



# Miesville Ravine Park Reserve

## Long-Range Plan

Dakota County, Minnesota

*Adopted by the Dakota County Board of Commissioners*

*February 27, 2024*





# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

## DAKOTA COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS:

---

- Mike Slavik
- Joe Atkins
- Laurie Halverson
- William Droste
- Liz Workman
- Mary Liz Holberg
- Mary Hamann-Roland

## DAKOTA COUNTY STAFF PROJECT TEAM:

---

- Kurt Chatfield, Planning Manager
- Curt Coudron, Soil and Water Resource Conservationist
- Anna Ferris, Parks Outreach Coordinator
- Grant Fleetwood, Parks Operations Coordinator
- Niki Geisler, Parks Director
- Scott Hagen, Parks Natural Resource Specialist
- Autumn Hubbell, Parks Outdoor Education Supervisor
- Beth Landahl, Parks Visitor Services Manager
- Michael Horner, Parks and Greenways Project Manager
- Lil Leatham, Principal Planner
- Tom Lewanski, Parks Natural Resources Manager
- Mike Longaecker, Communications Specialist
- Mark Ryan, Environmental Resources Senior Water Resources Engineer
- Al Singer, Land Conservation Program Manager
- Dylan Strand, Grounds Maintenance Manager
- Joe, Walton, Parks Natural Resource Senior Ecologist

## DAKOTA COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION:

---

- Dennis Peine
- Jerry Rich
- Amy Hunting
- Lori Hansen
- Jill Smith
- Mike Cahn
- Barry Graham
- Brady Folkestad
- Michael Esch
- Nate Reitz
- James Guttman
- Anthony Nelson
- Kelly Kausel

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## CONSULTANTS

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- 106 Group
- HKGi
- EOR





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*“We don’t inherit the earth from  
our ancestors, we borrow it from  
our children.”*

*- Native American proverb*



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## PROJECT OVERVIEW

Miesville Ravine Park Reserve's remote setting and expansive natural resources are key to its charm, but distance from the Twin Cities population core, access to limited parts of the park, and few facilities that support recreation make exploring this park more difficult than other Dakota County Parks. The plan's three-part approach seeks to develop and manage the park in a way that maintains the park reserve's high-quality landscapes, while improving the visitor experience.

### APPROACH

Continue to stabilize and preserve the park reserve's natural and cultural resources through invasive species control, habitat restoration, respectful siting of features, sustainable construction practices, strategic acquisitions, and stewardship outreach with neighboring landowners.

1. Provide thoughtfully integrated, accessible amenities that welcome a broader range of users into the park reserve, including those who may not feel equipped to explore Miesville Ravine currently.
2. Embrace Miesville Ravine's remote setting within the Dakota County park system as a landing pad where visitors are given what they need to get comfortable exploring remote natural landscapes.



Figure ES1 Regional Context





## GENERAL INFORMATION

### Park Reserve Size: 1,850 acres

- Dakota County Owned Land: 1,519 acres
- Inholdings (privately owned land within official park reserve boundary): 331 acres

### Natural Features:

- Cannon River
- Trout Brook
- Bluff Prairies

### Park Reserve Access:

- North Parking Lot along Orlando Trail
- South Parking Lot along Orlando Trail
- Public Water Access along the Cannon River

### Recreation:

- Percentage of the park reserve's land area developed for recreational use: 2.1%

The Miesville Ravine Park Reserve Natural Resources Management Plan was developed concurrently with this plan and provides detail on the park reserve's natural resources.



Cannon picnic shelter

## EXISTING CONDITIONS

At 1,850 acres, Miesville Ravine Park Reserve showcases many different landscapes that support a variety of biodiversity. Habitats range from oak forests to remnant prairies, dry rocky savannas to floodplain wetlands, and small seeps to reaches of navigable river and a trout stream that attract visitors from around the region. The park reserve's steep and sensitive ravine landscape has limited development, leaving much of the park reserve relatively free from disturbance. Significant restoration efforts have taken place over the years to restore vast expanses of tallgrass prairie.

The park reserve offers rustic access to the beauty of Trout Brook, the Cannon River, and the striking landscapes through which they flow. Trout Brook and its seeps, springs, and tributaries have cut steep ravines from the park reserve's upland tall grass prairie terrace, making it difficult to access. Two miles of natural surface trail loops wind through lowlands along waterways. Development is currently limited to the southern third of Miesville Ravine Park Reserve, with most amenities south of Orlando Trail. Only a small gravel parking lot and about a mile of trails (including a short boardwalk) exist north of Orlando Trail. A utility right-of-way cuts through the park reserve at the confluence of Trout Brook and the Cannon River. Upstream from the confluence is river access from an eroding stream bank. A small picnic area with tables and two shelters, restroom, and a fire ring is nearby.

## EXISTING PROGRAMMING

Miesville Ravine Park Reserve has limited organized educational programs and activities. Occasional County-led walks through the park reserve help to introduce new visitors, but no regular programming is currently offered.

## CULTURAL LANDSCAPE

Dakota people hunted game in the Trout Brook area into the 1860s. When the first Euro-Americans came to the area surrounding Miesville Ravine Park Reserve in the mid-1800s, they found it as inviting as the Native American peoples. As these new settlers began to plow the land and harvest the trees, they changed the landscape surrounding the valley. Mound groups along the Cannon River and its tributaries and historic farmstead remnants provide evidence of the park reserve's rich cultural history.

## NATURAL RESOURCES

Miesville Ravine Park Reserve is on the northwestern edge of the Driftless Area. Trout Brook flows through the central ravine to the Cannon River. Dozens of steep tributary ravines dissect the park reserve and drain toward Trout Brook, the Cannon River, and several intermittent tributaries. The park reserve is at the 'bottom' of the watershed, receiving all of the water and pollutants from the watershed.

The unique surface, bedrock, and groundwater geology influence the existing natural and water resources. Glacial deposits combine with a long history of erosion to create a rugged topography of bluffs and ravines with variable soil types. The underlying carbonate bedrock is karst-prone and characterized by springs and groundwater discharge. Groundwater provides conditions that support trout in Trout Brook. Karst features also transport rapid surface-to-groundwater pollutants.

Modern vegetation exhibits some remnants of the historical vegetation. Twelve land cover types vary in condition from near-excellent ecological integrity to alterations to the point they no longer resemble native plant communities. The County has restored many formerly cultivated areas to native plant community. Today, the County and partners manage natural resource projects both in the park reserve and on private lands in the surrounding watershed.



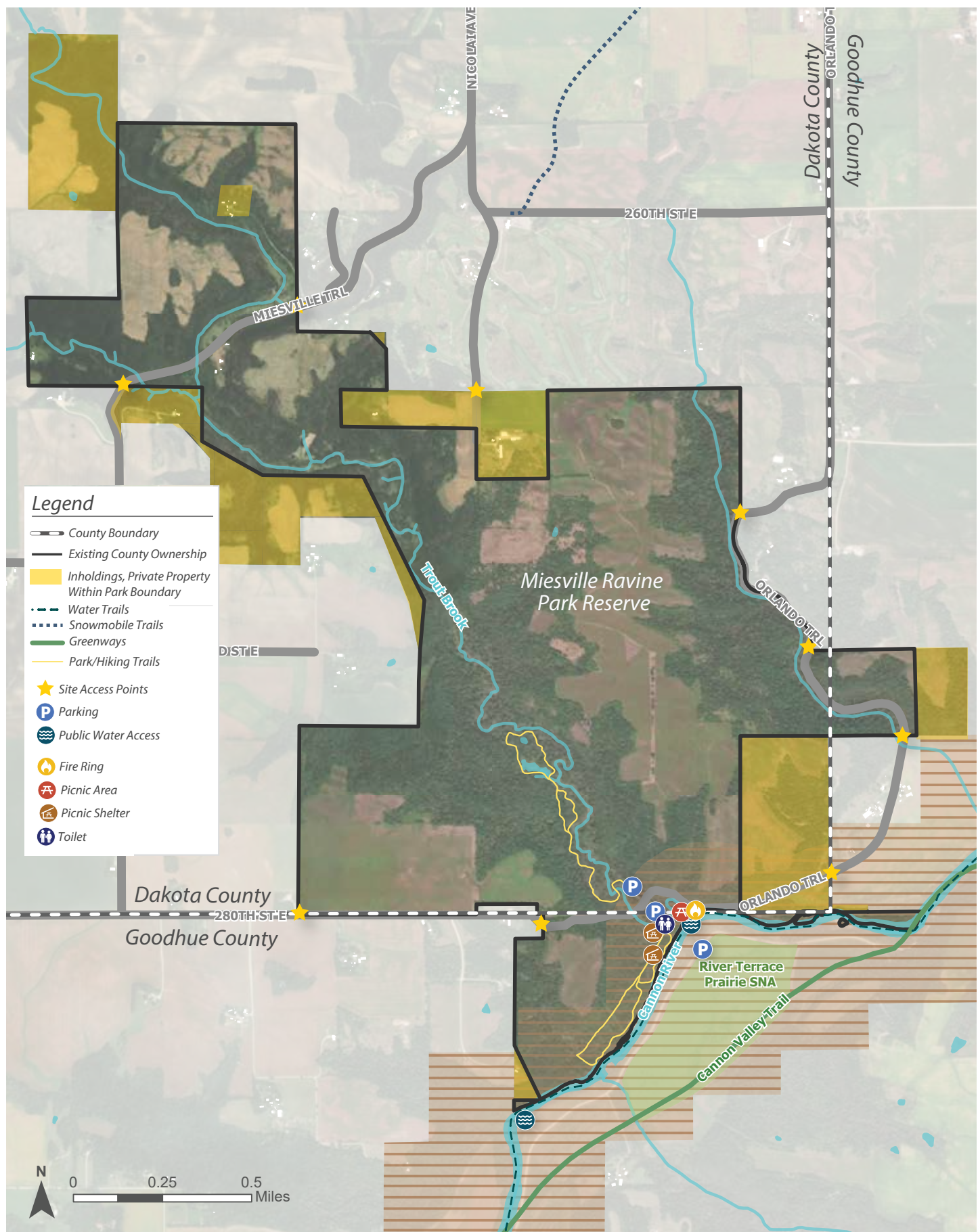


Figure ES2 Existing Conditions



# VISION & GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The vision statement and guiding principles establish the foundation for this plan. The vision statement succinctly expresses the long-range plan intent while the guiding principles identify broad directives for development and management. Together they have guided what is proposed within this plan and will continue to guide decision making related to park development and management through the life of this document.

## VISION STATEMENT

### ***Protecting Habitats and Connecting People to the Wonders of the Natural World***

Miesville Ravine Park Reserve is a healthy and diverse ecosystem whose habitats are protected by strategic preservation and restoration, where native flora and fauna can flourish. Access to and through the park reserve is sensitively expanded in order to improve visitors' experience of this unique landscape, while preserving its character. Visiting Miesville Ravine Park Reserve expands people's comfort with and connection to the natural world, provides them a window into the past, and empowers them to be stewards into the future.

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

1. Complement the rustic setting and provide a strong sense of arrival with entry improvements.
2. Strike a harmonious balance between landscape preservation and human use.
3. Celebrate the park reserve's rugged setting while making it more inclusive.
4. Protect Miesville Ravine Park Reserve's vulnerable and imperiled habitats.
5. Embrace the park reserve's proximity to the Cannon River.
6. Enhance Miesville Ravine's connection to the broader Cannon River valley.
7. Highlight the park reserve's expansive upland terrace prairie.
8. Recognize those who have stewarded this landscape for generations.
9. Keep the park reserve picturesque.

## LONG-TERM CONCEPT

The long-term concept for Miesville Ravine Park Reserve sets a vision for improvements. Park reserve development should be done in collaboration with Tribal Historic Preservation Officers in order to ensure that amenities and trails are sited appropriately, development occurs respectfully, and disturbance to any sensitive cultural areas in the landscape is avoided.

## FUTURE IMPROVEMENTS

### IMPROVED CIRCULATION AND ACCESSIBILITY

Miesville Ravine Park Reserve's expansive prairies, towering bluffs, and flowing waters make it both a beautiful place to visit and a difficult place to navigate. Visitors have found the park reserve's lack of clear wayfinding, inaccessible trails, and limited trail loops frustrating. The long-term plan for Miesville Ravine Park Reserve, "Figure ES3 Miesville Ravine Park Reserve Long-Term Concept", focuses on sensitively expanding the trail system to better accommodate visitors with a range of abilities, provide access to more of the park reserve's vast landscape, and establish a direct connection to the Cannon Valley Trail that will make Miesville Ravine Park Reserve an easy-to-reach destination for visitors exploring the Cannon River Valley.

### TRAILHEADS AND COMFORT AMENITIES

The long-term plan proposes four trailheads that offer convenient starting points to explore different areas of the park reserve. Each will offer parking, wayfinding, and screened portable restrooms.



## LONG-TERM

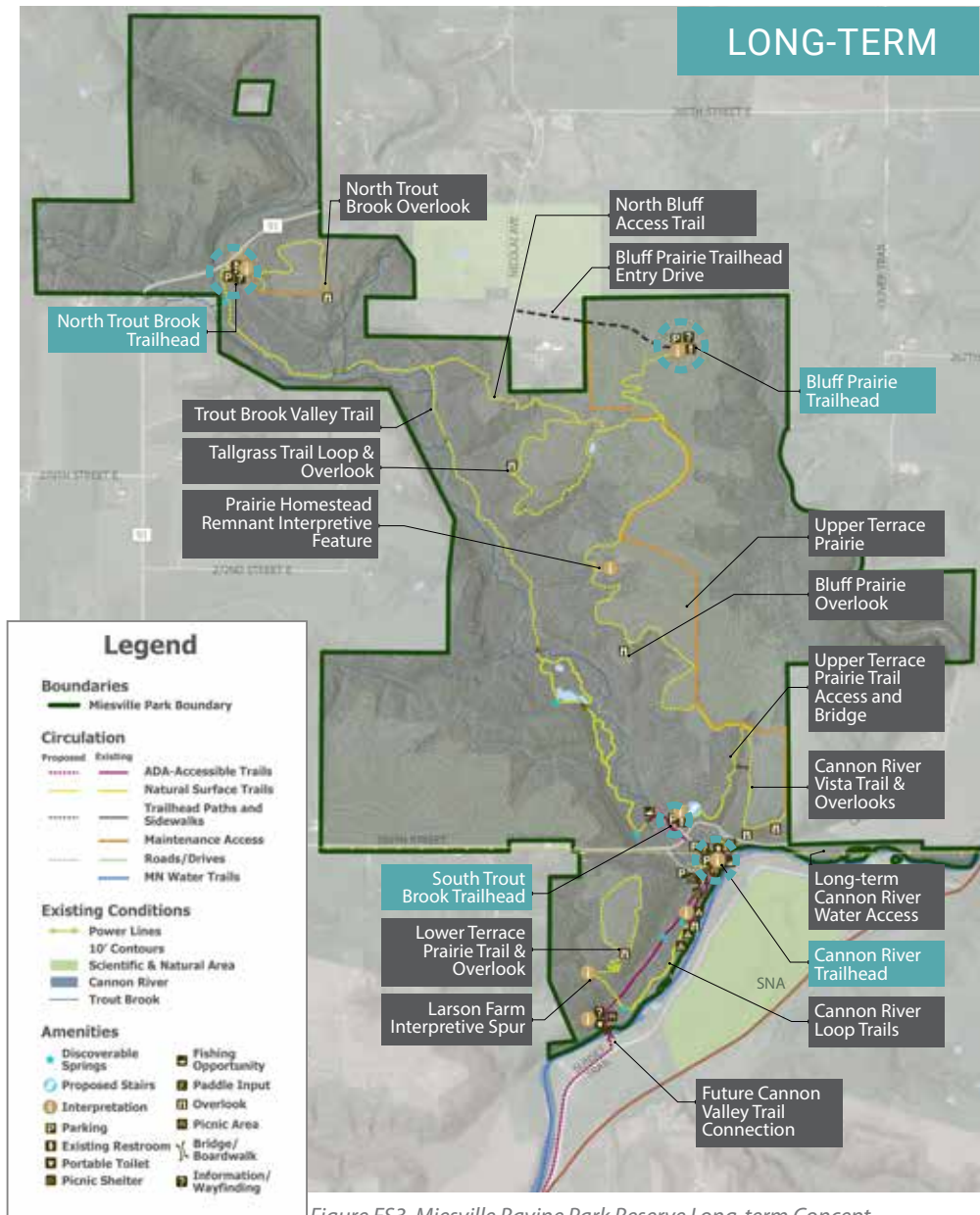


Figure ES3 Miesville Ravine Park Reserve Long-term Concept



### IMPROVED OPPORTUNITIES FOR RECREATION

The long-term concept strives to find a balance between preserving the park reserve's natural features and designating access points for visitors to interact with and enjoy all that Miesville Ravine Park Reserve has to offer with dedicated fishing areas, water touch points, overlooks, picnic areas, rustic campsites, interpretive features, and more.

- **Four trailheads to include:**
  - Wayfinding
  - Gravel parking lots
  - Screened portable restrooms
  - Picnic amenities
  - Drinking water
- **Enhanced Circulation:**
  - 9.5 miles of natural surface trails
  - Wayfinding
  - Boardwalks
  - Overlooks/vistas
  - Future Cannon Valley Trail connection
- **Enhanced ADA accessibility:**
  - ADA-accessible trail along the Cannon River
  - Accessible parking
  - Accessible watercraft launch, footbridges, overlooks, and fishing
- **New recreation opportunities:**
  - Rustic campsites along the Cannon River water trail
  - Picnic area within a restored savanna
  - Fishing platforms
  - Watercraft launch

### INTERPRETATION:

- Themed trails
- Trout Brook access
- Overlooks/vistas
- Discoverable springs
- Educational panels
- Integrated interpretive elements

### NATURAL RESOURCES:

- Three phases of habitat restoration
- Two phases of Trout Brook restoration



## 10-YEAR PLAN SUMMARY

- **Expanded natural surface trails**
  - Trout Brook Valley Trail, including boardwalk where necessary, and 2 bridge crossings
- **Cannon River Trailhead Improvements:**
  - New entry drive, turnaround, & parking
  - Picnic area improvements
  - ADA-accessible shore fishing
  - ADA-Accessible watercraft launch
  - Screened portable restrooms
  - Drinking water
  - ADA-accessible trail loop and overlook
- **Larson Farm interpretive Spur**
- **Lower Terrace Prairie Trail Loop and Overlook**
- **North Trout Brook Trailhead & Overlook:**
  - Gravel parking lot
  - Screened portable restrooms
  - Wayfinding
  - Overlook
- **South Trout Brook Trailhead Improvements:**
  - Screened portable restrooms
  - Wayfinding
  - Fishing platform
  - Accessible footbridge replacement
- **Enhanced wayfinding**

## INTERPRETATION:

- Themed trails
- North Trout Brook Overlook
- Discoverable springs
- Interactive educational panels
- Integrated interpretive elements
- Trout Brook touch point

## NATURAL RESOURCES:

- Phase I and II of habitat restoration
- First phase of Trout Brook restoration

## 10-YEAR CONCEPT

The 10-Year plan focuses on expanding upon what exists today, improving accessibility, clarifying circulation, adding complementary amenities, and helping visitors experience more of all the incredible things Miesville Ravine Park Reserve has to offer.

The addition of the North Trout Brook Trailhead establishes access to the northern portion of the park. Enhancements made to the park reserve along the Cannon River will create an inviting and inclusive recreational experience for guests, while an expanded trail network will enable visitors to explore a greater diversity of the park reserve's habitats.

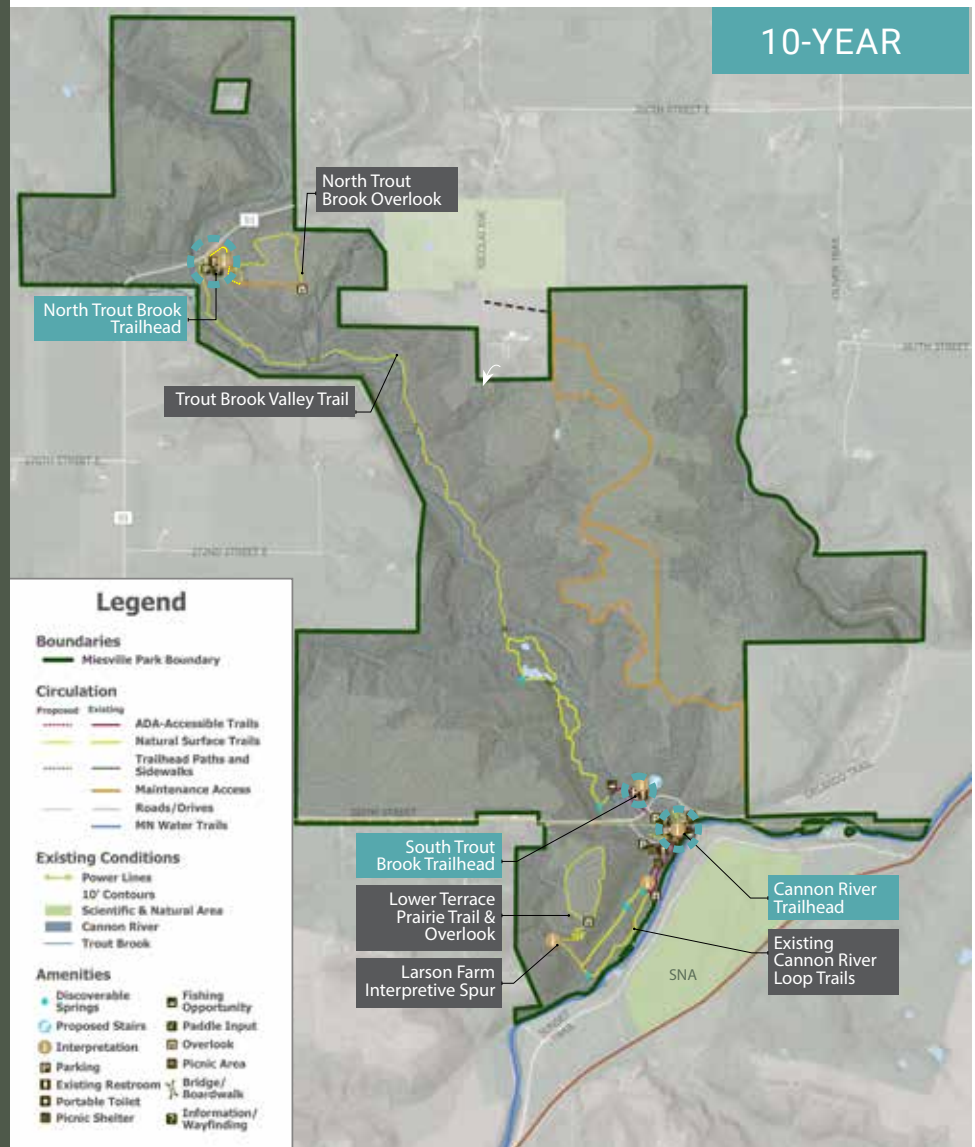
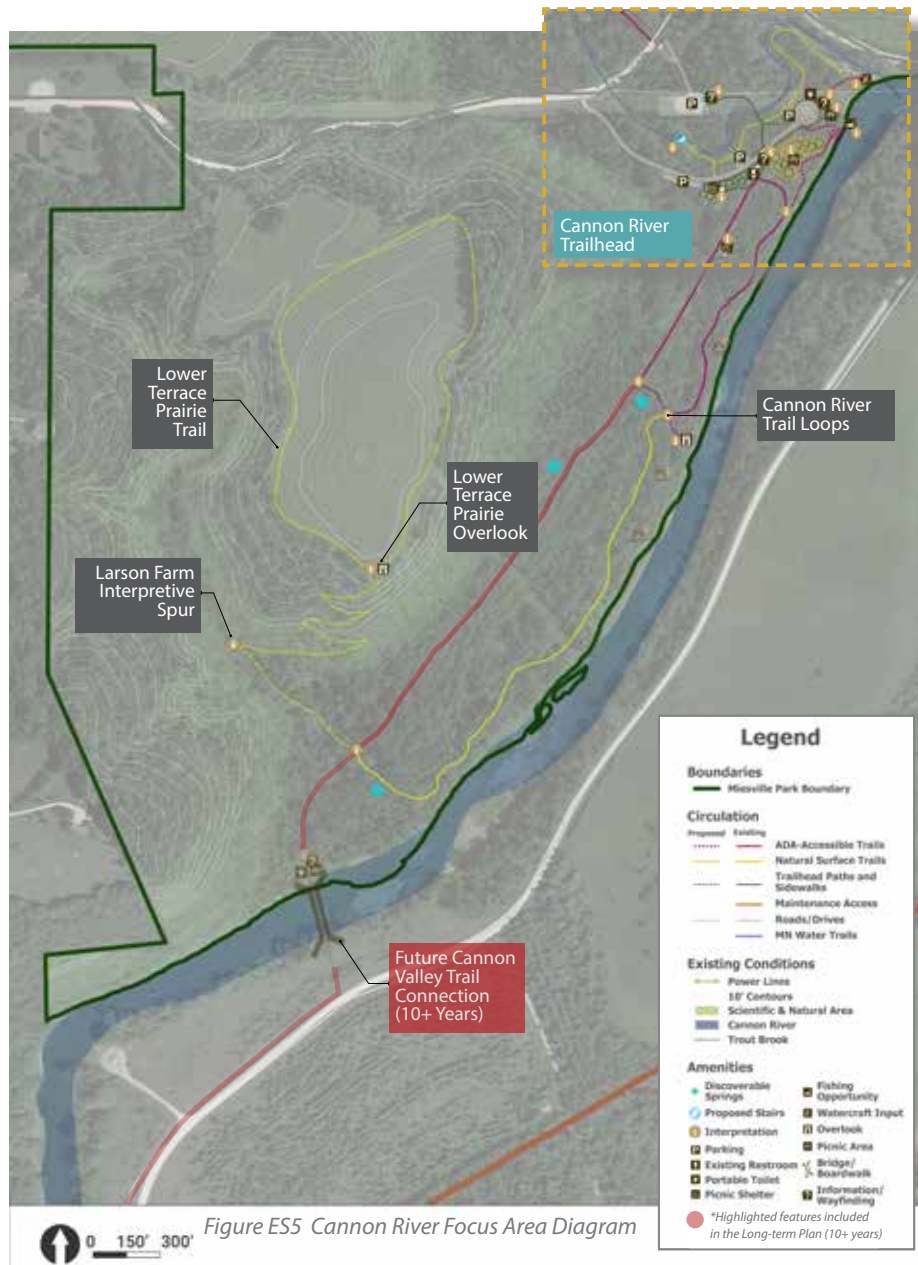


