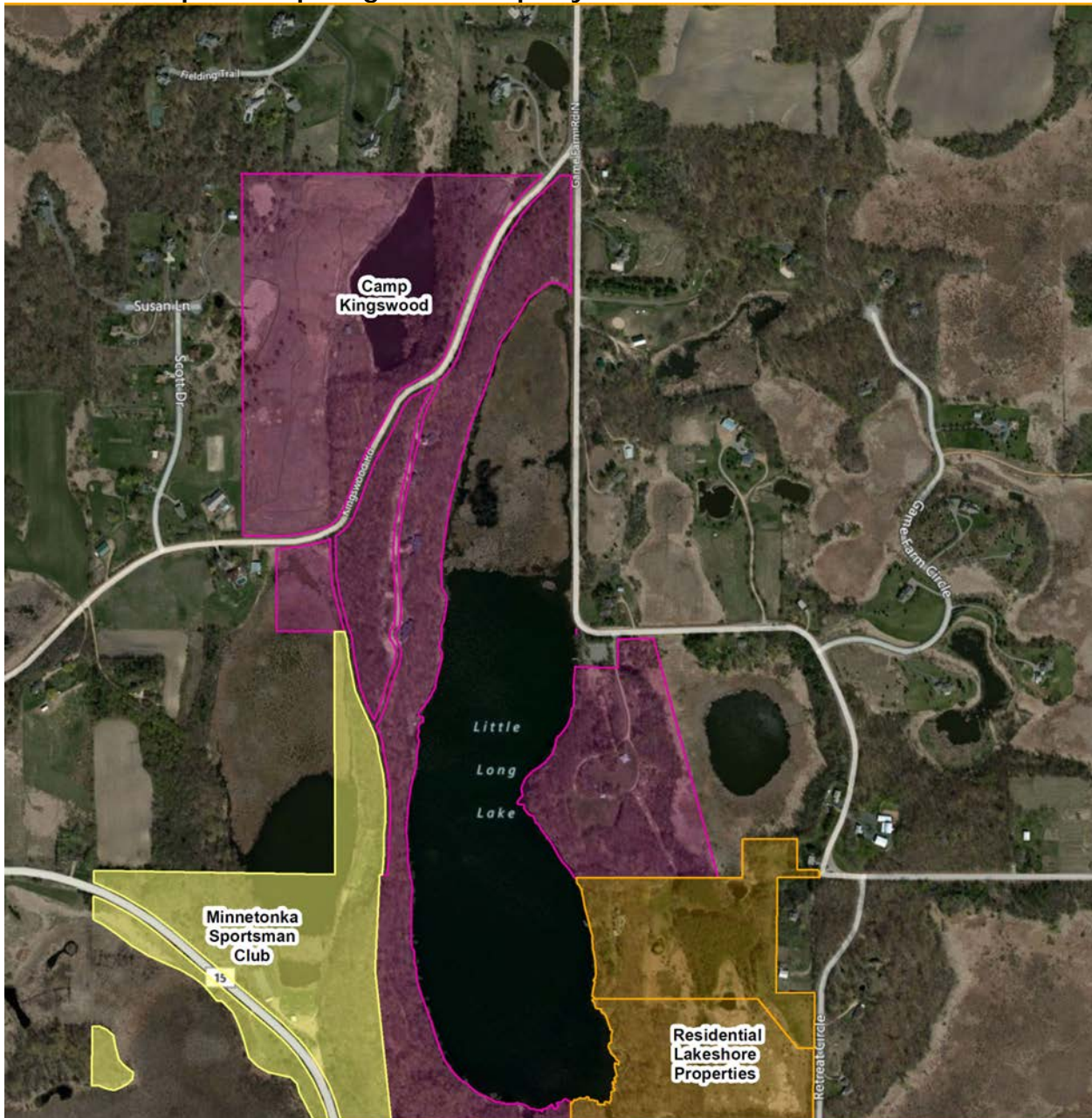
Context Map



This map is a compilation of data from various sources and is provided "as is" without warranty of any representation of accuracy, timeliness, or completeness. The user acknowledges and accepts the limitations of the data, including the fact that the data is dynamic and in a constant state of maintenance, correction, and update.

Department of: Planning Created by: KKG and HRK Map Created: 06/01/2012 Revised Date: 11/14/2012

Reference Map 2: Camp Kingswood Property



Note: The acquisition master plan boundary of the Kingswood Special Recreation Feature will likely include only the Camp Kingswood property, and would not include the Minnetonka Sportsmen Club or the two residential lakeshore properties.