Figure ES4 Miesville Ravine Park Reserve 10-year Concept





## CANNON RIVER AREA

### RECREATION:

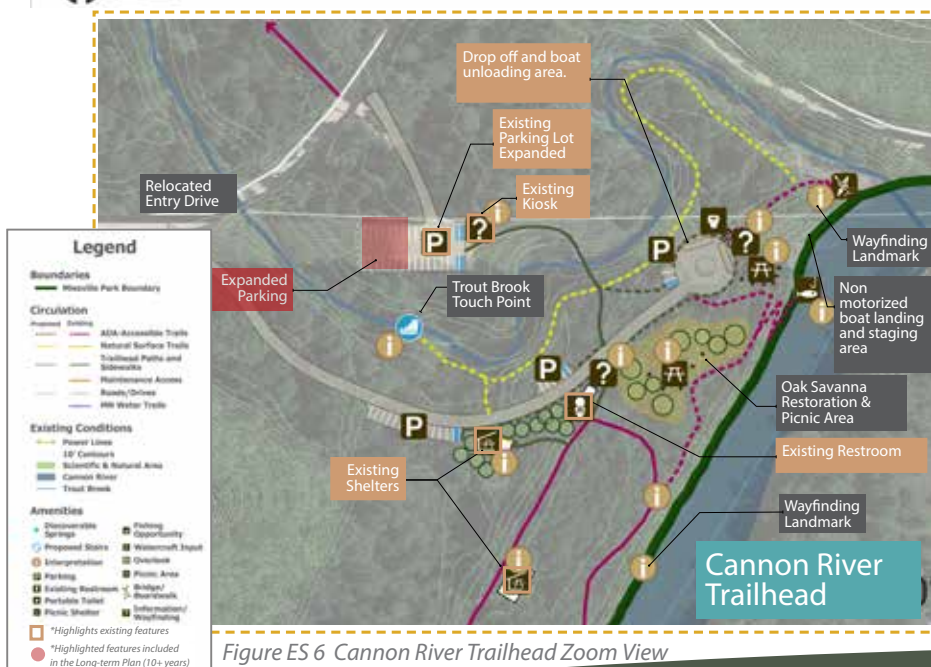
- New entry drive with parking
- Screened portable restrooms
- Drinking water
- Restored savanna picnic area with additional charcoal grills
- Group gathering areas/fire pits
- Bus turnaround
- ADA-accessible watercraft launch
- ADA-accessible shore fishing
- Trout Brook water touch point
- Enhanced visitor circulation
- Accessible trail loop and overlook
- Wayfinding
- Larson Farm interpretive spur
- Lower terrace prairie trail loop and overlook

### INTERPRETATION:

- Trail Themes
- Overlook
- Trailhead panels about Dakota identity, and "welcome" element at future Cannon Valley Trail connection
- Integrated elements (site furnishings) that speak to differing world views (Dakota/Western)
- Interpretive element related to the site's railroad history
- Larson Farm interpretive spur

### NATURAL RESOURCES:

- Phase I and II of habitat restoration
- Trout Brook restoration Phase 1



Hiking trails



# STEWARDSHIP

## NATURAL RESOURCES

The long-term vision is to restore and Manage Natural Resources in the entire park with restoration of an additional 300 acres over the next 10 years, taking the percentage of the park habitat that is restored from 40 percent today to 60 percent. General natural resource management goals include:

- Restore and manage plant communities at a landscape scale to provide a mosaic of appropriate communities with soft edges/transitions and explore the reintroduction of grazing methods.
- Increase native plant diversity and abundance within communities by restoring ecosystem structure and processes, establishing native groundcover, and diligently revegetating depauperate sites.
- Minimize invasive species presence and abundance through prevention of establishment by prioritizing sensitive habitats, by identifying populations that are likely to spread (e.g., upstream), and by identifying feasible target areas.
- Provide habitat for rare species and SGCN known or likely to occur in the park reserve by restoring and managing the native plant communities that provide their critical habitat.
- Enhance landscape connectivity through native plant community restoration.
- Restore natural hydrology and habitat to the Trout Brook channel and floodplain and tributaries, via stream restoration projects, landscape-level management practices, and partnerships.
- Restrict recreation to low-impact activities to preserve sensitive natural resources and highlight the natural heritage of the park reserve to the public.
- Nurture collaboration and outreach to address landscape-level issues by working with public and private stakeholders to accomplish shared or overlapping goals.
- Practice adaptive management to learn from and apply lessons of management outcomes while exploring alternative means of meeting objectives based on the current state of knowledge.
- Integrate climate change adaptation into management actions by managing for diversity, monitoring site-specific and regional responses to climate change, and practicing adaptive management.

## CULTURAL LANDSCAPE STEWARDSHIP

Traditional Cultural Properties and culturally sensitive areas throughout the park reserve necessitate ongoing coordination with Indigenous communities. Stewardship recommendations include managing vegetation based on the park's Natural Resources Management Plan, working with Tribal Historical Preservation Officers (THPOs) to establish consultation protocols, and working with representatives of associated Indigenous tribes and nations, the Minnesota Office of the State Archaeologist (OSA), and the Minnesota Indian Affairs Council (MIAC) to develop additional understanding.



### FROM FIELDS TO PRAIRIE

Since 2005, hundreds of acres of former agricultural fields atop the bluff have been restored to prairie.

*Before and after landscape images*



# IMPLEMENTATION

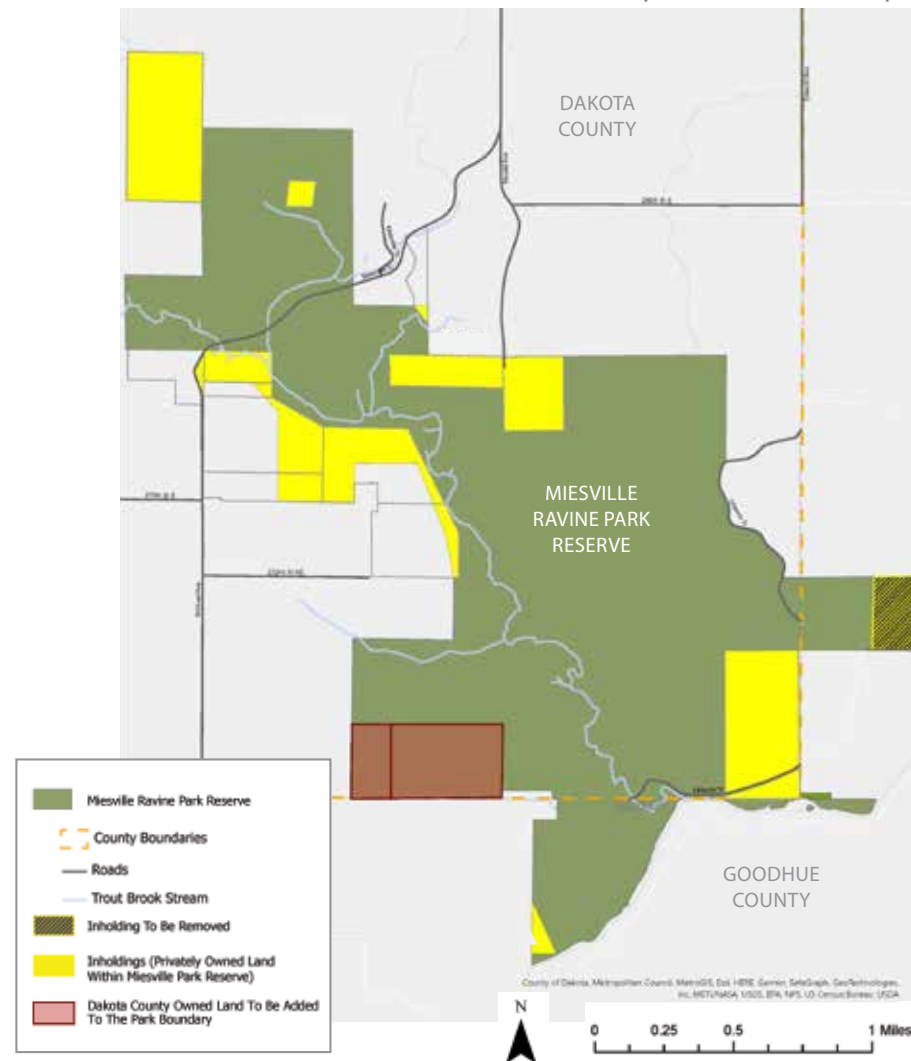
## CAPITAL PROJECT COST ESTIMATES

Recreation and natural resource improvements are prioritized into five-year, 10-year, and long-term phases, based on connection to the vision and principles, community support, cost, and estimated operational costs. Estimates are planning level, prepared in 2023 dollars, and will be refined as projects advance to construction.

| PHASE                                | COST         |
|--------------------------------------|--------------|
| 5-year plan                          | \$1,609,000  |
| 10-year plan                         | \$2,118,000  |
| Running total of 5-and 10-year plans | \$3,727,000  |
| Long-term plan                       | \$11,375,000 |

## BOUNDARY

Acquisition of inholding properties and enhanced stewardship of lands outside the park reserve boundary are priorities of this plan. Surrounding lands in agricultural use make acquisition and stewardship much more feasible during the 15-year life of this long-range plan than a time in the future when Miesville Ravine will inevitably be surrounded by much higher value and potentially more environmentally degrading development patterns. There is one existing inholding that is identified for removal from the park reserve boundary because this area is separated from most of the park by Orlando Trail and has minimal recreational value. There are two parcels owned and operated by Dakota County to be added to the Metropolitan Council park boundary.



### SUMMARY OF PARK BOUNDARY CHANGES

|                     |           |
|---------------------|-----------|
| Existing inholdings | 331 acres |
| Removals            | 19 acres  |
| Net                 | 309 acres |

Table 3.1 Summary of Park Boundary Changes

Figure ES 7 Miesville Ravine Park Reserve Boundary





*Trout Brook*



*Floodplain*



*Existing Cannon River tubing drop-off site (informal)*

Steward partnership lands are outside the park boundary and within the Trout Brook Watershed and springsheds and have a significant impact on the quality of the natural resources within the park reserve. The plan suggests close coordination with owners of these lands to enhance conservation and stewardship practices to lessen negative environmental and visual impacts on the park reserve. Stewardship will be accomplished through programs such as the Dakota County Soil and Water Conservation District's (SWCD) technical assistance and financial incentives, the Dakota County Land Conservation program, and the Dakota County Agricultural Chemical Reduction Effort (ACRE). These programs offer a range of voluntary stewardship incentives.

## INTERPRETATION IMPLEMENTATION AND CULTURAL LANDSCAPE

The interpretive plan section provides recommendations for enhancing the visitor experience and achieving goals for interpretation at Miesville Ravine Park Reserve. In order to bridge the gap between the interpretive framework presented in this plan and interpretive features informing design, it is recommended that a full interpretative plan be completed for the park reserve prior to implementing improvements. It is envisioned that interpretation of the area and history of the park reserve, natural resources, and cultural context inform the design of all future improvements.

## VISITOR SERVICES

Visitor Services manages outdoor education, interpretation, facility and equipment rentals, events and food, customer service and permitting, and volunteerism. The 2017 Dakota County Park Visitor Services Plan guides provision of services throughout the park system. The visitor services vision for Miesville Ravine Park Reserve is minimalist, focused on experiencing nature, with introduction of mobile and self-guided education. This long-range plan includes facility recommendations that support visitor services at Miesville Ravine Park Reserve.

## OPERATIONAL ANALYSIS

Following implementation of the five-year plan, operational costs at Miesville Ravine Park Reserve are estimated to increase from a 2022 baseline of \$288,700 to \$374,600. This represents a total estimated increase of \$85,900 (30%). The additional FTE requirements total an estimated 0.96-1.82 FTE. The largest increase is in the functional area of Natural Resources (\$46,600). Following implementation of the 10-year plan, operational costs are estimated to total \$498,700 and increase \$124,100 (33%) over the five-year plan requirement. The additional FTE requirements total an estimated 1.39- 2.36 FTE. The largest increase is in the functional area Natural Resources (\$48,000).



# INTRODUCTION

## PROJECT PURPOSE

### A NEW PLAN FOR MIESVILLE RAVINE PARK RESERVE

The purpose of this planning process is to update the long-range vision for the park reserve and to guide improvements for the next 10 or more years. This update to the 2005 Miesville Ravine Park Reserve Plan will ensure that desired improvements and future investments are grounded in responsible stewardship of the land and informed by the people seeking outdoor recreation along the Cannon River Valley.

#### THE GOALS OF THIS LONG-RANGE PLAN ARE:

- Create a visionary and strategic document.
- Review the current state of Miesville Ravine Park Reserve.
- Address changes that have occurred since the 2005 Plan (new trends and demographics, restoration of agricultural lands to tallgrass prairie).
- Incorporate direction from the 2008 Parks System Plan, the 2017 Visitor Services Plan, and the 2019 Natural Resources Management System Plan.
- Represent current community and outdoor recreational users' values, needs, and desires.
- Work in tandem with the Natural Resources Management Plan being developed alongside this document to make informed and ecologically sound decisions regarding future programming and potential development.
- Address recreation, interpretation, and natural resource management in an integrated process.
- Guide future investment in the park reserve.
- Meet Metropolitan Council requirements.
- Protect and manage Indigenous Traditional Cultural Properties.

## OVERVIEW

Miesville Ravine is a Park Reserve located in the southeast corner of Dakota County, just east of Lake Byllesby Regional park and adjacent to the Wild and Scenic Cannon River. The nearby cities of Cannon Falls and Red Wing offer additional attractions for those looking to supplement the outdoor recreation experiences provided within the park reserve.

Accessible by road and by water and near but not directly connected to the Cannon Valley Trail, Miesville Ravine Park Reserve holds great potential as a destination for outdoor recreation in the Cannon River Valley. The park reserve offers two miles of hiking trails, fishing along Trout Brook, picnic shelters, restrooms, water access to the Cannon River, and a fire ring. Its captivating and rugged landscape is remote and immersive, offering scenic views, tall bluffs, winding ravines, wildlife, and more than 1,600 acres of wetlands, prairies, and forests to explore.



*Bridge across Trout Brook*



## THE DAKOTA COUNTY PARKS MISSION

“To enrich lives by providing high-quality recreation and education opportunities in harmony with natural resource preservation and stewardship.”

Dakota County’s parks tradition emphasizes protection of large tracts of high-quality resource lands and providing nature-based recreation and outdoor education.



*Wildlife observation at the park reserve*



*Naturalists at Miesville Ravine*

## ROLE IN THE REGION

Miesville Ravine Park Reserve is part of the Metropolitan Regional Park System. It was included as part of the regional system due to its size and outstanding ecological significance in the region. Dakota County is a regional park implementing agency governed by the Metropolitan Council. Together, both agencies strive to address the following directives from the 2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan:

- Expand the Regional Parks System to conserve, maintain, and connect natural resources identified as being of high quality or having regional importance, as identified in the 2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan.
- Provide a comprehensive regional park and trail system that preserves high-quality natural resources, increases climate resilience, fosters healthy outcomes, connects communities, and enhances quality of life in the region.
- Promote expanded multi-modal access to regional parks, regional trails, and the transit network, where appropriate.
- Strengthen equitable usage of regional parks and trails by all Twin Cities metro region’s residents across age, race, ethnicity, income, national origin, and ability.

Within the Dakota County Parks System, Miesville Ravine Park Reserve provides the following unique qualities:

- Its location in the far southeastern part of Dakota County and the metro area serves rural residents with convenient access.
- The 200-foot deep ravine, tall bluffs, and hundreds of acres of restored prairie provide strikingly beautiful scenery that are emblematic of southeastern Minnesota bluff country.
- Spring-fed Trout Brook flows through the park reserve and into the Cannon River. This rarity within the metro (a designated trout stream by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources) offers Dakota County residents some of the closest trout fishing available.
- Proximity to the Cannon Valley Trail and future Mill Towns State Trail offer a possibility to directly connect park reserve visitors to additional recreational destinations along the Cannon River Valley.
- Proximity to Lake Byllesby Regional Park, a 620-acre park that features a reservoir formed by a hydropower dam, offers complementary outdoor recreation to the region’s visitors. This regional park is a popular spot for hiking, boating, swimming, and camping, among other things.
- The park reserve provides access to the Cannon River and boasts a mile-long shoreline along this designated wild and scenic river corridor.
- The park reserve has more than 1,000 acres of largely untouched habitat to explore and is home to abundant wildlife.
- The park reserve is culturally significant to Native Americans, who stewarded the landscape and made it their home for centuries prior to European settlement. The Dakota People continue to have meaningful ties to this land, and Dakota County is committed to bringing a level of sensitivity and respect to its work within the park.



# PLANNING CONTEXT

## PREVIOUS PLANNING EFFORTS

Dakota County staff and the design team carefully studied and pulled from past planning efforts to compile information and create a plan that fits cohesively into Miesville Ravine Park Reserve's role regionally and within the Dakota County Parks and Greenways system.

### DAKOTA COUNTY PARK SYSTEM PLAN

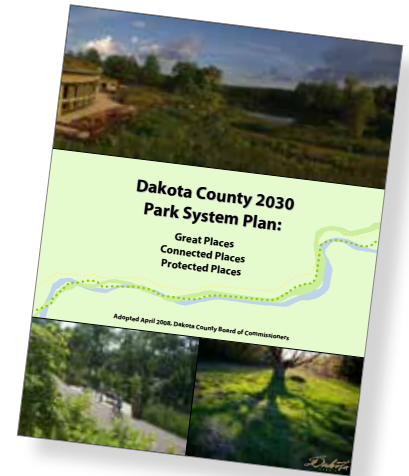
As part of its 2030 Comprehensive Plan update, the Dakota County Park System Plan was approved in 2008.

The vision for the park system strives for:

- **Great Places:** Enhance Dakota County's parks by ensuring that they include the basic popular amenities that the public expects as well as innovative, thought-provoking, or singular activities that relate to each park as a unique place.
- **Connected Places:** Establish a county-wide network of city and regional greenways for recreation, transportation, habitat, and water quality.
- **Protected Places:** Strategically protect resource areas to preserve natural processes and system function.

Miesville is defined as a Park Reserve in the Dakota County system. Other park facilities include regional parks, County parks, and regional trails or greenways. Ideas related to the initiatives stated in the Dakota County Park System Plan that pertain to Miesville Ravine Park Reserve include:

- Offer more options for year-round recreation to promote visitorship in every season.
- Introduce new recreation and programming within the park reserve that are sustainably and thoughtfully designed to work with the landscape.
- Implement educational and interpretive features that teach guests about Miesville Ravine Park Reserve's ecological importance and its ongoing restoration efforts and encourage visitors to be stewards of the land.
- Co-manage natural and interpretive systems with local tribes and provide interpretation to celebrate and honor the park reserve's Native American history.
- Expand trail connections, both within the park reserve's borders and outside of it. Create more internal access for guests and take advantage of potential links to the broader county-wide trails and greenway system by connecting to nearby State and Regional Trails.
- Prioritize continued restoration efforts and ecological health.
- Work with private landowners to acquire land for future park use and create better access to Miesville Ravine Park Reserve.
- Go above and beyond the required ADA standards to welcome guests with both mental and physical disabilities.







## 2017 DAKOTA COUNTY PARK VISITOR SERVICES PLAN

The plan is a 10-year strategic vision plan as well as a five- year business and implementation plan to improve park visitor services. The service areas addressed include:

- Awareness and marketing
- Events and food
- Outdoor Education
- Facility and equipment rentals
- Customer service
- Volunteerism

The vision for visitor services is to “ensure the visitor experience is meaningful and relevant to more people through quality nature-based environmental, recreation and cultural education opportunities that inspire understanding, awareness and stewardship.”



## DAKOTA COUNTY NATURAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT SYSTEM PLAN (2017)

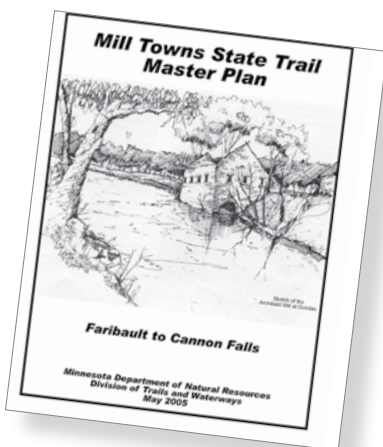
The Natural Resource Management System Plan guides system-wide natural resources management of Dakota County parks, conservation easements, and greenways for the next 20 years. The plan provides system-wide context for the natural resources of Miesville Ravine Park Reserve and for the specific Natural Resource Management Plan for the park reserve.



## 2019 LAKE BYLLESBY REGIONAL PARK MASTER PLAN

The Lake Byllesby Regional Park Master Plan and Natural Resource Management Plan emphasizes water recreation on both the lake and Cannon River and expands related amenities like camping, picnicking, play areas, and the trail network. Plans for the undeveloped western portion of the park will offer passive, nature-based outdoor recreation, while the park's eastern portion remains a hub of activity.

The plan leveraged the newly constructed Mill Towns Trail bridge to seamlessly connect the park to Goodhue County's Byllesby Park on the south side of the reservoir and to the broader Cannon River Valley.



## 2005 MILL TOWNS STATE TRAIL MASTER PLAN

The Mill Towns State Trail is a legislatively authorized state trail, managed and planned by the MnDNR. The most recent master plan for the trail was completed in 2005 and identifies alignment options from Faribault to Cannon Falls. Portions of the trail have been constructed, but the full trail will not be realized for years to come. The 2005 Mill Towns State Trail Master Plan identifies plans for trailheads in both the west and east portions of Lake Byllesby Regional Park, located just nine miles upstream from Miesville Ravine Park Reserve. If, in the future, the park reserve is able to connect directly to the Cannon Valley Trail, Mill Towns State Trail users will also have access to Miesville Ravine Park Reserve.



## THE CANNON VALLEY TRAIL 2017 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The Cannon Valley Trail is a paved, multi-use, regional trail managed by a Joint Powers Board made up of representatives from Goodhue County, the City of Cannon Falls, and local citizens. The Cannon Valley Trail 2017 Comprehensive Plan Update was adopted by the Cannon Valley Trail Joint Powers Board on May 23, 2017. The trail is almost 20 miles long and connects the cities of Red Wing, Welch Village, and Cannon Falls. Open year-round, the trail hosts more than 100,000 cyclists, in-line skaters, skateboarders, walkers, hikers, and cross country skiers annually. Trail users over 18 must have a valid Wheel Pass between April and November or a Great Minnesota Ski Pass for cross-country skiing. The Cannon Valley Trail is located just 1/4-mile south of Miesville Ravine's border, across the Cannon River.

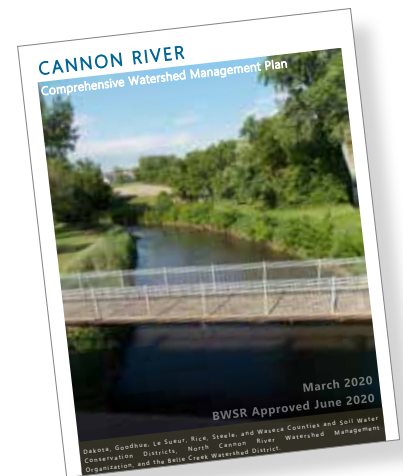


## CANNON RIVER WILD & SCENIC RIVER DESIGNATION

The Cannon River was designated as a Minnesota Wild and Scenic River in 1980, because it is "free of impoundments and contain[s] largely undeveloped shorelines." It is one of six in Minnesota. Miesville Ravine Park Reserve's boundary borders the river and features one mile of shoreline with a public water access site. The Cannon River is also a State Water Trail extending more than 80 river miles from Waterville to Red Wing. Wild and Scenic Rivers and State Water Trails programs are administered by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources.

The following factors apply to Wild and Scenic River Designations:

- Minnesota Rules, chapter 6105.1550–6105.1700 govern management of state lands and local land use regulation along the river.
- Being designated a Wild and Scenic River does not restrict boating access. Motorized and nonmotorized watercraft are allowed on the Cannon River, as well as tubing and swimming. Hunting and fishing are regulated under state laws.
- Designation neither prohibits development nor gives the federal government control over private property.
- Recreation, agricultural practices, residential development, and other uses may continue.
- Protection of the river is provided through voluntary stewardship by landowners and river users and through regulation and programs of federal, state, local, or tribal governments.







## 2005 MIESVILLE RAVINE PARK RESERVE MASTER PLAN

In 2005, Dakota County updated the master plan for Miesville Ravine Park Reserve. The plan provided a vision for the future of the park reserve that included the following:

- Themes and Future Facilities: Wilderness Park — Miesville Ravine will continue to have a minimal human footprint with rustic visitor facilities.
- The park reserve is about open and protected views, preserving the highest quality resources in the Park system, river and stream activities, and wilderness experiences (hiking, picnicking, primitive camping).
- Activity centers include a loosely connected complex with the main trailhead, picnic grounds, rustic stone shelters, and the Cannon River access area.
- Planned improvements include enhancement to the current main trailhead, a new trailhead in the uplands, potential Cannon River event grounds on the eastern edge of the park (not acquired), and a bicycle bridge link to the Cannon Valley Trail in Goodhue County.

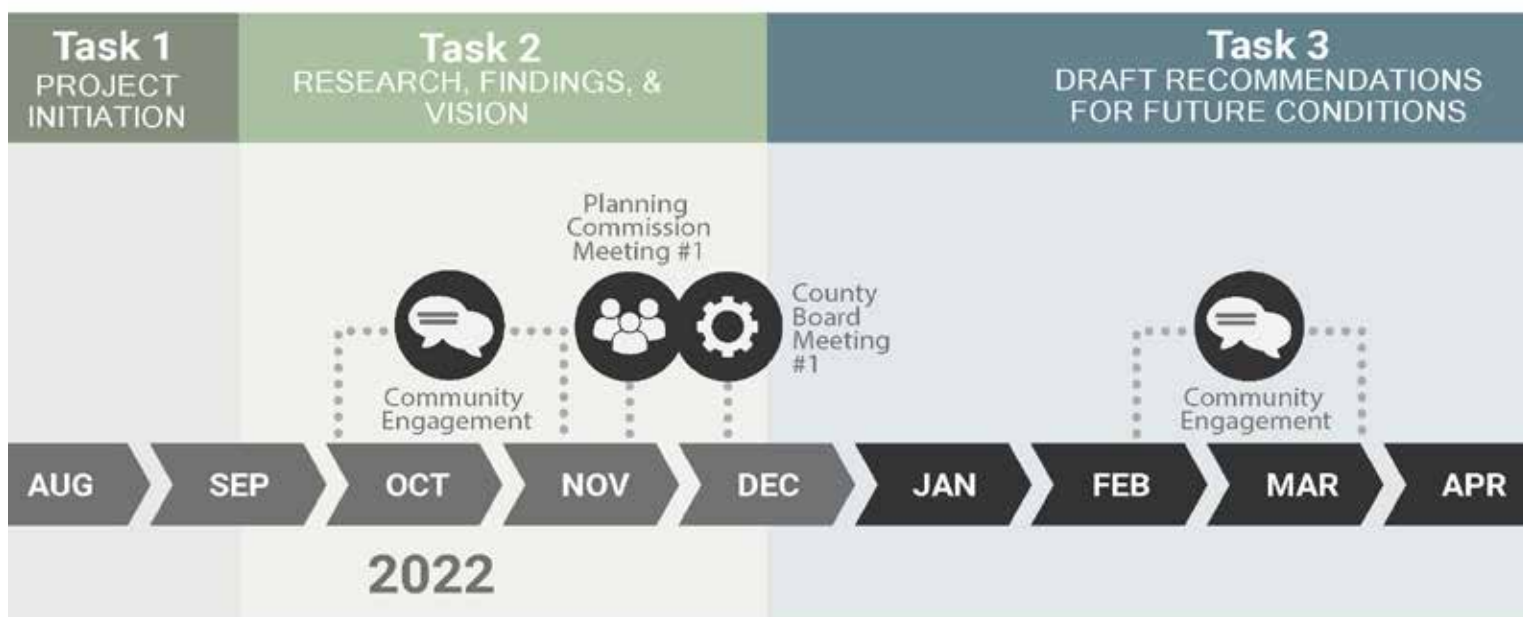
This plan strives to learn from the past research and planning within the 2005 Plan document and provide updates based on current research, trends, restoration efforts, relationships with private and public partners, and demographic needs to put Miesville Ravine Park Reserve on the map as regional destination in southeastern Minnesota.

## PLANNING PROCESS

### OVERVIEW

In conjunction with development of an update to the 2005 Miesville Ravine Park Reserve Plan, Dakota County worked with EOR, Inc. to create a new Natural Resource Management Plan for the park reserve. The County hired a park planning consultant, Hoisington Koeigler Group, Inc., along with cultural resource consultants 106 Group, who worked closely with County staff, stakeholders, tribal representatives, and the public to develop the plan.

### PROJECT TIMELINE:





## THE GOALS OF THE PLANNING PROCESS:

- **Cultural Interpretation Planning:** Dakota County is actively planning cultural resource interpretation programs and displays at several of their parks, greenways, and other facilities. Miesville Ravine Park Reserve has a rich history and a number of places of significance within the landscape that merit respect and can be honored through stewardship and interpretation. Interpretation can take on many forms, including audio, tours, special events, educational classes, signs, sculpture, designed landscapes, interactive exhibits, and more. This planning process includes an in-depth look at possibilities for interpretation.
- **Natural Resources Planning:** A separate, but coordinated, effort with this long-range plan document is the Miesville Ravine Park Reserve Natural Resource Management Plan (NRMP). The NRMP was developed using a detailed inventory of existing natural resources conditions. The inventory and analysis from the NRMP were used to inform the recreation and future programming concepts for the plan. The NRMP serves as a companion to this plan and provides specific strategies, priorities, and cost estimates for how to manage and improve the natural resources at Miesville Ravine Park Reserve for the next 10 years.
- **Engage with the Dakota County Board, Planning Commission, staff, and public.**

## PROJECT PROCESS:

### Task 1: Project Initiation

The project team collected and organized background information, toured the park reserve with staff, and discussed issues and opportunities.

### Task 2: Research, Findings, and Vision

The research, findings, and vision phase consisted of the creation of a project website where background data and analysis were compiled and made public to help existing and potential users learn about Miesville Ravine Park Reserve and talk about the project process. Online community engagement activities were launched to gather input on issues and opportunities. The Inventory and analysis report was created to capture what was learned.

### Task 3: Draft Recommendations for Future Conditions

This phase, in which potential development concepts for the park reserve are explored, allows the project team to test ideas and make recommendations for the future. Community engagement activities seek input from the public on potential concepts to help aid in the development of a preferred concept. Meetings will be held with project groups to review and refine concept ideas.

### Task 4: Plan Development and Draft Plans

The assembly of the plan document occurs during this phase of the project, during which several revisions are made as a result of multi-agency and public review.

### Task 5: Final Plan and Approvals

Approval will be sought from Dakota County staff and elected officials.





*“Often I have been exhausted on trout streams, uncomfortable, wet, cold, briar scarred, sunburned, mosquito bitten, but never, with a fly rod in my hand, have I been in a place that was less than beautiful.”*

*- Charles Kuralt*





# PROJECT CONTEXT OVERVIEW

This chapter explores the regional significance of Miesville Ravine Park Reserve. Miesville Ravine sits in the far southeastern corner of the seven-county Minneapolis-St. Paul metropolitan area along the border of Dakota County and Goodhue County.

This ‘hidden gem’ of Dakota County’s park system consists of 1,667 acres, including one mile of the Cannon River. Today, a limited number of outdoor rustic recreational opportunities are enjoyed by a relatively small number of visitors. However, by being located across the river from a state Scientific and Natural Area and the Cannon Valley Trail which is planned to connect with the Mill Towns State Trail, this park reserve has the potential to connect to Northfield, Cannon Falls, and Redwing by trail and water.

By exploring Miesville Ravine Park Reserve’s current position in the region and its place in the Dakota County Park System as a whole, future potential user needs, and recreational trends at both a state and national level, the County can make informed decisions regarding future programming and suitable amenities.

The project context chapter contains information on the following:

- **Park Reserve Context:** reviews the location and importance of the park reserve within the region.
- **Demographics and Trends:** outlines how the surrounding demographics and trends may influence visitor preferences and desired programming at Miesville Ravine Park Reserve.



*The Cannon River is a recreational hot spot*



*The Mill Towns State Trail, which connects to the Cannon Valley Regional Trail, offers a potential future connection*



## WHAT IS A PARK RESERVE?

Park reserves are over 1,000 acres, maintain 80 percent of the park as natural lands, and limit developed areas of the park to no more than 20 percent of the park's acreage. Park reserves emphasize preservation and restoration of quality natural resources and provide access to these landscapes for nature-based outdoor recreation. Miesville Ravine Park Reserve is one of two park reserves within the Dakota County Park System and has been a regional park reserve since 1985.



*Existing mesic hardwood forest*

## PARK RESERVE CONTEXT

Miesville Ravine Park Reserve is located in the southeast corner of Dakota County, along the border of Dakota and Goodhue Counties, between the cities of Red Wing and Cannon Falls, both popular tourist destinations in southern Minnesota. Named for a spectacular 200-foot deep ravine, through which a cold-water trout stream, Trout Brook, flows to the Cannon River, the park reserve features bedrock bluff prairie, oak savanna, maple-basswood forest, steep terrain, and river frontage that are a hallmark of this part of the state. The park reserve is located on the edge of the Driftless Area, land that was not glaciated during the last glaciation, and therefore consists of unique geomorphology and natural communities.

The Driftless Area includes portions of southeast Minnesota, southwestern Wisconsin, and northeastern Iowa. Efforts to preserve the landscape of southeast Minnesota have been aided by the creation of the Richard J. Dorner Memorial Hardwood Forest, which encompasses the entire park reserve property. Protections like this help visitors understand the landscape's regional significance and encourage park stewardship for future generations.

The park reserve can be accessed via local roads that stem from two major highways in the area, Highway 52 or 61. Those traveling the Cannon River, which is popular for tubing and paddling, arrive at Miesville Ravine Park Reserve via a public water access site just upstream of the river's confluence with Trout Brook. Currently, the park reserve cannot be accessed directly by state, local, or regional trails. However, the Cannon Valley Trail is located across the Cannon River just 1/4-mile from Miesville Ravine Park Reserve. The 2005 Miesville Ravine Park Reserve Plan proposed a bridge over the Cannon River to provide direct access to the park reserve from the trail, but no progress has been made on the bridge connection yet to date.



*Trout Brook*



*Views from the bluff prairies*







## MIESVILLE RAVINE PARK RESERVE: GATEWAY TO THE DRIFTLESS

Miesville Ravine Park Reserve is technically still in the seven-county metro; however, its terrain and associated native plant communities are far more representative of southeastern Minnesota's unglaciated driftless region. For visitors who want a taste of the driftless' spectacular bedrock bluff prairies, narrow valleys, trout streams, and maple-basswood forests, Miesville Ravine Park Reserve offers many Metro residents the closest option to experience it.



Figure 2.3 Driftless Area and MN Trout Fishing Lakes and Streams (Source: MN DNR, Environmental Law and Policy Center)

## RECREATIONAL CONTEXT

Miesville Ravine Park Reserve provides a unique and diverse landscape for passive recreation such as birding, hiking, fishing, picnicking, and snowshoeing. Its location along the Cannon River offers access to water-based recreation such as paddling and tubing just outside of its boundaries.

Minnesota's State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) indicates that two-thirds of all recreation occurs within a half-hour drive from home. While there are several other recreational facilities within a 15-mile radius (or 20-30 minute drive) from the park reserve, none offer as expansive a landscape to explore.

However, several destinations along the Cannon River Valley offer complementary recreation, including boating, swimming, and camping opportunities at Lake Byllesby Regional Park, golfing at Gopher Hills, or skiing at Welch Village. The Mill Towns State Trail, Cannon Valley Trail, and Minnesota Water Trail all pass by or directly connect to Miesville Ravine Park Reserve, enhancing its potential to be a destination for visitors to the Cannon River Valley. The park reserve's river valley bluff landscape, trout stream, expanses of prairie and oak savanna, and vast woods to explore help it stand out from other parks within the area.

The cities of Cannon Falls and Red Wing fall within a 20-minute drive of Miesville Ravine Park Reserve. The cities offer fun activities like breweries, markets, wineries, pottery, and shopping. By promoting the park reserve to generate increased awareness, the close proximity of these tourist attractions offers great potential to increase visitorship and position the park reserve as a destination for those visiting the Cannon River Valley.



Tubing and paddling along the Cannon River



Biking along the Cannon Valley Trail

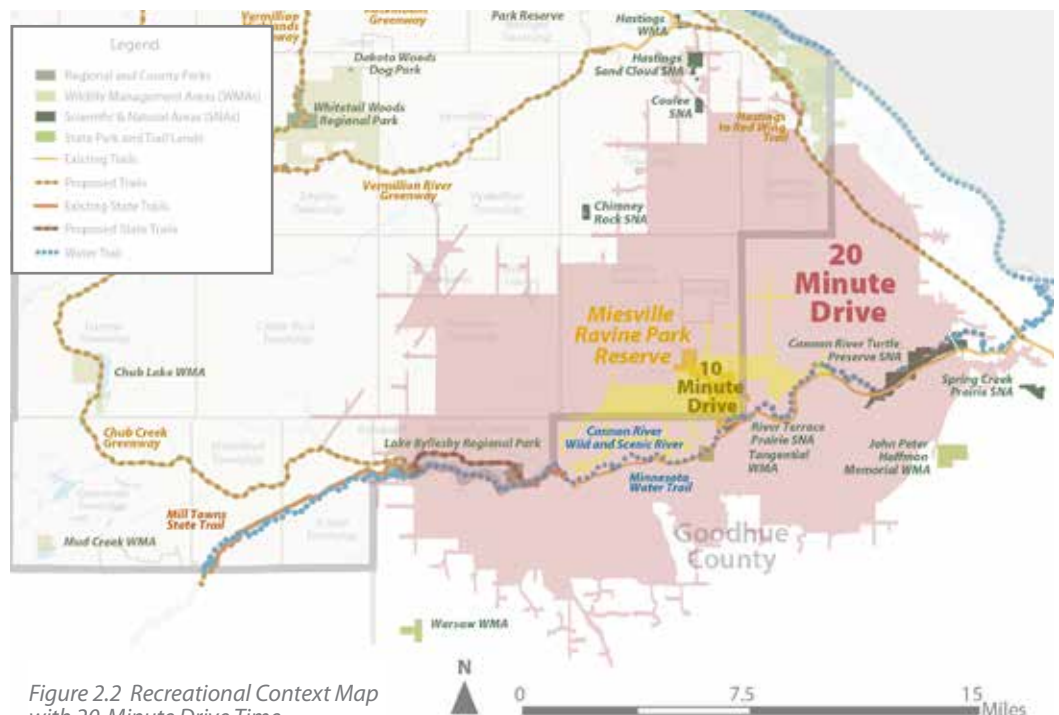


Figure 2.2 Recreational Context Map with 20-Minute Drive Time



|                     | Activity                    | City and Township Parks | Lake Byllesby      | Miesville Ravine | Scientific and Natural Areas (SNAs) | Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) |
|---------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------|------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
|                     | Type                        | Local                   | Regional           | Park Reserve     | State DNR                           | State DNR                        |
|                     | Acres                       | Varies                  | 620 acres/60 acres | 1,667 acres      | Varies                              | Varies                           |
| Passive Recreation  | Nature Observation          |                         | X                  | X                | X                                   | X                                |
|                     | Geocaching                  |                         | X                  | X                |                                     |                                  |
|                     | Picnicking                  | X                       | X                  | X                |                                     |                                  |
|                     | Paddle Sports               | X                       | X                  | X                |                                     |                                  |
|                     | Overlooks                   |                         | X                  |                  |                                     |                                  |
|                     | Fishing Pier                | X                       | X                  |                  |                                     |                                  |
|                     | Fishing                     | X                       | X                  | X                | X                                   | X                                |
|                     | Bird Blind                  |                         | X (future)         |                  |                                     |                                  |
|                     | Wildlife Management Hunting |                         |                    | X                | X                                   | X                                |
| Trails              | Hiking/Walking              | X                       | X                  | X                |                                     |                                  |
|                     | Trailhead                   |                         | X                  |                  |                                     |                                  |
| Lodging/<br>Centers | Tent Camping                |                         | X                  |                  |                                     |                                  |
|                     | RV Camping                  |                         | X                  |                  |                                     |                                  |
|                     | Camper Cabins               |                         | X (future)         |                  |                                     |                                  |
| Active Recreation   | Swimming                    | X                       | X                  |                  |                                     |                                  |
|                     | Splash Pad                  |                         | X                  |                  |                                     |                                  |
|                     | Playground                  | X                       | X                  |                  |                                     |                                  |
|                     | Nature Play                 |                         | X                  |                  |                                     |                                  |
|                     | Disc Golf                   | X                       |                    |                  |                                     |                                  |
|                     | Horseshoes                  |                         | X                  |                  |                                     |                                  |
|                     | Public Water Access         |                         | X                  | X                |                                     |                                  |
|                     | Volleyball                  | X                       | X                  |                  |                                     |                                  |
|                     | Athletic Fields & Courts    | X                       |                    |                  |                                     |                                  |
| Winter Recreation   | Cross-country Skiing        |                         | X                  |                  |                                     |                                  |
|                     | Snowshoeing                 |                         | X                  | X                |                                     |                                  |
|                     | Ice Fishing                 |                         | X                  |                  |                                     |                                  |
|                     | Sledding                    | X                       | X                  |                  |                                     |                                  |
| Amenities           | Picnic Shelter              | X                       | X                  | X                |                                     |                                  |
|                     | Restrooms                   | X                       | X                  | X                |                                     |                                  |
|                     | Grills                      | X                       | X                  | X                |                                     |                                  |
|                     | Benches                     | X                       | X                  |                  |                                     |                                  |

Table 2.1 Recreation Types, Activities, and Programming within a 20-Minute Drive Time



# DEMOGRAPHICS AND TRENDS

## TWIN CITIES REGIONAL DEMOGRAPHICS

The demographics for the Twin Cities Metro will change dramatically with the next generation. The 65 and older generation will account for one in five residents in 2040, nearly double of what it was in 2010. The region will also gain nearly 391,000 new households by 2040, but only one in five will be households with children, and there will be greater pressure on housing for post-retirement individuals. Similarly, people of color living in the metro will continue to increase, rising to nearly 16 percent of the total population. Increased racial and ethnic diversity, aging communities, and an overall change in household demographics will be a cultural shift for the region.

## DAKOTA COUNTY DEMOGRAPHICS

The current population estimate of Dakota County according to the U.S. Census Bureau is nearly 442,000, which has increased more than 10 percent since 2010. The largest age group in the county is 35 years to 39 years old, accounting for nearly 8 percent of the total population. Hispanic populations have shown the largest increase in the county over the past decade, and people reporting more than two races has nearly tripled since 2010.

With populations increasing and becoming more diverse, parks will need to be able to support these changes in order to be sustainable and serve potential visitors into the future.

## SERVICE AREA DEMOGRAPHICS

The service area defined for Miesville Ravine Park Reserve is divided into a primary and secondary service area. The primary service area is defined as the 20-minute driveshed, since most recreation occurs within a 20-minute drive from home. Most current visitors to the park live within this area. The secondary service is expanded to include all of Dakota County, since the park's unique landscape has the potential to attract visitors from further away and serve all county residents. Demographics discussed in this section encompass people who live in the primary and secondary service areas.

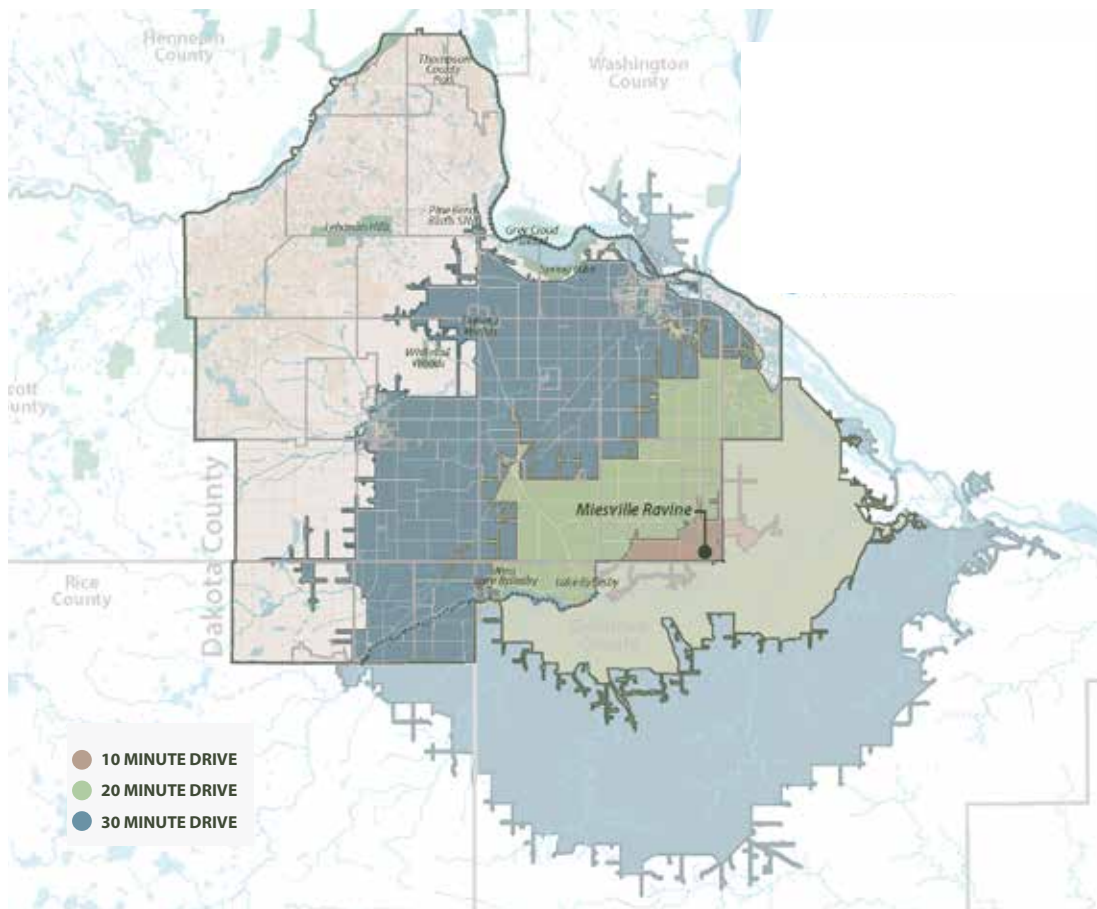


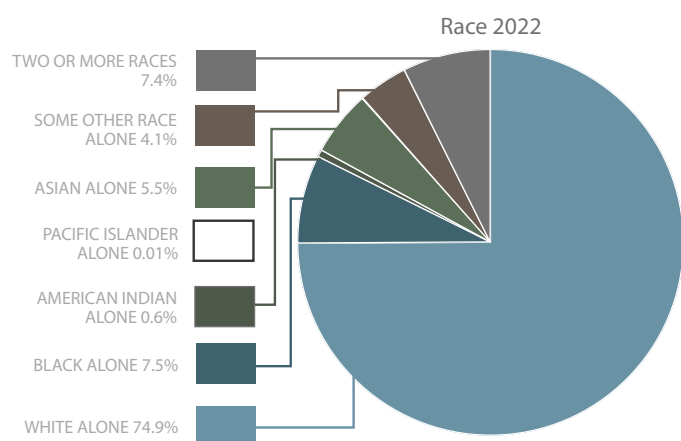
Figure 2.3 Service Area Drive Time Map



## RACE AND ETHNICITY

Within the service area there are only two races that show a projected decrease in the next five years: White Alone and Pacific Islander. White alone is the largest population in the service area making up more than 75 percent of the total population, but their projected decrease is only 0.44 percent (1,522 total residents).

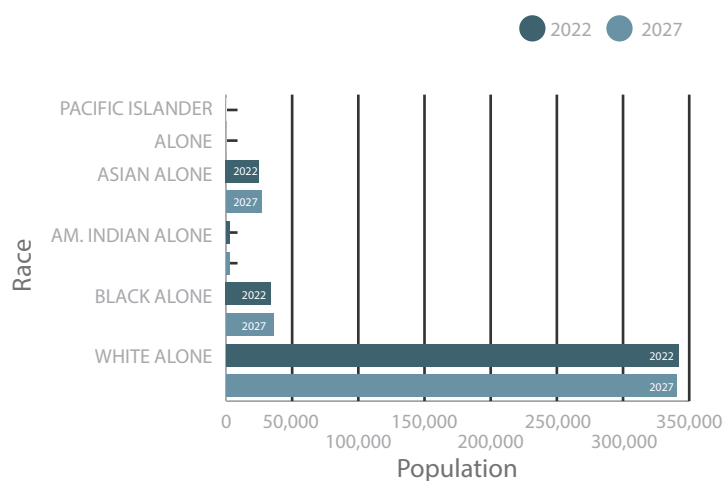
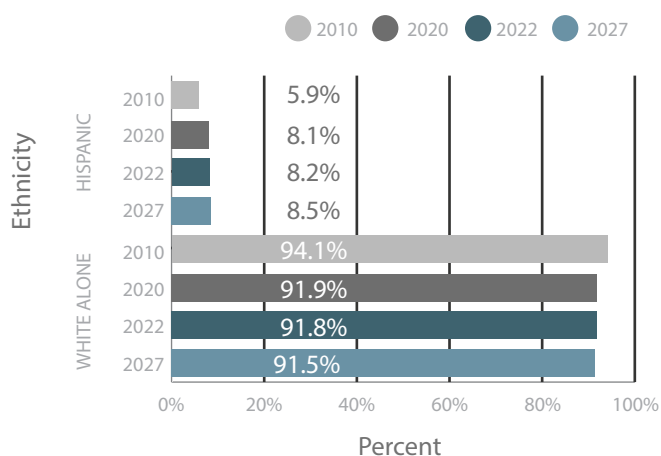
The largest projected increase for the next five years is expected to be Black Alone, Asian Alone, and Hispanic of any race. Black and Asian residents will increase by nearly 4,000 in the coming years, increasing their combined population by more than 13 percent.