Reference 3: Copy of Board action and vote

**DRAFT - Minutes of the 12/20/12 Regular Board Meeting
(Pending Approval at 01/17/13 Regular Board Meeting)**

Regular Board Meeting

- 8 -

December 20, 2012

8. CLOSED MEETING

A. Offers and Counter Offers for Camp Kingswood

MOTION by Gibbs, seconded by Woodbeck, TO RECESS THE DECEMBER 20, 2012, REGULAR BOARD MEETING AND CONVENE INTO A CLOSED MEETING AFTER CONCLUSION OF THE DECEMBER 20TH COMMITTEE MEETING FOR CONSIDERATION OF OFFERS AND COUNTER OFFERS – CAMP KINGSWOOD.

All ayes, no nays, MOTION ADOPTED

The Regular Board Meeting was recessed at 7:15 p.m.

The Regular Board Meeting was reconvened at 7:36 p.m. at which time Chair Blackstad asked for a motion to convene into a Closed Meeting.

MOTION by Gibbs, seconded by Woodbeck, TO CONVENE INTO A CLOSED MEETING TO CONSIDER OFFERS AND COUNTER OFFERS FOR CAMP KINGSWOOD.

All ayes, no nays, MOTION ADOPTED

Upon conclusion of the Closed Meeting, Chair Blackstad reconvened the Regular Board Meeting at 7:52 p.m.

General Counsel Jeff Brauchle distributed copies of a proposed Purchase Agreement for the acquisition of the Camp Kingswood property to Board Members. He introduced Ms. Barb Carroll, Director of Finance and Administration and Conference Treasurer for the Minnesota Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church. The Church is the current owner of the Camp Kingswood property. Mr. Brauchle briefly reviewed details of the proposed Purchase Agreement with Commissioners.

After discussion, the following motion was proposed.

MOTION by Wyatt, seconded by Woodbeck, TO APPROVE THE PURCHASE AGREEMENT BETWEEN THREE RIVERS PARK DISTRICT AND MINNESOTA ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH FOR ACQUISITION OF THE CAMP KINGSWOOD PROPERTY LOCATED WITHIN THE CITY OF MINNETRISTA, MINNESOTA, IN THE AMOUNT OF \$2.25 MILLION.

At the request of Commissioner Gibbs, Chair Blackstad asked for a roll call vote.

Corcoran	<u>Aye</u>	Peters	<u>Aye</u>	Wyatt	<u>Aye</u>
Gibbs	<u>Aye</u>	Woodbeck	<u>Aye</u>	Blackstad, Chair	<u>Aye</u>

MOTION ADOPTED

APPENDIX B: Proposed Changes to the 2030 Regional Parks Policy Plan



Como Zoo, St. Paul

Siting and Acquisition Strategy 4: Special recreation facilities must enhance services and facilities already offered, not compete with or duplicate them.

Special recreation facilities proposed for inclusion in the regional parks system must:

- Be unique and complement or enhance the services already offered by the regional system.
- Be capable of functioning within the existing management structure of the regional parks system.
- Not duplicate or compete with recreation facilities adequately provided by the public or private sector.
- Not drain funds from other facilities in the system either because they have an existing or committed financial base or because a prior agreement for a public subsidy has been reached that is in the public's interest.
- Demonstrate the existence or potential for drawing a sizable number of people from throughout the metropolitan area.
- Be approved through the master plan process.

Regional parks system legislation indicates that the system should contain parks, park reserves and trails, and zoos, conservatories and "other special-use facilities." The term "other special-use facilities" is not defined in legislation. Discussion in previous Council policy plans suggests that "other special-use facilities," also referred to in the plan as special recreation features (SRF), are those facilities that:

- Contribute to the inventory of available and needed recreation opportunities.
- Are distinctive developments and/or unique natural landscapes not commonly found in the parks, park reserves, and trails.
- Require special programming or management.

As of 2010, 2013 there are ~~seven~~ eight special recreation features:

- [Como Zoo](#)
- [Square Lake](#)
- [Silverwood](#)
- [Como Conservatory](#)
- [Gale Woods Farm](#)
- [The Landing](#)
- [Noerenberg Gardens](#)
- [Kingswood](#)

The Como facilities are found within Como Regional Park. [Noerenberg Gardens](#) was given to Three Rivers Park District with the understanding that it was a unique and regional-level attraction. [Square Lake](#) provides beach and boat access to the clearest lake in the metropolitan area. The land encompassing [Gale Woods Farm](#) was originally proposed as a regional park. [Silverwood](#) is a former Salvation Army camp on Silver Lake that was acquired in 2001. It is programmed for environmental education to serve urban populations. The Landing was added to the regional parks system as a special recreation feature through adoption of this update to the *2030 Regional Parks Policy Plan*. *in 2010 and the proposed Kingswood Special Recreation Feature was added in 2013.*

Special Recreation Features

The special recreation features, which are called for in state legislation, are defined as regional parks system opportunities not generally found in the parks, the park reserves or the trail corridors. Special recreational features often require a unique managing or programming effort on the part of the regional park implementing agency.