## DEFINITIONS OF RACE AND ETHNICITY

Below are the federally recognized Race and Ethnicity definitions that the United States Census Bureau uses for classification. These definitions are used throughout this section to ensure consistency while reporting:

- **American Indian or Alaskan Native:** A person having origins in any of the original peoples of North and South America (including Central American) and who maintains tribal affiliations or community attachment.
- **Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander:** A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Hawaii, Guam, Samoa, or other Pacific Islands.
- **Asian:** A person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent, including, for example, Cambodia, China, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippine Islands, Thailand, and Vietnam.
- **Black or African American:** A person having origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa.
- **White:** A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa.
- **Hispanic or latino:** An ethnic distinction, a subset of a race as defined by the Federal Government which includes a person of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race. Ethnic Hispanics may report as any race.
- **Alone:** Ethnicity joined with "Alone" describes someone who only identifies as that race, and does not identify as two or more, or Hispanic.







## GROUPS UNDERREPRESENTED IN PARK VISITS

Listening, responding, and creating a welcoming environment in parks for all residents, no matter their age, race, ethnicity, income, and ability, is a pillar of both Dakota County and the Metropolitan Council. According to the 2017 Dakota County Parks Visitor Services Plan (VSP), there were nine focus groups created as part of their outreach and engagement:

- Two Hispanic/Latino groups; one immigrant and one US born
- Somali
- Vietnamese
- Indian/South Asian
- African American
- Youth
- Seniors
- Persons living with Disabilities

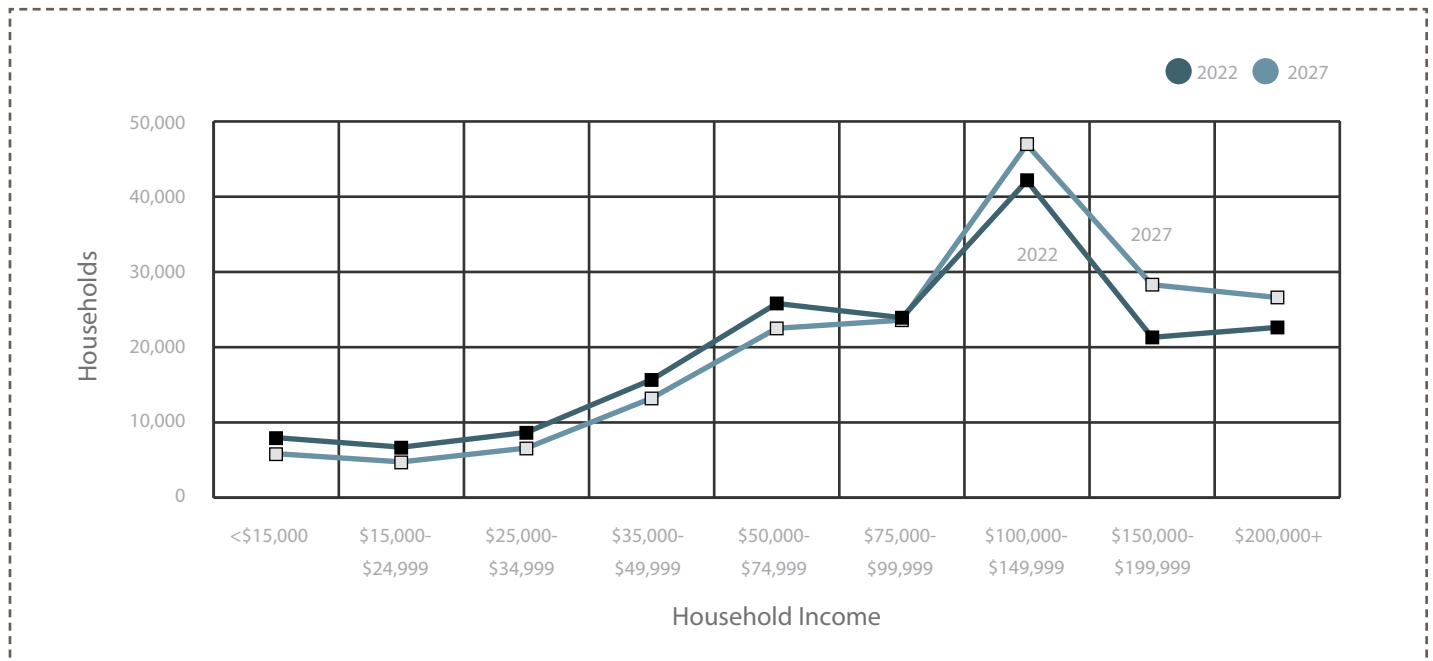
These focus groups recommended increasing awareness about Dakota County Parks as a whole by doing the following:

- Publish materials in more than one language.
- Pursue new strategies for distributing materials, like giving materials to children to then give to their parents.
- Changing the County home page to have multiple languages.
- Organizing an intentional outreach initiative to create ongoing relationships with underrepresented groups.

## INCOME

Residents within the defined service area span household incomes. There is an almost exact 50/50 split between households making below and above \$100,000/year. Projections show a nearly 18 percent gain in residents making more than \$100,000 over the next five years. Inversely, households making less than \$100,000 are expected to decrease by 14 percent. This population swing is equivalent to almost 30,000 residents.

Less than 80 percent of the Area Median Income (A.M.I.) is the Metropolitan Council threshold for Low Income. Currently, in the service area, households making less than 80 percent of the A.M.I. would be below \$78,630. Forecasted for 2027, this would rise to \$87,334, nearly an 11 percent increase over the next five years.





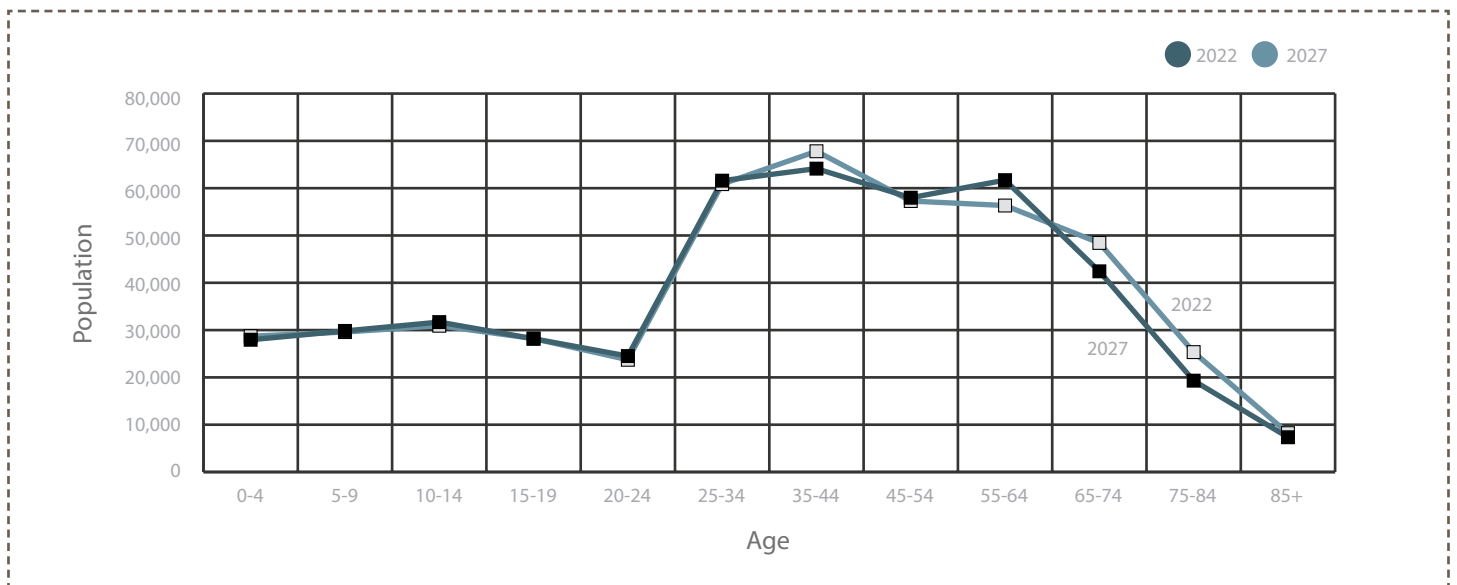
## POPULATION AND AGE

The service area for Miesville Ravine Park Reserve has a population of 456,629 as of 2022. The area has gained almost 50,000 residents since the 2010 census and is expected to gain another 8,000 to 9,000 residents over the next five years.

## AGING POPULATION



Age groups over 65 are expected to increase the most over the next five years. This age group makes up more than 15 percent of the total population of the service area and is anticipated to increase nearly 20 percent over the next five years. The only other age groups expected to grow are 30-to 49-year-olds, gaining 6 percent by 2027. All other groups are expected to decline between 2022 to 2027.



## DEMOGRAPHICS SUMMARY

The demographic trends for the 703-square-mile service area show a decline in population growth overall but an increase in certain age, race, and income groups. The development of Miesville Park Reserve over the next five years should not only cater to the general populous of nearly half a million people but should also create opportunities for the underrepresented groups in the area. These opportunities should ensure welcoming environments for people of all backgrounds, as well as create greater awareness for the Dakota County Parks system as a whole.

### STRATEGIES FOR PROGRAMMING AND FACILITIES IN THE PARK RESERVE SHOULD CONSIDER:

- **Income disparity** - provide park access, programs, and rentals affordable to those with lower incomes.
- **Race and Ethnicity** - provide park programming, opportunities, and a welcoming experiences for new visitors with diverse backgrounds.
- **Population and Age** - provide programming and facilities for a middle age and aging population.



# TRENDS

## DEMAND FORECASTING AND NEEDS

Based on projected demographics for both Dakota County and the metro, the potential visitors for Miesville Ravine Park Reserve are expected to be older guests, more diverse, with varying household incomes. Catering to its future audience depends on how the park reserve is programmed and how it markets itself to potential visitors within the surrounding areas.

- As Baby Boomers age, their recreation needs change. According to the 2022 Outdoor Recreation Participation Report, the number of participants 55 years and older increased more than 14 percent since 2019. Baby Boomers will require facilities and equipment that meet their mobility needs as they age, as well as programming and passive recreation opportunities that cater to their interests, capabilities, and activity level. ADA accessibility in parks and within marketing/informational materials will become increasingly more important for this group.
- People of color tend to participate in nature-based recreation less than white and/or non-Hispanic populations, so introducing these populations to outdoor recreational activities and encouraging continued participation will be essential to maintaining use of our regional parks and trails system in the future. Dakota County's Visitor Services Plan indicates that it will be important to overcome people's perceptions of park safety and promote awareness of the park system and its offerings.
- On a national level, since the Covid-19 pandemic, the number of park and recreational users continues to increase. Isolation highlighted the importance of having great outdoor spaces, and people who had never participated in recreational activities such as camping or paddling gave them a try for the first time. The outdoor participation base has grown 6.9 percent since March of 2020. These gains in participants are anticipated to be maintained, as it has been reported that once an individual begins taking part in outdoor activities, they are likely to continue the habit. Marketing efforts and the pursuit of safe and well-connected access to the Dakota County Parks and Greenways System can help encourage more residents to get outside.
- Miesville Ravine Park Reserve's 2021 Visitation Estimate, according to the Met Council, was 35,077 visits, approximately one-seventh of the total visits made to Lake Byllesby Regional Park just upstream. This makes Miesville Ravine Park Reserve the least visited Dakota County Park. Overall, Dakota County Regional Parks and Trails were estimated to have nearly 2.3 million visits in 2021.

### Providing a Growing Twin Cities Metro with Connections to the Outdoors

As the boundaries of the metro continue to grow into once-rural areas, and more of the county becomes urbanized, providing residents with opportunities to reconnect with nature becomes increasingly important. Miesville Ravine Park Reserve's proximity to the Twin Cities, Cannon Falls, Red Wing, state and regional trail systems, other large recreation hubs such as Lake Byllesby Regional Park, and its abundance of high-quality lands to explore all makes it well-positioned to provide the surrounding community with a unique natural experience.

As national trends continue to show an increase in the number of people interested in outdoor recreation, it is more important than ever to find ways to introduce new populations to nature-based recreation and to incorporate new activities that offer exciting ways to get outdoors. Participation in nature-based activities helps create citizens who have appreciation for the natural world, which in turn raises social and political support for resource conservation activities. It is important generate new champions among future generations.





## Incorporating New and Emerging Recreational Activities

Activities that could be considered appropriate for inclusion at Miesville Ravine Park Reserve include:

- Mountain Biking
- Night Trail Use
- Kayaking
- Stand-up Paddle Boarding
- Boardsailing

While not all of these activities are suitable for the park reserve, strategic implementation of new recreational experiences at Miesville Ravine Park Reserve could improve visitorship and experience:

- Implementation of night trail use in certain parts of the park reserve (closest to existing amenities such as picnic shelters, restrooms, the fire ring, and power sources) could offer a unique experience for visitors.
- Miesville's proximity to the Cannon River, existing public water access points, and the current number of established outfitters in the area offering tubing and other rentals makes it ideally placed for water-based activities. Improving water access sites and adding equipment rentals for paddling would allow the park reserve to offer more for visitors in the summer months.



### Interest in History and Culture

As urban and suburban areas continue to spread outward and grow into once-rural and natural spaces, there is a growing desire and sense of responsibility to preserve, protect, and celebrate these landscapes and their rich cultural history.

The park reserve is situated at the transition from the glaciated to the unglaciated driftless region and offers characteristics unique to the Metro, more often associated with southeast Minnesota.

Dakota people hunted, settled, buried their relatives, and stewarded the landscape of the Cannon River valley for thousands of years. When the first Euro-Americans came to the area in the mid-1800s, they found it inviting for many of the same reasons as the Native Americans who lived in the area: a year-round water source, rich soils, and plenty of fish and game. However, Euro-Americans also saw prairies ripe for farming and forests for timber.

The park reserve is steeped in rich history and a number of historical and cultural remnants can still be seen on-site today. The park reserve has undergone massive restoration efforts to restore its prairies and oak savannas, and visitors can enjoy fishing Trout Brook much like past inhabitants had. This story offers a unique opportunity to future generations to learn how the landscape was formed, utilized, and restored over many years. Interpretive features such as self-guided tours, educational signage, interactive art pieces, and the use of certain materials are just a handful of ways that the future park reserve could celebrate and educate visitors about its past and create meaning and connections for present and future visitors.



### Mental Health and Well Being

The overlap of physical and mental health has been recognized as an important consideration for parks, trails, and recreation programming in recent years. With an increase in post-traumatic stress disorder, and increasingly busy lives, general physical and mental health issues, and a global pandemic that isolated many from gathering indoors with loved ones and dramatically changed their daily routines, people are eager for respite. Nationally, activities such as “yoga in the park,” forest bathing, and calm spaces to conduct meditation have increasingly grown in popularity. Other activities, such as birding, which Miesville Ravine Park Reserve is a hot spot for, and exercise (running, biking, or walking) are all known to greatly contribute to mental health and overall physical well being. Parks and recreation departments have been tasked with providing facilities and programs that help people lead healthier lives on both a mental and physical level.



### Combating a Changing Climate

Climate change, exponential population increase, and the effects of an ever-growing built environment on our planet’s health are some of the most critical and pressing issues of our time. Reductions in air quality and increases in heat waves are health concerns with real-life impacts. The National Recreation and Park Association states that parks and open spaces can be a big part of the solution. Preserving more of the natural environment and planning for parks can help reduce harmful pollutants in the air, cool urban heat islands, minimize flood risks, improve water quality, and help reduce the impacts of severe storms or weather. Miesville Ravine has a rich cultural history of Native American stewardship, and coordination with local tribes to educate visitors about how they care for the land could inspire guests to utilize these practices in their own lives, growing the impact beyond the park reserve’s boundaries. In turn, a healthier planet overall can contribute to healthier ecosystems that support wildlife populations like bees and pollinators that directly benefit humans by providing food security and other necessities.



### Emphasis on Trails

Trails continue to be in high demand among users looking to utilize outdoor facilities as a means of living a physically healthier lifestyle. According to the 2022 Outdoor Recreation Participation Report, hiking, biking, and running remain among the top five most popular recreational activities that populations of all ethnic and most all age groups continue to participate in. As an added benefit, using trails is usually free or low-cost for those with smaller household incomes. Statewide, regional destination trails with associated facilities and amenities, such as trailheads, campsites, views/overlooks, cultural interpretation, and connections to popular local destinations, are increasingly in demand. Miesville Ravine Park Reserve’s close proximity to existing trail infrastructure places it in a good position to become a future destination within the Cannon River Valley.







### Standardizing Inclusion and ADA and Accessibility

With a drastically increasing population of residents over 55 years of age within the service area for Miesville Ravine Park Reserve, a focus on providing safe and accessible ADA-compliant facilities and amenities, as well as accessible marketing materials, will help to encourage future use among baby boomers. Legally, very little is required to meet ADA requirements, and design within Miesville Ravine Park Reserve should consider these regulations a minimum standard, striving to do more. ADA-accessible trails, ramps, bathroom facilities, and adequate parking benefit all potential guests.

Physical disabilities are not the only considerations needed when planning for a diverse population. Mental handicaps should also be considered in design, and design should provide safety in a rugged outdoor environment. Nationally, amenities such as fenced inclusive playgrounds, sensory gardens, or tactile interpretive elements have become more standard practice.



### Ecotourism and Birding

Ecotourism is tourism that centers around natural environments. Traveling to a place to experience threatened, exotic, or endangered lands rich in ecological diversity. Miesville Ravine is seen as an 'ecological gem' within its regional context and the Dakota County Parks and Greenways system. It has undergone extensive restoration efforts to bring past agricultural lands back to their original state and has drastically improved the quality of other natural features like Trout Brook. These efforts have led to the park reserve supporting a wide array of wildlife, and Miesville Ravine is known today to be an incredible birding hotspot within the Twin Cities metro area where numerous critical bird species call home. The addition of bird blinds, organized and self-guided birding experiences or tours, marketing materials, and sensitive access points to view them has great potential to increase visitorship to the park reserve.

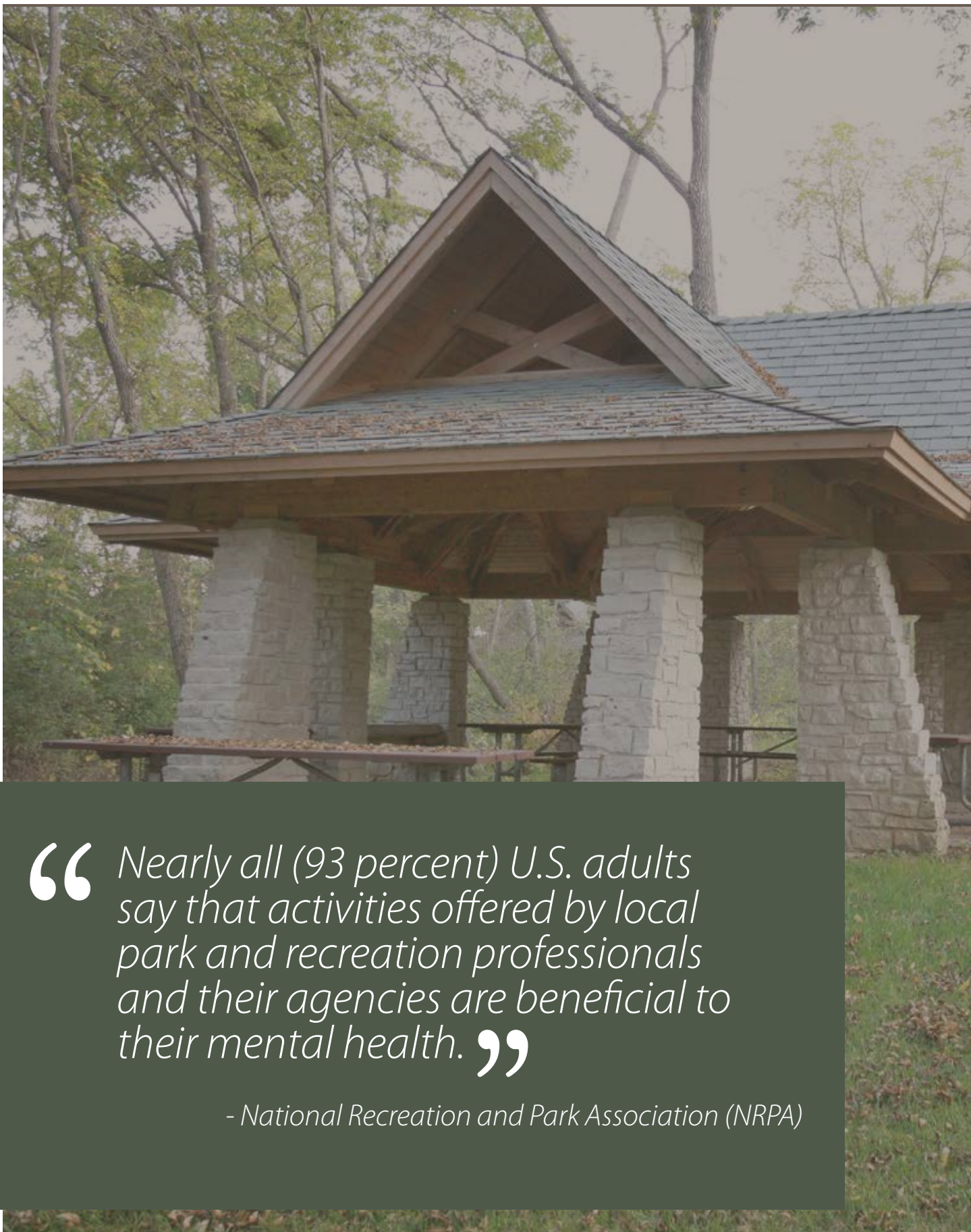
## RESPONDING TO EXISTING VISITOR DESIRES

Miesville Ravine Park Reserve is not widely visited today. Many respondents within community engagement efforts stated that they did not know where the park reserve was located or had not visited because they did not know it existed, or the drive was too far from home for what Miesville Ravine offers in terms of recreation. During community outreach phase 1, the design team heard an overwhelming desire to keep Miesville Ravine Park Reserve as natural as possible and to find ways to add more programming as sustainably as possible. The most common recreational activities that occur within the park reserve today are hiking, walking, or running along existing trails, paddling and tubing along the Cannon River, fishing Trout Brook, nature observation, and relaxation.

Potential users expressed interest in activating park spaces with events, adding more things for children and disabled users to enjoy, preserving wildlife and landscapes while offering more trail routes to view scenic overlooks and observe wildlife habitats, finding ways to respectfully celebrate the land's unique cultural history, and making the park reserve more available to explore in the winter months with activities such as groomed ski trails, snowshoeing expeditions, or fat-tire biking.

The Cannon River along the park reserve's border, Cannon Valley Trail just south of the river, and close proximity to other parks like Lake Byllesby Regional Park put Miesville Ravine Park Reserve in a great position as a regional destination.





“ Nearly all (93 percent) U.S. adults say that activities offered by local park and recreation professionals and their agencies are beneficial to their mental health. ”

- National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA)



# PARTNER AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT AND PARTICIPATION

## PHASE 1 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT: ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Community engagement activities for the first phase of the Miesville Ravine Park Reserve Plan update were held September-November 2022. The purpose was to introduce the park reserve and planning process to Dakota County residents, users, tribal representatives, and stakeholder organizations to collect meaningful input regarding existing issues and future opportunities. Engagement activities included stakeholder meetings, walks in the park reserve followed by discussion about issues and opportunities, phone calls, and a mailing to 500 residents who live near the park reserve.

Four hundred and twenty-five respondents participated in an online Polco questionnaire that discussed current use, existing conditions, and future desires. The questionnaire was open for comment from September 28th to November 6th, 2022. A Social Pinpoint “ideas wall” was available on the Engagement Opportunities storymap, where visitors could post notes about the park reserve that were considered as the project team moved forward with concept development. Both online engagement tools were well-used, however, it should be noted that the questionnaire results are not statistically valid. Below is a summary of the Phase 1 community engagement findings:

### KEY FINDINGS:

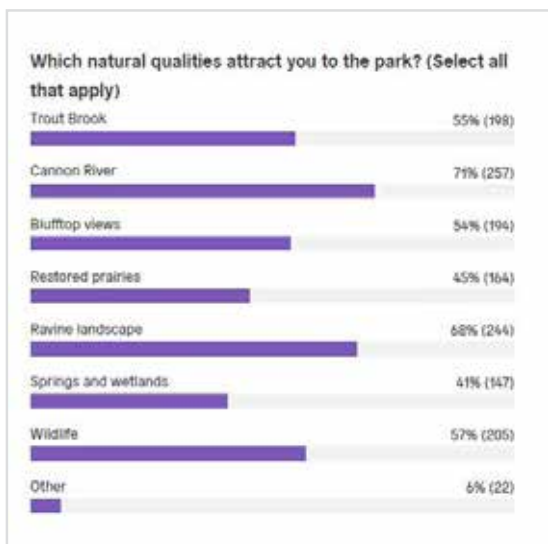
- A majority of those who responded stated that they rarely or never visit Miesville Ravine Park Reserve. The most common factors that prevent them are:
  - **Distance:** Over half would have to drive more than 20 miles to each the park reserve.
  - **Programming:** A lack of interesting activities, trail length, biking or mountain biking trails, and sufficient amenities like drinking water, trail benches, or wayfinding.
  - **Familiarity:** Many respondents stated that they just did not know that Miesville Ravine Park Reserve existed or what it had to offer.
  - **Busy lives:** Numerous respondents commented that work schedules, small children, and lack of time forced them to visit parks that are closer to home.



Screenshot of the Social Pinpoint ideas wall



Screenshot of the phase 1 Polco questionnaire



Polco questionnaire results

- **ADA compliance:** A number of comments asked that making the park reserve friendly to those with physical and mental disabilities be at the forefront of future planning efforts as they are unable to enjoy much of the park reserve in its current condition.

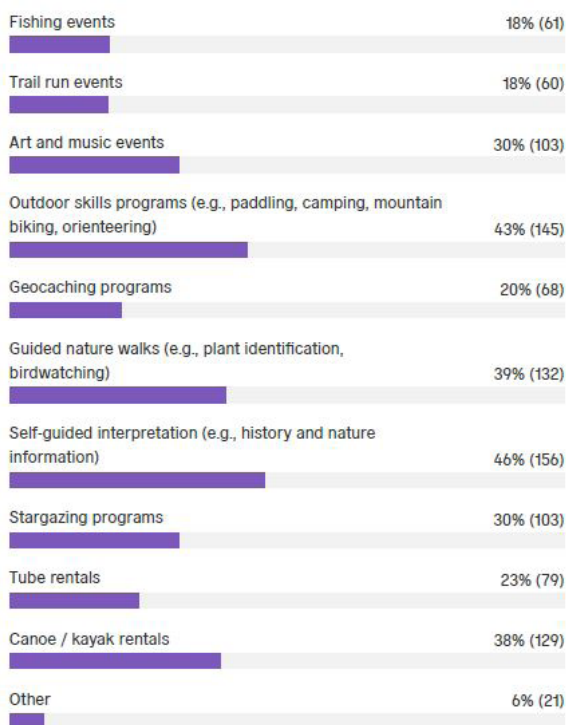
- **Outfitters and bus traffic from recreational tubing along the Cannon Valley River:** Constant busing of large crowds in the summer months can make the roads feel dangerous and ruin the overall peaceful experience of the park reserve.

- Guests choose to visit during the spring, summer, and fall seasons. Winter is an overall less popular time of year to make the trek, but winter recreation like snowshoeing, fat-tire biking, and cross-country skiing along existing trails was mentioned often in open-ended answers.
- Visitors to Miesville Ravine Park Reserve primarily come to the park reserve today for hiking, walking, and running. Nature observation and relaxation both came in at a close second. Other uses, such as fishing Trout Brook and paddling or floating along the Cannon River are known to be popular activities but were not strongly represented in the questionnaire results. These replies make sense, as many comments stated that trails seemed to them like the park reserve's only current recreational option.
- Biking and geocaching also appeared in the results as popular alternate park reserve activities that are not officially offered as uses today. Miesville Ravine Park Reserve does not currently offer any bike-riding facilities, but a small group of gravel riders have been known to use the unpaved roads through and around the park reserve.
- The top characteristics of Miesville that attract current visitors to the park reserve include:
  - The Cannon River
  - Trout Brook
  - Blufftop views
  - Ravine landscape
  - Wildlife viewing
  - Diversity of plant life
- There are numerous features at Miesville Ravine Park Reserve that respondents feel are important to protect, and a majority would like to see the natural environment remain the primary focus with any future planning.
- Protecting the integrity of the Cannon River, the Cannon Valley Watershed, natural springs, Trout Brook, and other naturally occurring water features is at the top of the list when it comes to considerations for future design. Protecting existing and known cultural resources on site also received a number of mentions and should be carefully considered.
- The park reserve would benefit from invasive species removal (primarily buckthorn) and continued restoration efforts.
- The park reserve's two existing trail loops are the most commonly utilized recreational features for visitors to date. Ways that these features could be improved include:
  - Expanding trails into currently unreachable areas of the park reserve.
  - Connecting trails to existing regional trail facilities like the Cannon Valley Trail.



- Creating longer stretches of trail with loops that are easy to navigate, have varying levels of physical intensity, and include ADA-accessible options.
- Diversifying current trail uses to include activities like cycling (paving some segments), mountain biking, and groomed cross-country skiing.
- Potential future park reserve users would be interested in seeing camping facilities such as camper cabins, primitive campsites, full hook-up RV sites, and canoe-in camping options.
- Miesville would likely attract more visitors by offering:
  - Drinking water on site and updates to existing facilities like restrooms and shoreline picnic areas.
  - Access to scenic overlooks that capture the bluffs and Cannon River Valley.
  - Improving access points; improved shoreline and public water access sites, connections to trail systems outside of the park reserve's boundaries, and clear directions for vehicles.
  - Trail amenities like benches, wayfinding, and bike repair stations.
  - Mountain biking that is designed and added in a sustainable manner.
  - Keeping the park reserve natural with more access to different types of landscapes.
  - Adding educational and interpretive features that highlight the landscape's natural beauty.

**What potential events, education programs, and rentals would interest you at Miesville Ravine Park Reserve? (Select all that apply)**



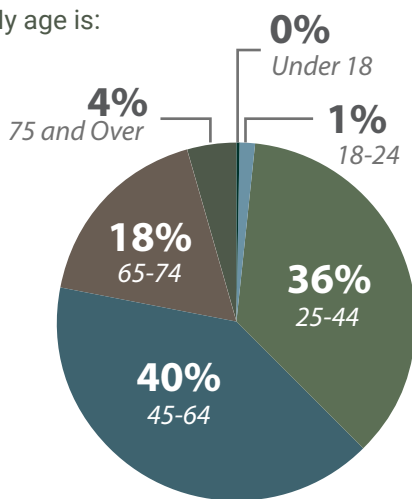
Polco questionnaire results

- Potential users are interested in activating spaces with music or art, outdoor skills programs, guided nature tours, self-guided interpretive tours, education that highlights the land's Native American history, and canoe/kayak rentals.
- Many who use and love Miesville Ravine Park Reserve today consider it a special and unique environment within the Dakota County Parks System. There is an overwhelming desire to both see more facilities and amenities within the park reserve and keep it as natural and undeveloped as possible. Finding the balance between attracting more visitors with more things to do and preserving Miesville Ravine Park Reserve's natural beauty is a challenge that both design and policy will need to work to address.

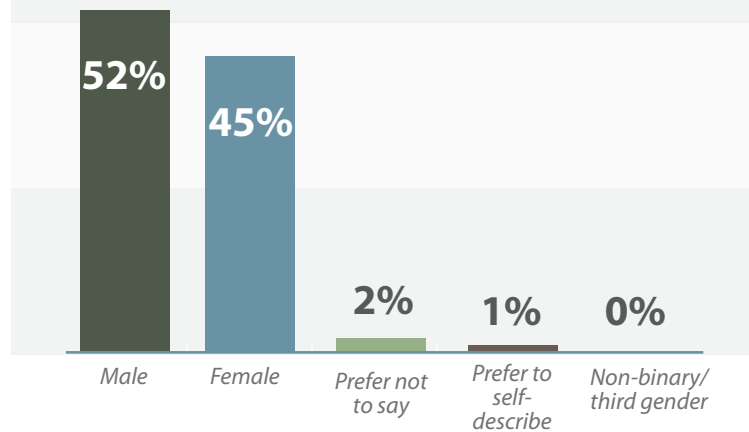


## POLCO QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

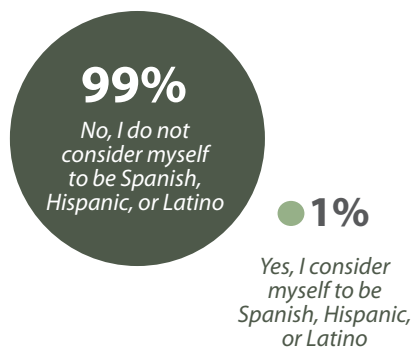
My age is:



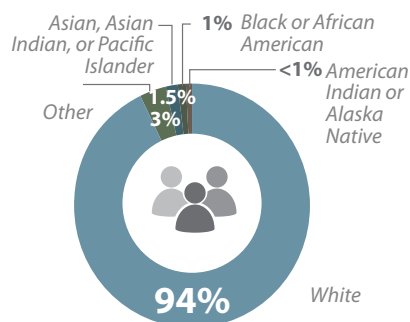
I Identify as:



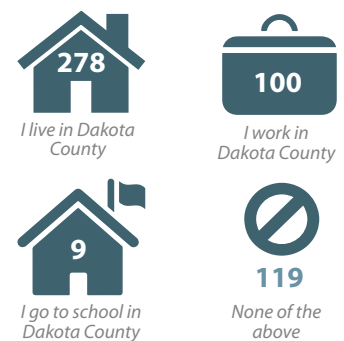
Are you Spanish, Hispanic, or Latino?



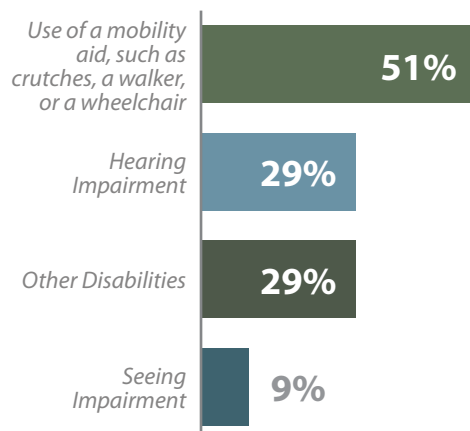
What is your race?



Which describes you?



65 respondents stated that they or someone in their household has disabilities that should be considered as the design team works on a plan for Miesville Ravine Park Reserve. These disabilities include:



What types of things should we consider in the Miesville Ravine Park Reserve Plan that would help people with disabilities enjoy their visit?

- ADA has a low bar, target responses from people with disabilities.
- Interpretive features and sound assistance headphones.
- Sensory experiences.
- ADA playground equipment.
- Places to relax and take a break (overlooks, bench seating along trails, picnic areas).
- Clear wayfinding with large print and icons.
- Safe river access (worries about disabled child safety along shoreline).
- Consider adaptive design with each feature e.g. ADA disc golf course, trails, mountain biking experience. Try not to limit what they can and cannot take part in when possible.
- A number of comments expressed concern about paving trails and adding too much infrastructure and expressed the desire to see park reserve remain natural.



## SOCIAL PINPOINT WORD WALL SUMMARY

Within both the word wall and the Polco questionnaire responses, it is clear that current and future park reserve visitors love and appreciate its existing natural environment. From wildlife observation to fishing Trout Brook, guests want to see the park reserve's plant and animal communities protected, they want to learn more about them, and they desire more opportunities and ways to enjoy them.

"Keep it simple. The beauty of the park is that it's relatively unimproved compared to other parks. Keep it as natural as possible."

"I'd like more picnic tables with views of the river."

"The Trout Brook is one of the best places to fish near the metro area. I fly fish for brown and brook trout in Trout Brook frequently. The trout in the section within a half mile of the Cannon River are thriving. There is good cover to fish from the bank with stealth. Above half a mile, the brook is harder to get to and very sandy without a lot of structure. There is a lack of good trails on the upper section near the main road so fishing access is more difficult and hard to explore."

"I think in general, the park should stay as natural as possible. The park is a gem and all of its diverse and unique habitat should be protected."

"Explain some of the history of the park. Who owned the homesteads/farmsteads, info about fish hatchery, etc."

"Reroute the trail near north parking lot and replace the small timber bridge to prevent further streambank erosion and provide an improved crossing."

"There is no drinking water."

"I'd like Bison and Prairie Chicken restored to provide more wildlife to view."

- "Safer way to climb up river bank. Often muddy and slippery."
- "An interpretive piece on the history of the small gauge railroad from Randolph to Red Wing."
- "More paths near wild areas."
- "More trout access spots."

"Maintained mountain bike trails."

"I'd love to be able to hike at least 6 miles in the park. Today is a long way to drive for less than an hour of hiking."

"I love spotting fish in Trout Brook. The water is so clear!"

"Formalize gravel bike loops on the surrounding scenic gravel roads as an additional park amenity."

"I'd like it if the roads that go through the park were paved."



# PHASE 2 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT: DRAFT PLAN REVIEW

Community engagement activities for the second phase of the Miesville Ravine Park Reserve Plan update were held October-December 2023. The purpose was to offer Dakota County residents, park visitors, stakeholder representatives, and partners the opportunity to review the plan, suggest changes, and provide feedback on priorities for future improvements. Engagement was conducted in conjunction with the Natural Resources Management planning process.

Notification of opportunities for review was done through a mailing to 300 area residents, postings on Dakota County's social media accounts, a flyer in the Pleasant Hill Library in Hastings, and emails to project partners, nearby townships, stakeholders, individuals who had rented the picnic shelters at Miesville Ravine Regional Park Reserve or Lake Byllesby Regional Park in the last five years, and those who participate in the annual deer hunt at Miesville.

Online and in person opportunities to provide input and feedback were made available during the public review period and are summarized in Table 3.1.

For the most part, feedback was supportive of the plan recommendations and priorities for improvements. Many appreciated the plan's focus on natural resource and cultural landscape protection and management while making improvements to allow visitors access to more of the park. Many appreciate the recommended improvements that will allow people with physical disabilities better access to Trout Brook and the Cannon River area. Because effort was made to reach a variety of stakeholders, the focus of feedback varied by outreach method and audience. Feedback was received from people very familiar with the park as well as from people who had never visited the park.

| Feedback Opportunity   | Primary Audience  | Number of Participants  |
|--|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Online comments within the plan document</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>General public</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4 individuals and Trout Unlimited</li> </ul> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Online questionnaire</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>General public</li> <li>Most visited the park less frequently (36% at least once a year and 24% less frequently than once a year)</li> <li>84% of respondents were white, age 22-44</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>33</li> </ul>                                |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pop-up at Hispanic Advocacy and Community Empowerment Through Research (HACER) resource fair</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>General public</li> <li>Latinos</li> <li>Likely to be unfamiliar with the park</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Approximately 15-20</li> </ul>               |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Online and in-person open house</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>People who live near the park and are familiar with the park</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Approximately 20-25</li> </ul>               |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Partner, agency, and stakeholder meetings</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stakeholders and organizations that have a specific interest in the park</li> <li>Meetings with:<br/>Dakota County Citizen Public Art Committee, Douglas Township Board of Supervisors, Tribal Historic Preservation Officers, MnDNR, Welch Mill Outfitters, Cannon River Canoe and Bike Rental</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>6 agencies</li> </ul>                        |

Table 3.1 Phase II Community Engagement



## KEY FINDINGS:

- Most participants appreciate the priority placed on natural resource management, Trout Brook restoration, and improving access to more of the park (open houses, online questionnaire, online comments).
- Wildlife viewing and river recreation are high priorities (HACER Resource Fair).
- Trail based recreation is a high priority (HACER Resource Fair, online questionnaire).
- Some participants feel that the plan recommends too much recreation development (open houses, online questionnaire).
- Some participants feel that the plan does not provide enough recreation and requested facilities such as recreational vehicle camping (online questionnaire).
- Some participants requested that mountain biking be allowed in this park. They expressed interest in a signature mountain biking facility in the southern portion of Dakota County and this park is desirable for mountain biking due to southern location and steep topography (online questionnaire).
- Many participants recognize that current Cannon River access is unsafe and creates conflicts on Orlando Trail. There is support for prioritizing improved boat launch access. Specific recommendations for improvements include maximizing parking, ensuring turnaround is wide enough for people loading and unloading, creating an area for buses to wait, providing wayfinding on the river to alert people to pull-out spots, creating a large beach area for entering/exiting the river (open houses, Welch Mill Outfitters, Cannon River Canoe and Bike Rental, MnDNR, online questionnaire).
- There were several requests for boundary clarifications. Specific requests include not depicting inholdings as part of the park on public facing maps and better signage between the park boundary and private property (open houses).
- There were requests for better wayfinding including signage that clarifies winter-use rules and better wayfinding from the Cannon River (online questionnaire, Cannon River Canoe and Bike Rental, Welch Mill Outfitters).
- Some feel that the park does not provide safe spaces for people of color. Suggested improvements include signage in languages other than English and increasing presence of park staff and law enforcement to address people with guns in the park (online questionnaire).
- There is support for Indigenous people's involvement and engagement with the park and concern for Dakota County's accountability with this (online questionnaire).

### MOUNTAIN BIKING

Some participants requested that mountain biking be allowed in this park. They expressed interest in a signature mountain biking facility in the southern portion of Dakota County and stated this park is desirable for mountain biking due to its southern location and steep topography (online questionnaire).

Mountain biking is not being recommended in Miesville Ravine Park Reserve at this time to protect the natural and cultural landscape, which are the park's defining and signature features. Specific reasons include:

- The park is replete with steeply sloped areas that have fragile soils that are highly sensitive to erosion. The plan seeks to minimize the number of and width of trails in these areas.
- The plan seeks to minimize potential soil erosion flowing into Trout Brook, a sensitive cold water trout stream habitat, by limiting uphill trail development.
- The park's ravine slopes contain plant communities designated by the State of Minnesota as Vulnerable and Imperiled to loss, local extirpation, or extinction of specific plant communities from Minnesota. Minimizing recreation impact to these areas is a goal of the plan.
- Large parts of the park contain Indigenous Traditional Cultural Places (TCP). The plan seeks to limit the amount of recreation in these areas.
- Currently, Dakota County Parks does not operate shared use mountain biking and hiking trails for safety reasons.

The Dakota County Parks Department will work with the mountain bike community to explore opportunities for mountain biking in the southern portion of the County. Currently the Parks Department operates a signature mountain biking facility at Lebanon Hills Regional Park.



## ONLINE QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS - KEY FINDINGS:

- **Respondents visited infrequently:** Most visited the park at least once a year (36%) and 24% visited less frequently than once a year.
- **Respondents support habitat restoration:** Most respondents supported habitat and Trout Brook restoration among their top natural resource improvement priorities.
- **Natural surface trails are valued as a recreation priority:** Most people selected “other” for their top recreation improvement priorities, with the second highest category being natural surface walking/hiking trails that have minimal impact. Among those who selected “other,” many asked for mountain biking trails and a few asked for paved roads through the park and campsites.
- **Respondents support increasing park use.** People love the park and would love to see increased use of it.

### Suggestions:

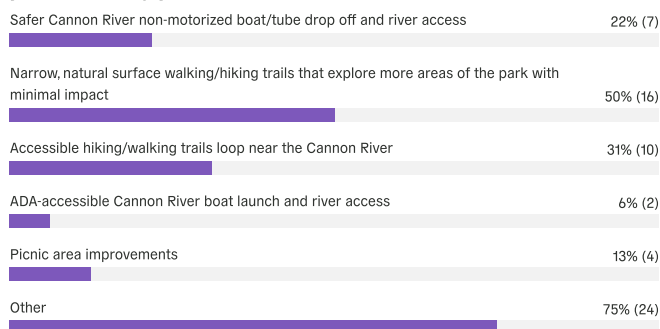
#### Long-Range Plan:

- Paving Township and County Roads adjacent to the park
- Mountain biking trails (or a clear explanation of why this is not recommended)
- Creation of signage that reflects Dakota County’s intentions for winter trail use rules
- Cessation of mowing the prairie
- Restrooms
- More safe spaces for people of color; signage in languages other than English

### Survey Demographics:

- Most respondents were ages 24-44
- 84% of respondents were white (2 were American Indian or Alaskan Native and 3 identified as “Other” for race)

#### What are your top recreation improvement priorities that would increase your use and enjoyment of Miesville Ravine Park Reserve?



Polco questionnaire results

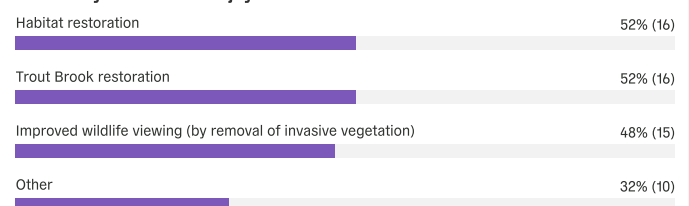
### Natural Resource Management Plan:

- Increase education and presence for rule and law enforcement to protect people, plants, and animals in the park.
- Addition of bison and prairie chicken (some requested to not add bison)
- More tent campsites
- Mowing less or less widely

### What people liked about the plans:

- People liked the connection to Cannon Valley trails system, as well as expansion of trails within the park.
- A neighboring resident supported removal of buckthorn and maintaining prairie grass areas.
- People supported indigenous people’s involvement and engagement with the park and voiced a concern for Dakota County’s accountability.
- People supported increased accessibility (both ADA access and park access points).
- People supported maintaining prairie grasses and controlling invasive species.

#### What are your top natural resources improvement priorities that would increase your use and enjoyment of Miesville Ravine Park Reserve?



Polco questionnaire results



# PARTNER ENGAGEMENT

Partner engagement occurred during the two engagement periods in Fall 2022 and Winter 2023. Affected agencies include:

- Douglas Township. The majority of the park is within Douglas Township.
- Minnesota DNR. Trout Brook is a designated trout stream, the Cannon River is a State designated Wild and Scenic River and is a State water trail, and the park falls within the Richard J. Dorer Memorial Hardwood State Forest.
- Cannon Valley Trail. The plan recommends connection to the Cannon Valley Trail.
- Dakota County Soil and Water Conservation District. The park is within the soil and water conservation district.
- North Cannon River Watershed Management Organization (NCRWMO). The park is within the NCRWMO.
- Tribal Historic Preservation Officers for Dakota Tribes located within Minnesota. The park contains Traditional Cultural Places (TCP).

| Organization  | Outreach   | Feedback and Recommendations   |
|---|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Douglas Township Board of Supervisors</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 12/5/2022 presented project overview.</li> <li>• 11/6/2023 presented draft plan.</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initial concern about park over-development, interest in improvements to benefit the community and improving access.</li> <li>• Support for plan recommendations. Plan has appropriate level of development.</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minnesota Department of Natural Resources</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 11/7/2022 meeting with staff, project overview and initial input.</li> <li>• 12/08/2023 and 12/14/2023 meeting with staff, plan recommendations.</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussed working within Cannon River Wild and Scenic River rules and potential water trail amenities.</li> <li>• Support for plan recommendations. Wild and Scenic River rules will apply. Mutual interest in natural resource management information sharing.</li> <li>• Potential for partnership regarding future boat launch and water trail amenities.</li> </ul> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cannon Valley Trail</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 11/07/2022 meeting with staff.</li> <li>• Fall 2023 email notice of Public Review period and opportunities to provide input.</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support for potential future trail connection, which is recommended in the plan.</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dakota County Soil and Water Conservation District</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff participated on Core Team for plan development.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plan is compatible with Dakota County Soil and Water Conservation District goals and programs. Continued collaboration on land conservation within the larger watershed will occur.</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• North Cannon River Watershed Management Organization (NCRWMO)</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fall 2023 email notice of Public Review period and opportunities to provide input.</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Land preservation ties into the watershed plan, appreciation for the work to preserve and enhance land within the park.</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tribal Historic Preservation Officers Cansa'yapi / Lower Sioux Indian Community</li> <li>• Pezihutazizi / Oyate Upper Sioux Community</li> <li>• Tinta Wita / Prairie Island Indian Community</li> <li>• Mdewakanton / Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Upper Sioux Community was contracted to conduct Traditional Cultural Places Survey to identify culturally sensitive sites and areas.</li> <li>• Meeting to review draft plan 12/13/2023. Mdewakanton Sioux Community attended.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Avoid recreation in TCP areas.</li> <li>• Plan recommends limiting access to sensitive areas and continued consultation, partnership, and exploration of co-management for protection and management of TCP areas.</li> <li>• Plan recommendations are in the right direction. Interest in future relationship building and partnership.</li> </ul>                     |

Table 3.2 Partner Outreach, Feedback, and Recommendations



# EQUITY ANALYSIS

## PROJECT DATA

### RACE AND ETHNICITY

Demographics of those living within three miles of the park reserve in 2019 are white (97%), Black (2%), multi-racial (1%), Asian (0.00%), American Indian (0.00%), and Hispanic (0.00%). Median Income in the three-mile service area is \$106,728, and 8 percent of households are below 185 percent of the poverty line. Sixteen percent of the population within the three-mile service area is over 65, and 20 percent is under 15. Demographics in the larger, 20-minute drive service area are more diverse with white (74.9%), Black (8%), multi-racial (7.40%), Asian (5.50%), American Indian (0.60%), and Hispanic (8.50%).

Dakota County's Parks, including Miesville Ravine Park Reserve, are not drawing residents from all communities. The Dakota County Visitor Services Plan and Metropolitan Council research on visitor demographics have found that several groups are under-represented among park visitors. People of color, people with disabilities, seniors, and those with lower household income comprise a smaller share of park visitors than would be predicted by their proportion of the general resident population.

Current reasons for under-representation include distance from home, lack of awareness, time, and transportation options. In addition, safety concerns, language barriers, weather, cultural or religious insensitivity and discrimination, and lack of desired recreation facilities contribute to inequity in park use.

The historic reasons for this inequity are numerous. Reasons can be traced to the US-Dakota War of 1862 after which many Dakota people living in the area were sent into exile. In the 150 years that have followed, government programs and policies have enabled white settlement and discouraged people of color from living in the rural areas surrounding Miesville Ravine Park Reserve. In addition, government policies, institutional racism, and personal discrimination have discouraged generations of people of color from visiting parks. People who were not raised going to parks tend to not visit parks as adults or take their children to parks.

## EVALUATION SUMMARY

The Long-Range Plan was directly shaped by the community input received both from the general public and underrepresented audiences. Recurring themes expressed throughout the process included preserving and protecting natural resources, increasing access to the Cannon River, providing access to more of the park with low-impact natural surface trails, and improving accessibility. Recurring input themes, feedback received, and plan response are summarized in Table 3.1. All engagement was within the International Association for Public Participation's Public Participation Spectrum of consult. Input from demographic groups underrepresented in park visits has resulted in recommendations that will increase the park's accessibility, provide more to do, improve trail wayfinding, reduce impact to TCPs, and include amenities such as additional restrooms and drinking water.