As of 2010, 2013 there are seven eight special recreation features in the system:

- [Como Park Zoo](#), and
- [Marjorie McNeely Conservatory at Como Park](#), both managed as a part of Como Regional Park;
- [Square Lake](#) in Washington County;
- [Noerenberg Gardens](#) on the northwest side of Lake Minnetonka;
- [Gale Woods Farm](#) on the shore of Whaletail Lake in Minnetrista;
- [Silverwood](#), on the shore of Silver Lake in the City of St. Anthony;
- [The Landing](#), along the Minnesota River in Shakopee-; Kingswood, on the shore of Little Long Lake in Minnetrista.

New special recreation features need to be complementary to the rest of the regional parks system and not be a financial burden to the system.



Gale Woods Farm, Three Rivers Park District





Process for Determining System Changes

State law requires that every ten years, each city, county and township in the metropolitan region review and update its comprehensive plan to ensure that the local plan conforms to the Metropolitan Council's system plans, including the *Regional Parks Policy Plan*. ([MN Statute 473.864](#)) The latest round of local comprehensive plans was due to the Metropolitan Council in 2008 for review. These comprehensive plans were required to acknowledge and plan for the regional parks system facilities identified in the *2030 Regional Parks Policy Plan*.

Regional park implementing agencies underwent extensive planning processes to prepare their parks system plans, which were incorporated into their jurisdiction's comprehensive plan. As part of their planning processes, some implementing agencies identified potential changes to the regional parks system. Council staff advised the agencies that the proposed additions could not be considered regional facilities unless they were identified in the Council's *Regional Parks Policy Plan* and recommended that the agencies seek regional status for their proposals when the Council updates its policy plan. The proposed system changes from Carver, Dakota, Scott and Washington counties as well as St. Paul came from their local comprehensive plans. The proposed additions from Three River Park District and Anoka and Ramsey counties were initiated as part of this policy plan update.

Regional Parks System Changes

The regional parks system changes primarily focus on new regional trail search corridors and boundary adjustments to existing regional trails. A total of 17 regional trails search corridors proposed by Anoka, Carver, Dakota, Ramsey, Scott and Washington counties, as well as the City of St. Paul, were added to the regional parks system in 2010. The amendment to the *2030 Regional Parks Policy Plan*, adopted by the Council in 2012, added two regional trails proposed by Three Rivers Park District. These trails will provide connections between local and regional recreational facilities and meet the criteria for regional trails outlined in this policy plan. The regional trail system changes are shown in Table 3-10.

There are two system changes for regional parks—the addition of a special recreation feature and the deletion of a regional park search area identified in the *2030 Regional Parks Policy Plan*. A new category of Regional Park Study Area is also being presented.

Special Recreation Feature Additions

~~As part of this update to the 2030 Regional Parks Policy Plan, The Landing, which is a park that provides a historical perspective of life in a river town in the 1800s, has been~~ was added to the regional parks system as a special recreation feature. ~~in 2010.~~ The Landing focuses on environmental education concepts in a historical setting. Several buildings on the site are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. ~~Visitor origin information provided by Three Rivers Park District shows that about 68% of visits are non-local. The Park District owns and operates The Landing, so there would be no acquisition costs to the region. Acknowledgement as a special recreation feature would entitle the Park District to regional operations and maintenance funding, and upon Council approval of a master plan, The Landing would be eligible for regional capital improvement funding for development.~~ Kingswood

SRF was added to the regional parks system in 2013. Three Rivers proposes to develop Kingswood SRF with a Water Resources Learning Center to focus on public involvement in the enjoyment, study and management of the park's high quality natural resources



Table 3-11 Regional Parks Changes

Regional Park Implementing Agency	Map Designation	Site Name	Type	Conversion Acres	Trail Length (miles)	Notes
Dakota County	P-1	Thompson-Kaposia-Port Crosby (local parks)	Regional Park Study Area	230	-	Studies to be conducted to determine the feasibility of combining three local parks that are connected by North Urban and Mississippi River RTs as a joint regional park unit.
Three Rivers Park District	P-2	The Landing	Proposed Special Recreation Feature	86		Recognition as a Special Recreation Feature as a historic site that introduces visitors to environmental education concepts.
Dakota County	DELETION	Proposed deletion of SW Dakota County Regional Park Search Area	Proposed Deletion of a Regional Park Search Area	-400		The Regional Parks Policy Plan (2005) indicated that this regional park search area was subject to the outcome of the County's Park System Plan. The System Plan did not include this search area.

Three Rivers
Park District

P-3

Kingswood

Proposed
Special
Recreation
Feature

106

Addition to the regional parks system for development of Kingswood SRF, which will promote environmental stewardship of the park's high quality natural resources and will include a Water Resources Learning Center.