Engagement events for demographic groups underrepresented in park visits included:

- Latino: Walk with Caminatas Domingueras (5/29/22); walk with Huellas Latinas (7/9/22); Hispanic Advocacy and Community Empowerment Through Research (HACER) resource fair pop-up input(10/8/2023).
- Youth: Outdoor Career Success input session(8/26/22).
- People Living with Disabilities: Project Healing Waters meeting (4/11/2023).
- Dakota Communities: Dakota County contract with the Upper Pezihutazizi / Oyate Upper Sioux Community Tribal Historic Preservation Office to conduct a Traditional Cultural Places (TCP) survey for the park and invitation to THPOS from the four Dakota Tribes within Minnesota to a meeting to discuss draft plan recommendations (12/13/23).

Though the Long-Range Plan addresses park activities and amenities that may result in increased park use among underrepresented audiences and sets a goal of creating a park that is welcoming to people of all abilities, races, and backgrounds, additional efforts will be needed to address equity. Community feedback included a request that the park increase park staff or law enforcement presence to improve safety for park visitors. Barriers to park use among demographic groups underrepresented in park visits include lack of awareness of the park and its distance from most of the County's residents. Dakota County efforts, such as the Parks Awareness and Promotion Plan and the Marketing Plan, recommend strategies to raise park system awareness.



| Topic   | Contributing Stakeholder Group                     | Phase 1: Issues and Opportunities   | Phase 2: Plan Review   | Long-Range Plan Recommendations   |
|---|--|---|--|---|
| Natural Resource Restoration                  | General public<br>County staff<br>Tribal groups    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Keep the park as natural as possible</li> <li>Preserve and restore natural resources</li> <li>The natural setting is what makes Miesville Ravine Park Reserve unique</li> </ul>              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strong support for natural resource restoration</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Natural Resources Management Plan created</li> <li>Proposed development remains well under the 20% allowed per park reserve standards</li> <li>Park amenities sited primarily on existing active-use areas, out of sensitive areas</li> <li>Low-impact materials and methods proposed for construction</li> </ul>  |
| Accessibility                                 | Disabled community<br>Older individuals<br>Parents | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do not limit disabled guest participation</li> <li>ADA is a low bar, strive for more</li> <li>Desire to limit pavement</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support for accessibility improvements</li> <li>Request for adult changing stations in restrooms</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enhanced circulation at Cannon River Trailhead will include accessible paths and a loop trail</li> <li>Accessible paddle launch and fishing areas will allow easier access to the Cannon River</li> <li>Restroom requirements clarified</li> </ul>   |
| Outfitters and Bus/Vehicle Traffic            | General public                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The bus traffic is noisy and disrupts the peaceful environment of the park reserve</li> <li>Groups from the Cannon River do not know that current amenities exist for them to use</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support for river access safety and accessibility improvements</li> </ul>                                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A new bus turnaround at the proposed Cannon River Trailhead organizes and directs bus traffic for quick and efficient drop-offs, set away from general user parking</li> <li>ADA-accessible water access with dedicated parking and improved wayfinding signifies a destination for river users</li> <li>Enhanced picnicking and gathering amenities accommodate large groups</li> </ul> |
| Wildlife Viewing                              | General public<br>Latino                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wildlife viewing/bird watching is a large draw for visitors</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wildlife viewing as a high priority</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Trail benches, bridges, boardwalks, and overlooks bring visitors to new locations</li> <li>Natural resources protection and management are at the forefront of concepts</li> </ul>   |
| Mountain Biking                               | General public                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No existing bike facilities</li> <li>Gravel cycling is popular on the surrounding gravel roads today</li> <li>Would like to see mountain bike trails</li> </ul>                              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Request for mountain biking to be allowed in the park</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Due to the extremely sensitive nature of its habitats and its standing as a park reserve, mountain bike trails and facilities are not compatible with Miesville Ravine Park Reserve</li> </ul>   |
| Fishing/Water Touch Points                    | Disabled community<br>Youth                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Trout Brook offers some of the best trout fishing in the metro</li> <li>Streambank degradation and erosion have occurred from informal access points</li> </ul>                              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No comments</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continued Trout Brook management and restoration efforts included</li> <li>Dedicated fishing areas and touch points help manage shoreline erosion</li> <li>Discoverable springs are highlighted throughout the park reserve</li> </ul>   |
| Winter Use                                    | General public                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Would like to see more to do in the winter months e.g. groomed ski trails, snowshoe tours</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Desire to see winter trail use specified on wayfinding signage</li> </ul>                                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Miesville Ravine Park Reserve is open year-round for winter hiking/walking/snowshoeing and birdwatching along the expanded trail system</li> <li>Winter camping will be allowed</li> </ul>   |
| Cannon Valley Trail Connection                | General public                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Connect to Cannon Valley Trail (CVT)</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support for CVT connection</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bridge proposed across the Cannon River in the long-term plan</li> </ul>   |
| Comfort Amenities (Restrooms, Drinking Water) | General public                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of amenities/uninviting</li> <li>No drinking water</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support for comfort amenities</li> <li>Restrooms as a high priority</li> </ul>                              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Visitor amenities such as seating along trails, picnicking areas, wayfinding, restrooms, and drinking water are proposed at each of the trailheads</li> <li>Benches are proposed at 1/2-mile intervals along the trail</li> <li>Improved wayfinding is proposed throughout the park at trailheads and along trails</li> </ul>  |

Table 3.1 Equity Analysis Table



| Topic  | Contributing Stakeholder Group                 | Phase 1: Issues and Opportunities  | Phase 2: Plan Review   | Long-Range Plan Recommendations  |
|--|--|--|--|--|
| Hiking and Walking Trails                          | General public<br>Latino visitors              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Trails are not extensive and do not take users throughout many interesting portions of the park</li> <li>Only existing form of recreation</li> <li>Trails are not accessible</li> <li>Concern for adding too many paved trails, keep the park natural</li> <li>Lack of amenities and activities along the trails</li> <li>Hard to navigate</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Trail-based recreation as a high priority</li> <li>Wayfinding in multiple languages</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The long-term vision introduces 9 miles of expanded hiking and walking trails, including loops, into new areas</li> <li>Two additional trailheads proposed on the north side of the park reserve</li> <li>Improvements to wayfinding are proposed, including information in multiple languages</li> <li>ADA-accessible trail loop and enhanced visitor circulation at the Cannon River Trailhead</li> <li>Most proposed trails are natural surface and will be field-fit to protect sensitive ecosystems</li> <li>Seating, overlooks, bridges, boardwalks, dedicated fishing spots, and interpretive features will help activate the trails and offer points of interest along the way</li> </ul> |
| Bluff Views  | General public                                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bluffs and topography unique to southern Minnesota should be highlighted</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support for overlooks and natural surface trails</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Numerous low-impact overlooks are proposed, offering visitors multiple viewpoints to take in the scenery</li> <li>Expanded natural surface trails to locations within the park reserve that were previously inaccessible</li> </ul>   |
| Family-friendly                                    | General public<br>Families with young children | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Visit other parks closer to home that have more amenities for young kids</li> <li>Not much to do at Miesville Ravine Park Reserve besides trails</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No comments</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Water touch and access points invite people to interact with and play in the water</li> <li>Dedicated fishing areas with interpretation make fishing accessible to young kids</li> <li>Three campsites with amenities for picnicking and bonfires will be available for family use</li> <li>Interpretive features will contain interactive/tactile elements geared towards kids</li> <li>Family-friendly amenities like restrooms and drinking water will make family outings easier</li> <li>Proposed ADA trails are stroller-friendly</li> </ul>  |
| Cannon River Access                                | General public                                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Current paddle access site and make-shift bus drop-off site on the adjacent river bank are eroded and difficult to access for input/takeout</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support for water access safety improvements</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A formalized water access point at the Cannon River Trailhead with non-motorized boat trailer parking, a bus turnaround, and an ADA-accessible water access will provide easy access to the Cannon River and prevent further erosion</li> </ul>   |
| Camping  | General public                                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Want camping facilities at Miesville Ravine Park Reserve (both RV and Tent camping options)</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interest in camping</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Three, themed tent campsites proposed along the Cannon River will offer space for camping, picnicking, and bonfires, with drinking water, restrooms, parking, and water access nearby</li> </ul>  |
| Equipment Rental                                   | General public                                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interested in the ability to rent kayaks/canoes/paddleboards during visits</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No comments</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>An enhanced water access with parking for personal watercraft use is proposed</li> <li>Private outfitters will provide equipment rentals</li> </ul>   |
| Cultural Landscape Preservation and Interpretation | USC<br>Tribal Historic Preservation Officers   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Miesville Ravine Park Reserve has a rich cultural history and significance to Native Americans whose ancestors stewarded this land for thousands of years; the design should strive to protect existing areas with culturally sensitive resources.</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support for protection, management, and interpretation of Indigenous sites</li> <li>Interest in continued discussion and coordination regarding management</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Great care was taken in the inventory and analysis phase of the design process to coordinate with tribal representatives and map out areas of cultural significance; proposed park development takes those areas into account, laying out trails and siting activity areas outside of sensitive areas</li> <li>Trails and amenities will be field-fit and designed to be sustainable and low-impact</li> <li>Dakota County is open to opportunities for native-led co-management within the park reserve</li> </ul>   |



# EXISTING CONDITIONS OVERVIEW

Miesville Ravine Park Reserve's landscape is outstanding; its rugged terrain and remote location contribute to its high ecological quality. However, these features also create some challenges for visitors, who sometimes feel uncertain navigating to the park reserve, while traveling for miles on gravel roads from the nearest town. While seasoned outdoor enthusiasts may feel comfortable traversing the site off-trail, not everyone feels comfortable exploring this way, and the trail system is not well-developed.

Accessibility is also an issue; the existing natural surface trails do not allow for ADA access to most of the park reserve. Portions of Miesville Ravine Park Reserve do not have good cell coverage, making internet access spotty and exacerbating feelings of unease for some users. These issues offer a jumping-off point for potential improvements that could make visiting more inclusive and welcoming.

Improving amenities and increasing visitorship to Miesville Ravine Park Reserve comes with its own set of considerations, given the park reserve's cultural features and quality natural resources. Any future recreation development must take care to first avoid potential impacts, and if avoidance is not possible, then it must try to find ways to minimize and mitigate impacts.

## THE EXISTING CONDITIONS CHAPTER EXPLORES THE FOLLOWING TOPICS:

**Existing Conditions:** a description of existing recreational facilities within the park reserve today.

**Existing Programming:** current park reserve programs.

**Natural Resources Inventory:** a summary of existing natural resources in the park reserve, including areas with high erosion potential, high biodiversity, and native plant communities.

**Existing Cultural Resources:** summary of known cultural resources in the park reserve, including historical resources that are known to be significant to the area.

**Cultural Landscape Significance:** a description of cultural and historic artifacts that exist on site today and their significance to the park reserve's story.

**Issues and Opportunities at Miesville Ravine Park Reserve:** a summary of issues and opportunities as heard from Dakota County staff, key stakeholders, and the public, to be addressed in this plan document.



MIESVILLE RAVINE PARK RESERVE  
GENERAL INFORMATION

Park Reserve Size: 1,850 acres

- Dakota County-Owned Land: 1,519 acres
- Inholdings (privately owned land within official park reserve boundary): 331 acres



Natural Features:

- Cannon River
- Trout Brook

Park Reserve Access:

- North Parking Lot along Orlando Trail
- South Parking Lot along Orlando Trail
- Public Water Access along the Cannon River

Recreation:

- Percentage of the park reserve's land area developed for recreational use: 2.1%

EXISTING PARK RESERVE  
CONDITIONS

At 1,850 acres, Miesville Ravine Park Reserve is vast and showcases a variety of landscapes. Habitats range from oak forests to open prairies, dry rocky savannas to floodplain wetlands, small seeps to reaches of navigable river that attracts tourists and outfitters from around the region. The park reserve's steep terrain has limited development, leaving much of the landscape relatively free from disturbance. Large restoration efforts have taken place over the years to bring formerly cultivated fields back to vast expanses of tallgrass prairie.

While it lacks a large trail network, the park reserve offers rustic access to the beauty of Trout Brook, the Cannon River, and the striking landscapes through which they flow. Trout Brook and its seeps, springs, and tributaries have cut steep ravines down from the park reserve's upland terrace, which has been restored to tallgrass prairie but is difficult to access. Two miles of natural surface trail loops wind through lowlands along waterways and provide connections to two shelters and a restroom building. Development is currently restricted to the southern half of Miesville Ravine Park Reserve, with most amenities south of Orlando Trail. Only a small gravel parking lot and about a mile of trails (including a short boardwalk) exist north of Orlando Trail. A utility right-of-way separates the southern wing of the park reserve, clear cutting through the native canopy cover. Just upstream from the confluence of Trout Brook and the Cannon River is a water access point with an eroding stream bank. A small picnic area with tables, limited restroom facilities, a fire ring, and waste receptacles is available nearby.

| Park Area                        | Visitor Facility         | Description  |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------|--|
| North of Orlando Trail           | Gravel Parking Lot North | Gravel lot with adjacent small picnic area provides access to trails and Trout Brook   |
| South of Orlando Trail           | Gravel Parking Lot South | Gravel lot with one signed ADA parking space and room for about 20 vehicles; access to trails, Trout Brook, picnicking, restrooms, and Cannon River water access |
|                                  | Trailhead                | Location at south parking lot; kiosk and waste receptacles   |
|                                  | Public Water Access      | Steep and eroding Cannon River access  |
|                                  | Fire Ring                | Simple fire ring near the water access   |
|                                  | Picnic Tables            | Wooden picnic tables near the water access, no ADA tables  |
|                                  | Restrooms                | Vault restroom building with two toilets   |
|                                  | Picnic Shelter 1         | 50'x30' open-air shelter with electricity, used for event reservations   |
|                                  | Picnic Shelter 2         | 40'x20' open air shelter with electricity, used for event reservations   |
| North and South of Orlando Trail | Trout Brook Bridge       | ADA-accessible steel and wooden bridge connecting the trailhead to picnic shelters, restrooms, and Cannon River trails   |
|                                  | Trails                   | Mixture of gravel and turf trail loops, with a short boardwalk, totalling 2 miles  |

Table 4.1 Existing Facility Inventory



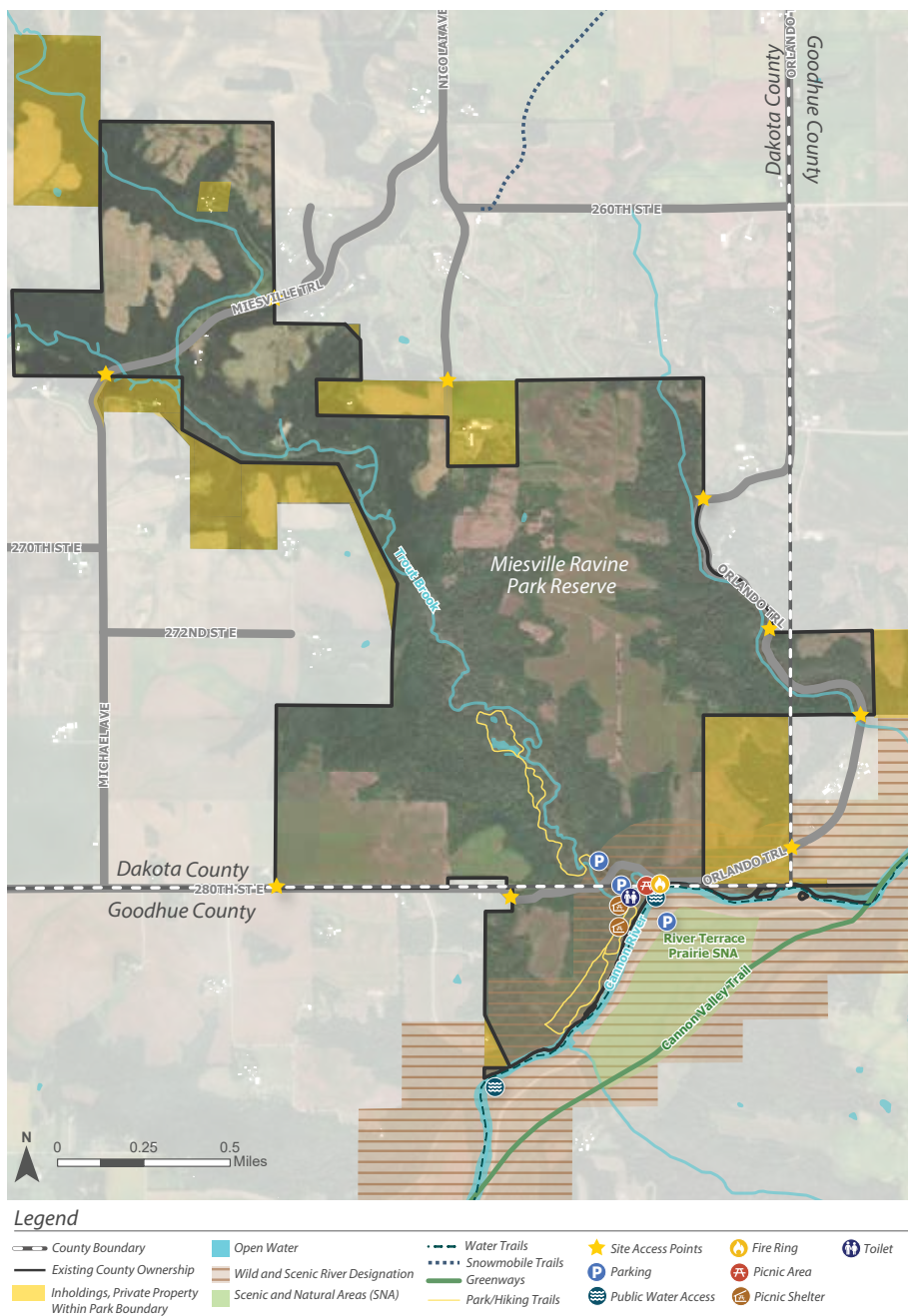


Figure 4.1 Existing Conditions

## EXISTING PROGRAMMING

Miesville Ravine Park Reserve has limited organized educational programs and activities. Occasional County-led walks through the park reserve help to introduce new visitors, but no regular programming is currently offered. Trout fishing is popular among those in the know, and Trout Unlimited has participated in and funded restoration projects within the park reserve. Tubing and paddling the Cannon River are popular ways for visitors to arrive utilizing private outfitters and or personal equipment, but the County does not sponsor trips or provide tubes or kayaks.



Existing restrooms



Cannon picnic shelter



Fire ring and picnic area



Cannon River tubing drop-off site (informal)





## ACCORDING TO THE DAKOTA COUNTY PARK SYSTEM PLAN:

“The park reserve is named for a spectacular 200-foot deep ravine, through which the pristine Trout Brook flows to the Cannon River. The park includes several bluffs, side ravines, and Cannon River frontage. The park landscape is defined as lightly glaciated, characteristic of the high-relief terrain of southeastern Minnesota bluff country and unique in the metro area. The park has a rich natural diversity, ranging from oak forests to open grassy areas, dry rocky hillsides to wet floodplain, and small spring-fed creeks to sections of navigable river. The park has abundant and diverse wildlife populations and an impressive natural stand of white pines near the center of the park on the west side of the large ravine. Trout Brook supports a naturally reproducing population of brook trout.”

## NATURAL RESOURCES INVENTORY

A Natural Resource Management Plan for Miesville Ravine Park Reserve was undertaken concurrently with this plan and can be consulted for additional detail on the park reserve’s existing and proposed native plant communities, water quality, and related topics. It was an invaluable resource for this plan’s development when considering how best to preserve the park reserve’s high-quality natural areas while investing in suitable access and amenities.

The following pages highlight key maps that illustrate natural resource-related considerations within the park reserve. Understanding these maps helps to identify optimal locations for future recreation while being conscious of protecting and further enhancing the integrity of its natural resources.

## CURRENT NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT ISSUES

The park reserve is situated along a transition between ecological subsections that includes the level-to-rolling topography of the Rochester Plateau and the heavily dissected landscape of the Blufflands. Miesville Ravine Park Reserve is also on the northwestern edge of the Driftless Area, an area that was not covered with glacial drift from the last glaciation event. Trout Brook flows through the central ravine of the park reserve until its confluence with the Cannon River which flows along the southern boundary of the park reserve. Dozens of steep tributary ravines dissect the park reserve and drain toward Trout Brook, the Cannon River, and several intermittent tributaries. Miesville Ravine Park Reserve is at the ‘bottom’ or ‘down-flow end’ of the watershed, meaning that it receives all of the water and pollutants from the rest of the watershed that is up-flow of it. This is significant, for example, because excess nutrients can and do cause an overabundance of algae, which is bad for spawning trout.

The unique surface, bedrock, and groundwater geology of MRPR influences many of the existing natural and water resources. Glacial deposits from multiple glaciations combine with a long history of erosion by wind and water to create a rugged topography of bluffs and ravines with variable soil types, including areas of loess (windblown silt and fine sand), outcrops, and shallow depths to bedrock. The dissected topography creates variable slopes, an aspect that exerts control on plant communities. The underlying carbonate bedrock is considered karst-prone and characterized by springs and groundwater discharge. This groundwater influence serves as the source water to Trout Brook and provides temperature and clarity requirements that trout depend on. Karst features also facilitate rapid surface-to-groundwater transport of pollutants and are extremely sensitive to groundwater pollution.



Prior to European settlement the vegetation was a mosaic of prairie, savanna, woodland, and hardwood forest. The park reserve likely hosted outstanding plant community diversity largely driven by topography, soils, and management by indigenous people. Following European settlement, most prairies and savannas were converted to cropland or pasture, in addition to many wooded areas. Other wooded areas were thinned or exposed to intense livestock grazing. Fire suppression caused overgrowth of prairies, savannas, and woodlands. Many historical wildlife populations, including keystone species such as beaver and bison, have generally declined or been extirpated from the park reserve. Native grazers such as bison and elk provided structural diversity within habitats for plants and wildlife. For example, reconstructed prairie in the absence of bison will tend toward uniform plant height and favors a suite of certain vegetation. Bison create variable structure and species diversity, while creating habitat via trampling such as wallows.

Other species like white-tailed deer have greatly increased on the landscape. Land use changes also affected the water resources of the park reserve, including ravine erosion, large volumes of sediment deposition along Trout Brook, and channel incision of Trout Brook, resulting in high nutrient loads and a disconnected floodplain.

Modern vegetation exhibits some remnants of the historical vegetation such as a couple of good-sized bluff prairies and forests that were too steep or rocky to cultivate and dry enough to resist woody encroachment. Twelve land cover types were identified by the NRMP. These land cover types vary in condition from near-excellent ecological integrity (remnant bluff prairies) to alterations to the point they no longer resemble native plant communities. The County has restored many formerly cultivated areas and old pastures so that their condition is now on restored trajectory toward resembling a native plant community. Today, the County and partners manage and implement many activities and projects directly in the park reserve and indirectly on private lands in the surrounding watershed.

Accessing areas of the park reserve for management activities is a challenge due to the rugged topography, private inholdings, and surrounding private lands. Ravine bottoms are generally inaccessible by vehicle, and heavy equipment and steep slopes of the many ravines make

vehicle or heavy equipment access impossible. Blufftops are generally accessible, but where they are dissected by ravines, they may be cut off from vehicle and equipment access. Some blufftops and slope-shoulders, where heavy equipment could be used, are surrounded by inholdings or private lands outside of the park reserve. These inaccessibility issues limit the management tools available.

## ISSUES

Natural resource issues at the park reserve are complex and intertwined with land use, both historic and current. Regional and landscape-level issues have impacts across the entire park. More discrete issues affect specific terrestrial and stream habitats. Finally, programmatic issues impact implementation efficiency and effectiveness.

### ISSUES IDENTIFIED FOR THE PARK RESERVE INCLUDE:

- Legacy of post-settlement land use
- Regional landscape degradation and fragmentation
- Loss of key ecological processes
- Habitat fragmentation
- Park access
- Terrestrial habitat degradation, including:
  - Invasive vegetation
  - Invasive earthworms
  - Deer browse
  - Grazing legacy
- Riparian habitat degradation
  - Channel incision and disconnected floodplain
  - Log jams
  - Beaver dams
  - Riparian vegetation
- Erosion
  - Ravine erosion
  - Soil erosion
- Excess nutrients
- Programmatic issues
  - Funding
  - Partnerships
  - Citizen outreach, stewardship, and education
- Climate change



## CURRENT PLANT COMMUNITIES

As part of the Miesville Ravine Park Reserve Natural Resource Management Plan, current plant communities were assessed and classified. The resulting maps were based on 2021 field visits, desktop data, and staff input. Desktop data included Minnesota Land Cover Classification System (MLCCS) data, DNR Native Plant Community (NPC) mapping, historical aerial imagery, and two-foot elevation contours. An existing vegetation layer was created in GIS using the MLCCS layer and was manually updated according to the other data sources. Land cover was classified based on a simplified version of MLCCS and NPC classifications to provide meaningful and legible mapping at a reserve-wide scale.

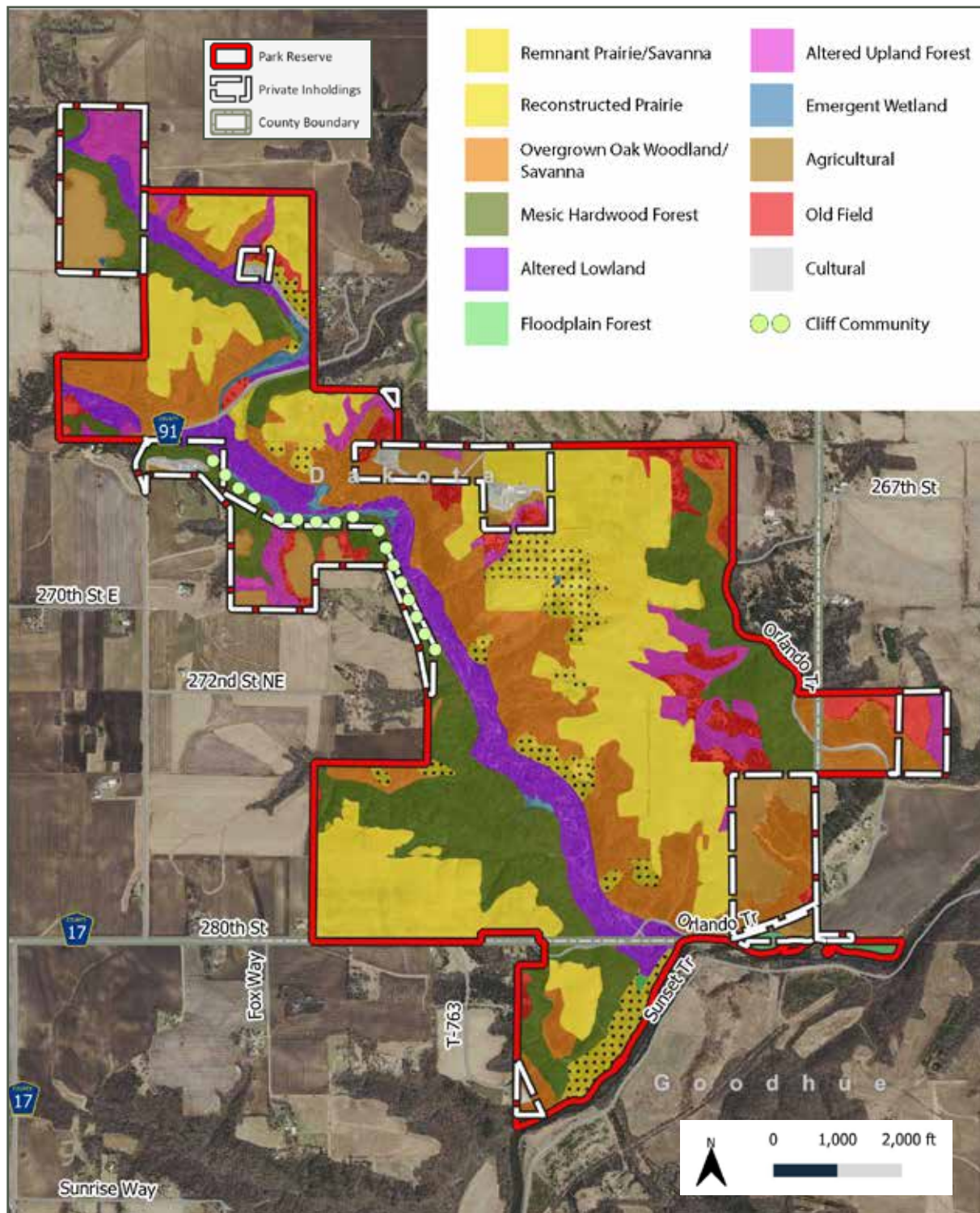


Figure 4.2 Existing Vegetation



## ENDANGERED, THREATENED, AND SPECIAL CONCERN SPECIES

The National Heritage Information System (NHIS) provides information on rare plants, animals, and native plant communities across Minnesota. A map of the park reserve's high-quality native plant communities can be found in Figure 4.3. While there are no endangered species reported in Miesville Ravine Park Reserve, there are a dozen threatened or special concern species. Trout Brook's coldwater stream ecosystem supports several rare species of mussels. Blanding's Turtles and Ozark Minnows also use this important habitat. The park reserve's forests support populations of American Ginseng and its bluff prairies feature populations of kitten-tails and are home to gopher snakes.

| Species (Name)     | Status          |
|--------------------|-----------------|
| Ozark Minnow       | Special Concern |
| Kitten-tails       | Threatened      |
| Blanding's Turtle  | Threatened      |
| Gopher Snake       | Special Concern |
| American Ginseng   | Special Concern |
| Fluted-shell       | Threatened      |
| Round Pigtoe       | Special Concern |
| Black Sandshell    | Special Concern |
| Mucket             | Threatened      |
| Spike              | Threatened      |
| Ellipse            | Threatened      |
| Creek Heelsplitter | Special Concern |

Table 4.2 NHIS List of Endangered, Threatened, and Special Concern Species







## BEAVERS

" CÁPA "

### IN DAKOTA

Beaver and beaver dams are present throughout the Trout Brook corridor along with evidence of activity such as chewed and felled trees, sometimes far up ravine slopes. Beavers are ecosystem engineers and keystone species that are a natural part of stream systems. They build dams that hold back water, moderate flows, and create wetland habitat. In the upper Midwest, only about 10 percent of the beaver population present prior to European settlement remains.

Recent research has shown just how beneficial beavers can be on the landscape, especially in regard to improving wetland and riparian habitat, increasing wetland quality and quantity, and increasing base flows for surface waters. Management needs to consider the dynamic nature of beaver dams and ponds and to monitor changes in plant composition so that degradation does not occur. Very large beaver dams can function like low-head dams and cause sediment aggradation in the channel, loss of riffle habitat, and channel widening. Within a well-functioning hydrologic and ecological landscape, large beaver dams would not be an issue. However, like all changes to the ecosystem, their impacts should be carefully assessed.

For more information on how beavers are being addressed within Miesville Ravine Park Reserve, see sections 3 and 4 of the 2023 Natural Resource Management Plan.

## ANIMALS OF MIESVILLE RAVINE PARK RESERVE

The park reserve is host to a variety of animals, including those highlighted below. For more information on Miesville Ravine Park Reserve's wildlife, see section 2 of the 2023 Natural Resource Management Plan.

### FISH AND MUSSELS

- Trout Brook supports naturally reproducing populations of brook and brown trout. Brown trout are found in higher densities in lower reaches of the stream, while brook trout are at higher densities closer to the headwaters.
- At least three rare mussel species are present in the vicinity of the park reserve within the Cannon River.



*Creek heelsplitter*



*Brown Trout*

### BIRDS

- A total of 202 bird species have been recorded at the park reserve, including 50 Species of Greatest Conservation Need.



*Northern cardinal*



*Northern flicker woodpecker*



## MAMMALS

- A variety of mammals use the park reserve's habitats and include rodents, bats, raccoons, opossum, mustelids, coyote, foxes, black bear, beavers, and white-tailed deer.



*Black bear*



*Beaver dam along Trout Brook*



*Coyote*

## AMPHIBIANS AND REPTILES

- Within the park reserve, western fox snakes, eastern hognose snakes, milk snakes, and red-sided and common garter snakes have been observed. The park has suitable habitat for gopher snakes and timber rattlesnakes.
- Blanding's turtles were observed in the park in 1991.



*Eastern hognose snake*



*Red-sided garter snake*



*Blanding's turtle*

## INSECTS

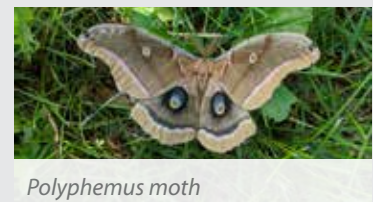
- A 2021 survey identified over 185 species of moth and 34 species of butterfly within the park reserve.



*Monarch butterfly*



*Giant Swallowtail*



*Polyphemus moth*



## NATIVE PLANT COMMUNITY VULNERABILITY DESIGNATIONS

Native plant community designations are based on the vulnerability to loss, local extirpation, or extinction of a specific native plant community from Minnesota. Within Miesville Ravine Park Reserve, the community most at risk (S2) consists of a sugar maple/ basswood forest system. Bluff prairies and oak maple basswood forests between the bluffs and prairies are ranked S3, which is still a vulnerable native plant community. There is only one area considered to have a “secure native plant community,” and that is in the middle of the park reserve just north of the furthest extent of the trails. Vulnerable and imperiled plant communities make up 481 acres of the park reserve, more than one-third of the total area.

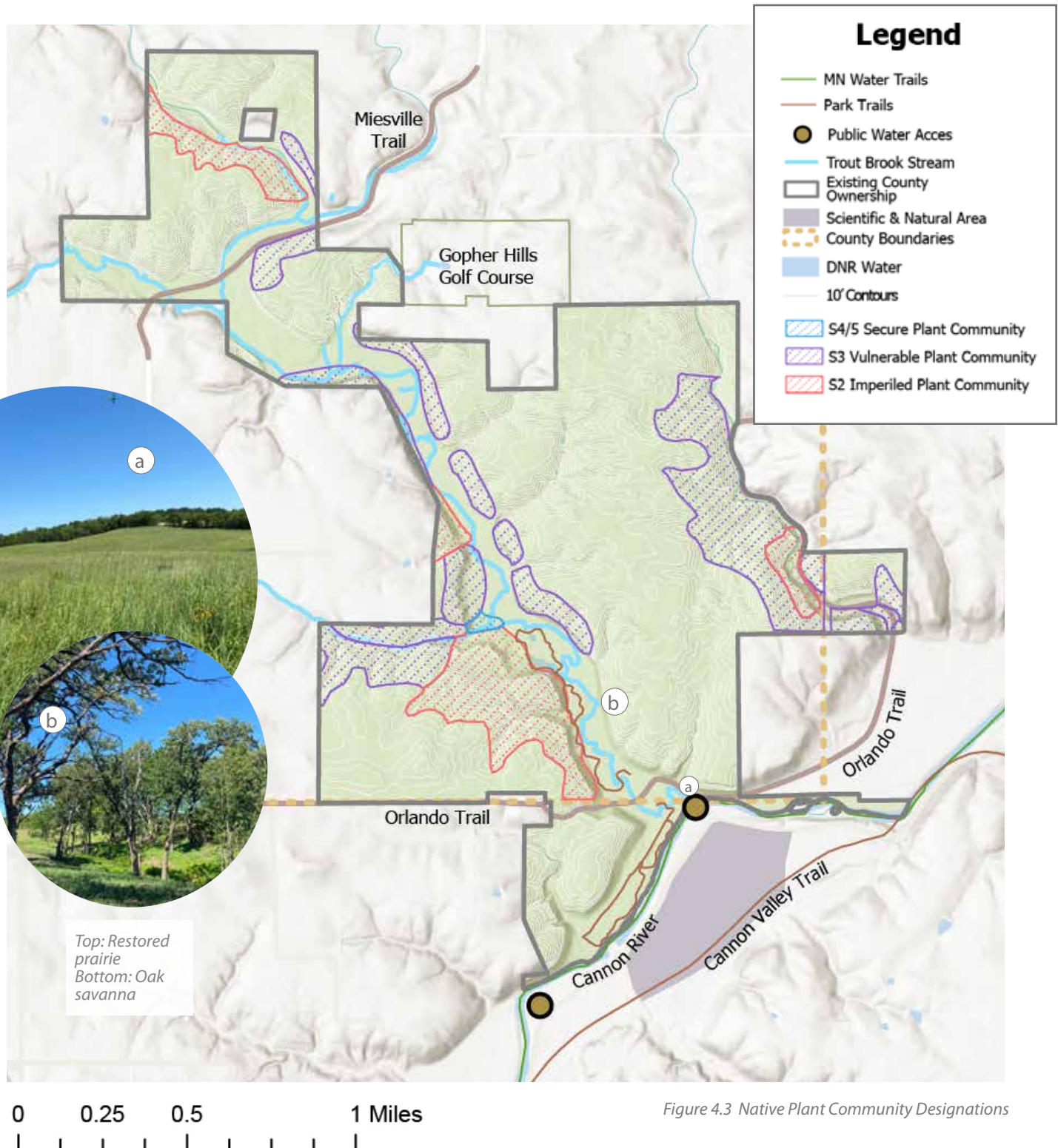


Figure 4.3 Native Plant Community Designations



## MINNESOTA COUNTY BIOLOGICAL SURVEY (MCBS)

The MCBS maps native plant communities that are defined as either outstanding or high-quality. The following map represents the native plant communities that are classified as high-quality within Miesville Ravine Park Reserve. No plant communities were identified as outstanding.

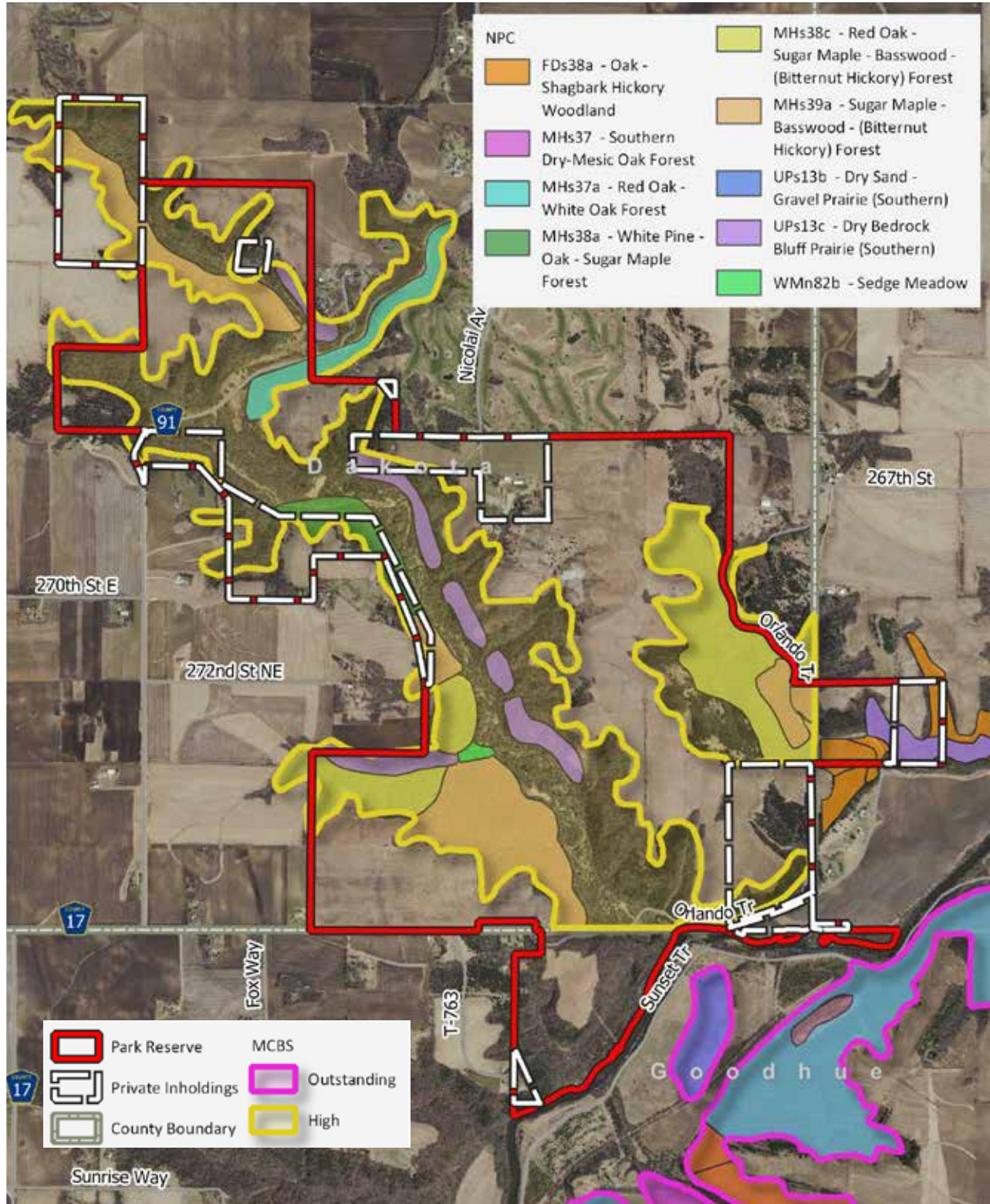


Figure 4.4 Minnesota County Biological Survey: High-Quality Native Plant Communities



## AREAS WITH HIGH BIODIVERSITY SIGNIFICANCE

The MCBS classifies areas of “High Biodiversity Significance” where there are “sites containing very good quality occurrences of the rarest species, high-quality examples of rare native plant communities, and/or important functional landscapes.” Within Miesville Ravine Park Reserve, these areas add up to more than 1,000 acres, or over two-thirds of the park reserve. Most of the acres considered to have high biodiversity significance are within a half-mile of Trout Brook and almost completely encompass the steep slopes of the ravine. Since the last MCBS mapping, the large patch of former agricultural field on the park reserve’s upper terrace has been restored to tallgrass prairie and has been deemed as having a high biodiversity significance by Dakota County’s natural resources staff and the consultants working on the park reserve’s NRMP.

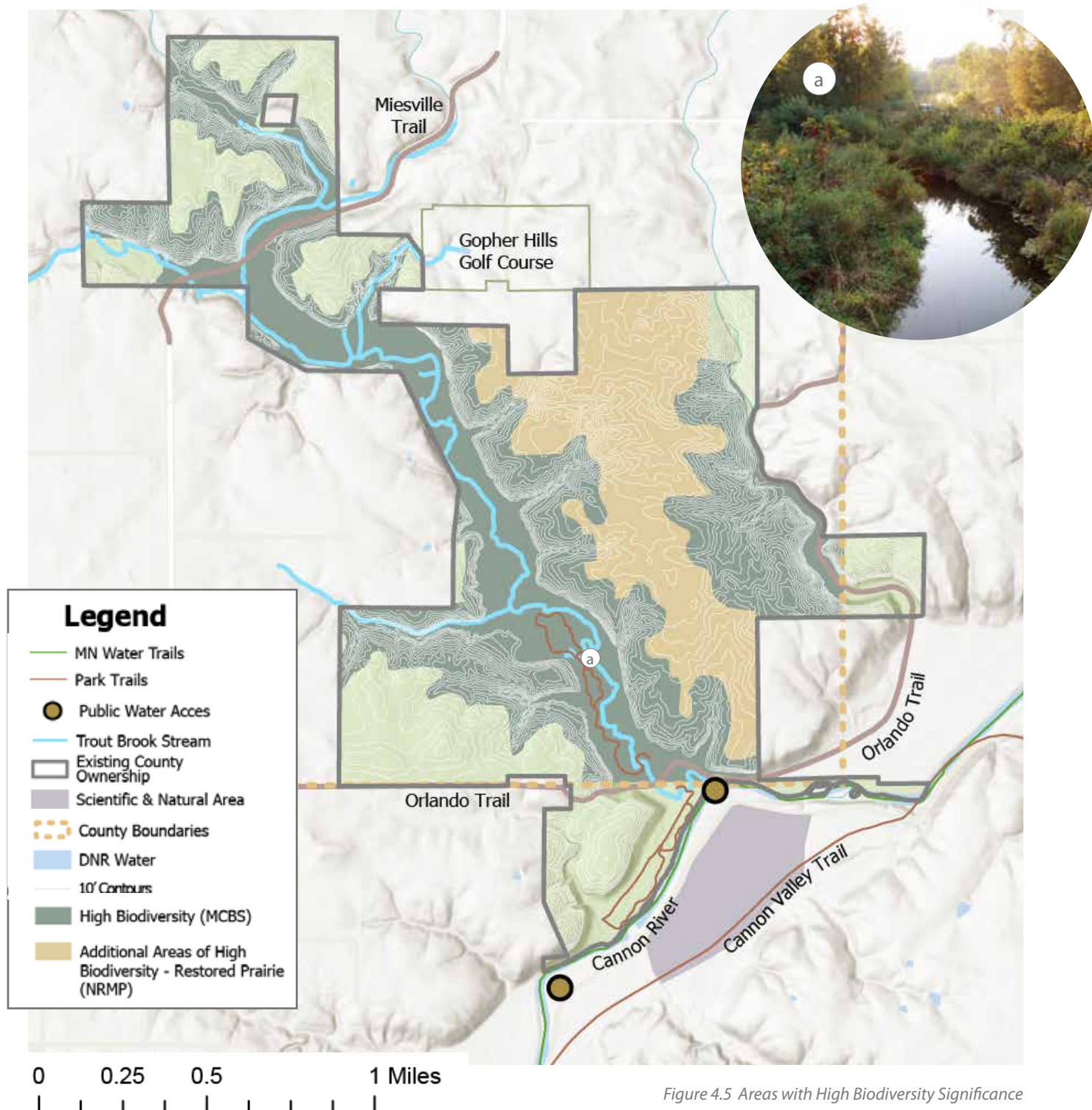


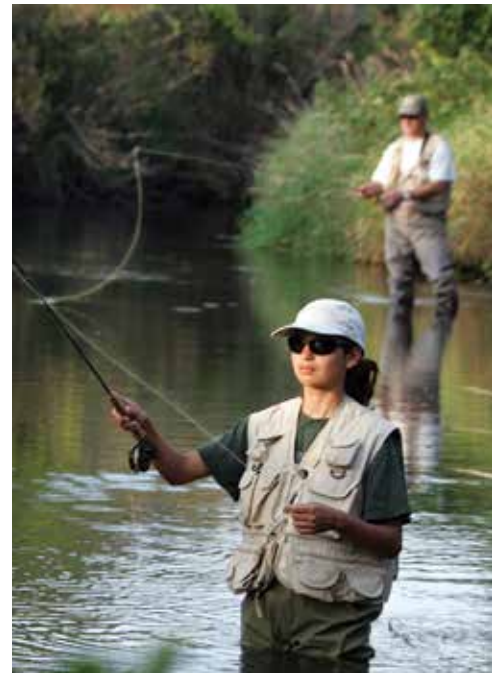
Figure 4.5 Areas with High Biodiversity Significance



## THE CANNON RIVER WATERSHED

Trout Brook drains into the Cannon River and is part of the Cannon River watershed, but Trout Brook collects water from a subset of this land, called a subwatershed. Miesville Ravine Park Reserve is located at the bottom of this subwatershed, a natural oasis in the midst of a matrix of plowed agricultural fields. Runoff from rainfall can travel a long way before it reaches Trout Brook, picking up pesticides and fertilizer and carrying sediment along the way. This also means that Trout Brook receives a large volume of water from across the subwatershed during large rainfall events, making it vulnerable to erosion along its banks.

While streambank restoration projects can help to improve the way Trout Brook handles water within the park reserve's boundary, many of the issues that impact the stream, such as nutrient and sediment loads, cannot be resolved without broader interventions. Groundwater sensitivity in the park reserve and across the watershed makes the water table susceptible to pollution. Partnering with the Dakota County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) on initiatives that educate residents on sustainable land management and provide incentives to undertake projects is an important part of keeping Trout Brook a quality trout stream.



*Fly fishing in Trout Brook*



### WHAT IS A WATERSHED?

A watershed is the land area that drains into a particular stream, river, or lake.

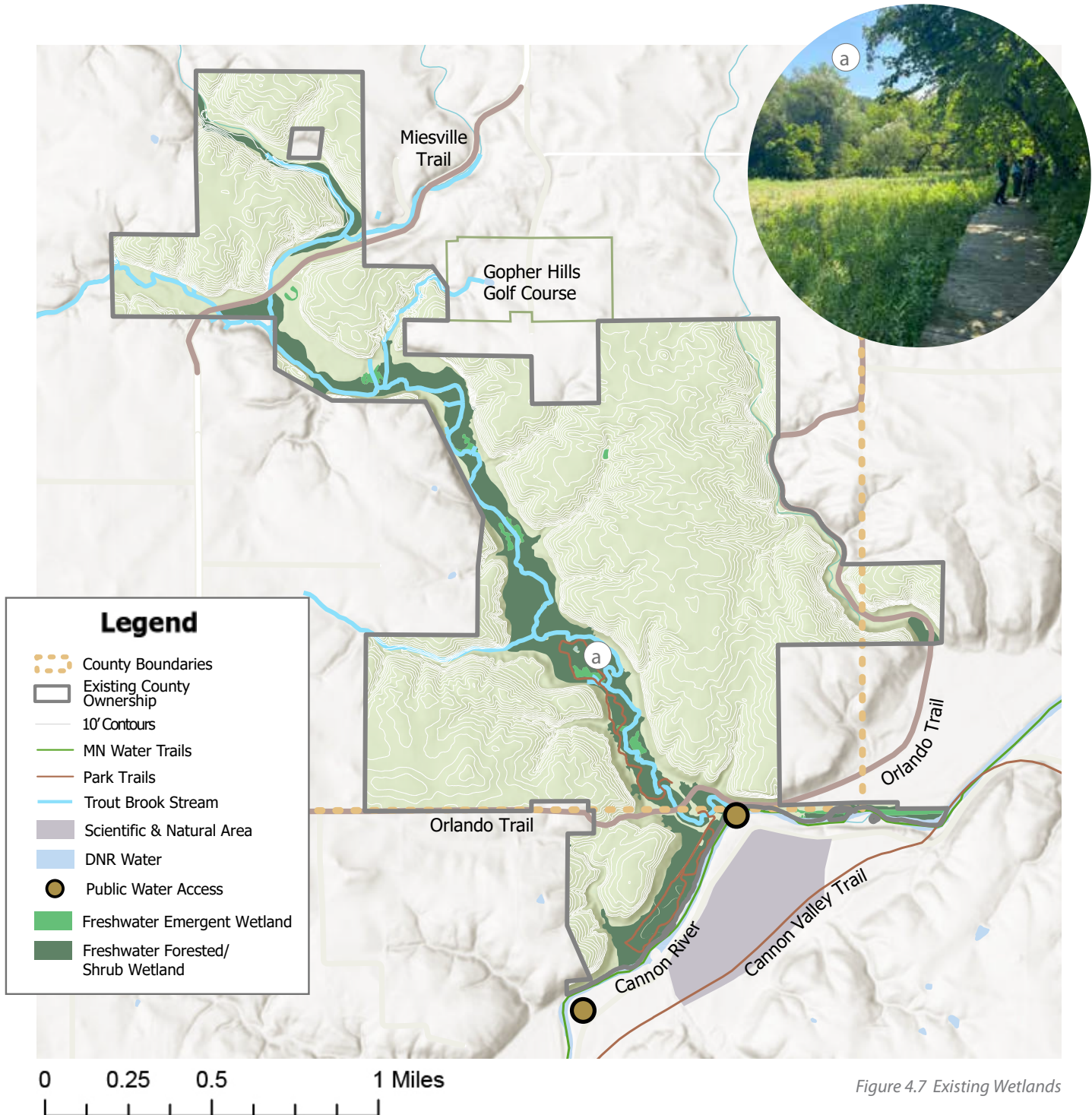


*Figure 4.6 Trout Brook Subwatershed Map*



## WETLANDS

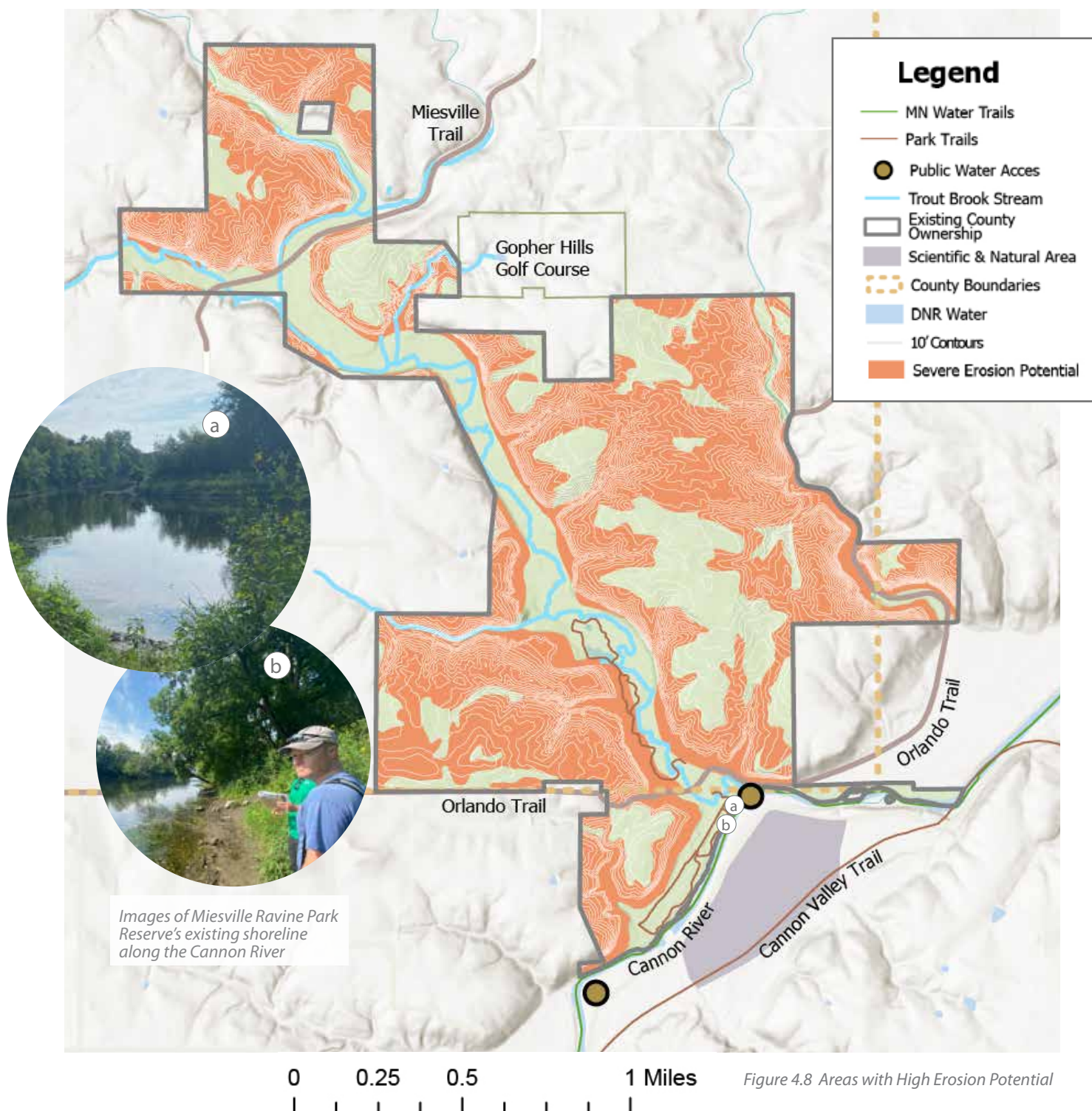
Wetlands play an important part in this coldwater stream ecosystem. When properly functioning, the wetlands surrounding Trout Brook are connected to the stream's banks, and as rainstorms raise the water level in the channel, it overflows across the adjacent wetlands, where the water can spread out, pool, and be absorbed. Wetlands function as sponges, storing excess water during rainstorms and keeping it from rushing down the channel of the creek and eroding the banks. While many of the wetlands within the park reserve have been preserved, most wetlands that were part of the broader watershed were drained to make way for agricultural fields. This has increased the speed and volume of runoff that reaches Trout Brook, which has resulted in erosion. When erosion gets severe enough, the streambanks become too deep and disconnected from their adjacent wetlands, exacerbating the problem. Stream restoration reconnects the floodplain wetlands to the streambank so they can resume their intended function.





## AREAS WITH HIGH EROSION POTENTIAL

This map highlights the areas of the most severe erosion potential within Miesville Ravine Park Reserve. It can be seen from the map that a majority of the land in the park reserve is highly erodible. Any recreation development that occurs in these areas will require erosion-control measures and careful monitoring to keep up with maintenance needs. This map takes into consideration soil types, soil textures, and existing grades, which is why areas along the edges of the steep ravine show the most potential for erosion.





# EXISTING CULTURAL LANDSCAPE

## RESOURCES AND THE RIVER: THE STORY OF MIESVILLE RAVINE PARK RESERVE

The history of Miesville Ravine Park Reserve is the story of land use and preservation. One of the defining topographic features of the park reserve—the dramatic valley of Trout Brook—has attracted people for thousands of years. In addition to the history of landscape exploitation, there is another story—a story about how people and nature have interacted to preserve the landscape for future generations. These stories are made tangible by the narratives, buildings, structures, objects, and sites within and surrounding the park reserve. Today, people continue to be attracted to this special place. The natural and cultural landscapes combine to provide a sense of the long history of the lands that make up the park reserve.

### TROUT BROOK VALLEY

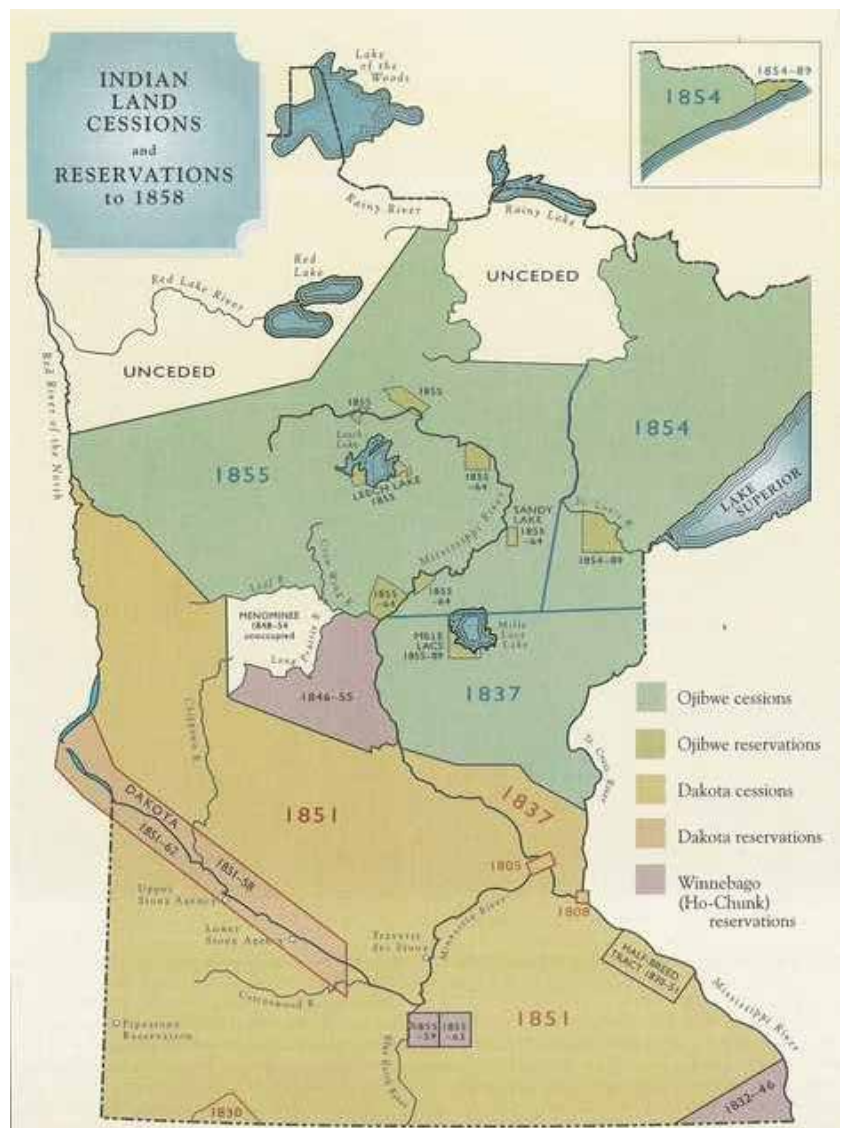
At the south end of the park reserve, the spring-fed Trout Brook flows out of the valley and joins the Cannon River. The valley, with its year-round water supply and connection to the Cannon River, has attracted people to the area of the park reserve throughout time. Evidence from archaeological sites along the Cannon River, on terraces just east of the park reserve as well as two sites within the park reserve itself along Trout Brook on terraces just above the water level, indicate that the area was used by Native American cultures for thousands of years. Trout Brook and the Cannon River provided people with food, drinking water, water for cooking and for bathing, and medicinal plants. The surrounding environs provided resources for fuel, tools, weapons, and shelter.

Most of the archaeological sites surrounding the park reserve were recorded in the mid-1970s during the Statewide Archaeological Survey. The purpose of this survey was to identify new archaeological sites as well as further document existing ones. This survey gives insight into the Native American groups who lived in the area of Miesville Ravine Park Reserve.

### TROUT BROOK VALLEY AND NATIVE AMERICAN PRESENCE

At the south end of Miesville Ravine Park Reserve, the spring-fed Trout Brook flows out of the valley and joins the Cannon River. The valley, with its year-round water supply and connection to the Cannon River, has attracted people to the area throughout time.

Dakota people hunted game in the Trout Brook area into the 1860s. Native Americans continue to care for these lands in the present day.





# CULTURAL LANDSCAPE SIGNIFICANCE

## ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES NEAR MIESVILLE RAVINE PARK RESERVE

Two archaeological sites have been recorded within the boundaries of the park reserve. Both sites are located along the Trout Brook Valley and are on terraces 10 to 20 feet above the current water level. Both sites are what archaeologists refer to as “lithic scatters,” which consist of the pieces of fractured rock left over from the manufacture of stone tools and sometimes the stone tools themselves (though in these cases, no tools were identified). The stone for these fractured rock pieces was readily available from the surrounding landscape. One of these two sites identified within the park reserve is thought to have been a winter camp, visited seasonally over a number of years.

A total of nine archaeological sites have been recorded within one mile of the park reserve, most of which are within just a few hundred feet of the park boundaries. Five of these sites are located along the south side of the Cannon River, and one is located along the north side of the river, immediately southeast of the park reserve.

The other three sites are located on terraces overlooking the Cannon River to the east of the park reserve. Because the steep slopes of the Trout Brook Valley have served to protect the valley from intensive farming and other ecological impacts, its diverse ecological system has been preserved and, aside from the steep, eroding banks of the stream itself and invasion of exotic species, may today look much like it did in the past when Native Americans first occupied these lands.

Of the sites recorded within one mile of the park reserve, seven are lithic scatters. The eighth site contains numerous projectile points and pieces of pottery, and a nearby ninth site consists of a mound, one of nearly 700 that were recorded along or near the Cannon River during the late 1800s. The presence of these sites, which contain evidence of hunting, cooking, tool manufacture, and burial of the dead, indicates that Native American occupation of the park reserve area was not fleeting, likely due to the area’s rich landscape that provided food, water, shelter, tools, weapons, and fuel.

## TRADITIONAL CULTURAL PROPERTIES AND CULTURALLY SENSITIVE AREAS

In September 2022, the Upper Sioux Community (USC) conducted a traditional cultural property (TCP) survey within the publicly owned portions of Miesville Ravine Park Reserve. This study was carried out to begin the process of identifying TCP and culturally sensitive areas (USC 2022). TCPs are associated with the cultural practices, traditions, beliefs, arts and crafts, and other institutions of a native community. Culturally sensitive areas are locations that either contain some elements of a TCP or are near existing TCPs. In addition, culturally sensitive areas contain a TCP that has not yet been identified. The TCPs and culturally sensitive areas within the park reserve are different from archaeological sites and should be managed through ongoing consultation with USC (USC 2022).

USC identified 73 features comprising nine TCPs, all of which are categorized by USC as containing or potentially containing burials (USC 2022). Additionally, a culturally sensitive area was identified as likely containing TCPs, but these TCPs were not visible at the time of USC’s survey (USC 2022). Additional TCPs may be present on private land within the park reserve.

### NATIVE AMERICAN ARTIFACTS

The mound groups present along the Cannon River and its tributaries, the presence of pottery in at least one site near the park reserve, and the presence of Traditional Cultural Properties (TCPs) within Miesville Ravine Park Reserve indicate that Native Americans were present throughout this landscape during or after the Ceramic/Mound Stage.



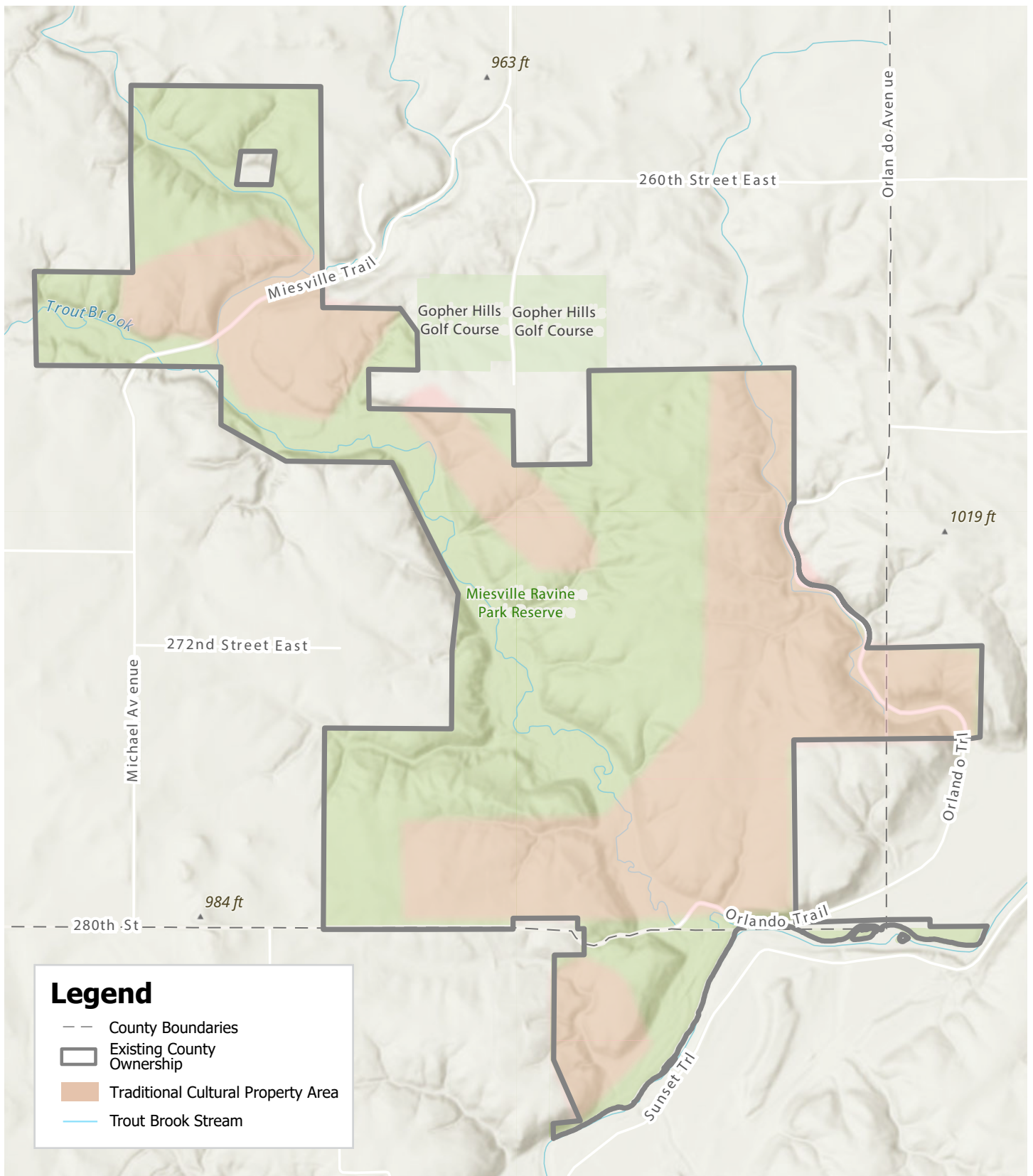
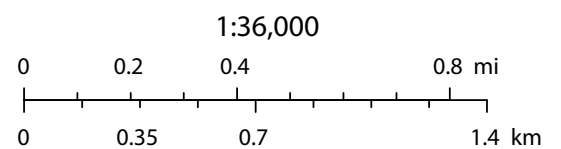


Figure 4.9 Cultural Resources Summary Map





## NATIVE AMERICAN HABITATION

The mound groups present along the Cannon River and its tributaries, the presence of pottery in at least one site near Miesville Ravine Park Reserve, and the presence of two archaeological sites within the park reserve, indicate that Native Americans lived in the greater park reserve area during or after the Ceramic/Mound Stage. The presence of archaeological sites made up of only stone materials suggests this occupation may have occurred earlier as well.

As its name implies, the Ceramic/Mound Stage corresponds to the time when Native Americans in the Midwest began making pottery and building earthen mounds, between 3000 and 900 years ago. This period corresponds to the time when the Maya settled the Yucatan peninsula, Homer wrote the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, and construction began on both the Roman Colosseum and the Great Wall of China. During the latter portions of this stage, the manufacture of pottery, domestication of plants, and construction of burial mounds within a pattern of sedentary village life became typical for Native American groups in the area, though adoption of these elements would not necessarily be immediate or concurrent. In the earliest portions of this stage, it is likely that, while mounds were constructed and pottery was made, daily life was not too distinct from the earlier Archaic Stage.

The Archaic Stage, ranging from about 8000 to 3000 years ago, is characterized by new techniques in the creation and use of stone tools, diverse and specialized hunting and gathering practices, and mobile or semi-mobile groups that moved around the region following game. Specialized hunting of large grazing animals, like bison, was common.

In the late 1650s or early 1660s, French fur traders began operating in Minnesota. By the late 1670s, merchants from Canada had created a company to trade furs with Dakota people. During this period of trade, European goods and influences became more widely available to the Dakota, though some Dakota people had traveled east earlier and encountered Europeans. Many parts of Native American life changed during this period of European interaction: massive depopulation due to disease or warfare, hunting animals for fur trade as opposed for subsistence use, and the adoption and use of Europeans materials, such as iron, glass, and porcelain.

The Dakota people hunted game in the Trout Brook area as late as the 1860s. It is likely, therefore, that Native American groups used the landscape of the Trout Brook Valley consistently between the Archaic Stage, the Ceramic/Mound Stage, and the 1860s, when they were forcibly removed.

## TROUT BROOK

When the first Euro-Americans came to the area surrounding Miesville Ravine Park Reserve in the mid-1800s, they found it equally as inviting as the Native American settlers to the area and for many of the same reasons. In addition to a year-round water-source, they found prairies for farming and forests to supply the timber needed for building and fuel. Trout Brook provided food. As these new settlers began to plow the land and harvest the trees, they changed the landscape surrounding the valley. The woods that once covered all of the uplands surrounding Trout Brook were cut for timber or burned for pasture until the remaining trees were those that clung to the steepest hillsides; the bluffs were repeatedly plowed and planted. Without trees and other vegetation to hold the land in place, severe erosion began—gouging the land and moving soil and gravel into the waterways. Soon, the railroad blazed its path through the southern portion of the future park reserve. Yet, throughout this period, Trout Brook Valley remained largely unaltered: While its precipitous topography rendered it attractive in the physical sense, it kept the valley itself from being an attractive location for farming or settlement.

## THE PATTERN OF EARLY EURO-AMERICAN SETTLEMENT IN DOUGLAS TOWNSHIP

In the mid-1800s, the park reserve area was largely prairie, with the upland areas surrounding the river being deciduous savanna giving way to deciduous forest nearest the waterway. Expansive prairies bordered the park reserve to the southwest and northeast, and open river bottoms were present along the south edge of the reserve where Trout Brook joins the Cannon River. At this time, during the original land grant survey, the surveyors of Douglas Township recorded no settlements, trails, or evidence of permanent human habitation. The first Euro-American settlers of the township soon followed, with Hugh McKay making the first recorded claim in Section 4 in the spring of 1854.



During the original land grant survey, the surveyors of Douglas Township recorded no settlements or trails. The first Euro-American settlers of the township, however, soon followed, with Hugh McKay making the first recorded claim in Section 4 in the spring of 1854

## FARMING IN MIESVILLE RAVINE PARK RESERVE

the Stephen Gardner farm had become the William Knoblauch farm; and new farms had been established by John Green and D. L. Thompson in the Dakota County portion of the park reserve. All seven farms present as of 1896 remained as of 1916, though ownership of the John Estergreen, John Green, D. L. Thompson, and Jas Lawther farms had been transferred to N. Nelson, And Nelson, N. A. Larson, and O. N. Larson, respectively. In addition, it is possible that John Ludwig may have moved his house or constructed a new house slightly to the north, based on the location of the building on the 1916 plat map. Most of the early farmers likely engaged in wheat farming, as that was the predominant crop grown in the state between 1860 and 1880.

One of the farms, however, was of a different sort. In the 1870s, E.W. Grosvenor ran a trout farm in Section 27 at the head of Trout Brook. There, he raised trout in a fish house that he constructed for that purpose, feeding them on milk curd, eggs, and beef liver. The farm was described in an 1873 newspaper article:



*A former farm structure is still present on the prairie terrace*



*Screenshot from project storymap that depicts photos taken on the initial site tour*



*[The fish-house] is, perhaps, forty feet wide by one hundred feet long, merely a frame with roof, and sides roughly boarded. Across this building are constructed troughs, watertight, the bottom covered with gravel, and through which the water is allowed to flow to the depth of four to six inches. In these troughs are the young trout to the number of forty thousand, which are now about three-quarters of an inch in length.*

*...Besides this house two ponds or tanks have been constructed, with fall enough to carry the water from one to the other, to which may be added others, as it shall be determined to raise one, two, three, four, or five year old trout.*

*...There are some three hundred trout kept in reservoirs for breeding purposes, varying in size from four to eight inches, who dart with great velocity for their feed, or playfully and sometimes listlessly sport in the transparent water.*

Recent aerial photographs show that three of the early farmsteads remain on private land within the park reserve. These farmsteads, along with those in Douglas Township outside of Miesville Ravine Park Reserve, speak to the recent history of the area, which largely retains its rural character today.

### THE CHICAGO, MILWAUKEE, & ST. PAUL

In 1884, the Chicago, Milwaukee, & St. Paul Railway Company constructed a rail line from Cannon Junction (Red Wing) to Northfield through the Cannon River Valley, with the railroad grade passing through the south end of the park reserve along the north side of the river. This rail line, with connections to both Minneapolis and St. Paul, would likely have served the local farmers in distributing their goods to the more urban areas of the state.

Though the tracks of the Cannon Falls to Northfield portion of the route were taken up in 1918, the portion that ran through the park reserve, from Cannon Falls to Red Wing, continued to be used until 1937. In that year, the Chicago, Milwaukee, & St. Paul Railway Company (which had become the Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul & Pacific) obtained rights to use the tracks of the Chicago Great Western Railway Company, located on the south side of the river, and therefore abandoned its tracks through the Cannon River Valley.

## CONSERVATION

By the late 1910s, the people of Minnesota were already beginning to realize the negative impacts that agricultural practices were having on the delicate landscape of southeastern Minnesota, and efforts began to reverse them. Major efforts were begun in the 1940s by Richard J. Dorer, who at that time, worked for the Division of Game and Fish of the Minnesota Department of Conservation. Dorer, a conservation activist who would subsequently work for the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, was passionate about conservation education, wetlands protection, and forest conservation. When he retired from the Department of Natural Resources in 1958, as president of the Minnesota Division of the Izaak Walton League, he began a major crusade to create a “public forest-playground” along the Mississippi River from Hastings, Minnesota, to the Iowa border. Working with other conservationists, such as Edward Franey, Dorer obtained the necessary funds and support, and in 1961, the Minnesota Memorial Hardwood Forest was established as a “memorial to the early Minnesota pioneers and soldiers in all wars.”

Over time, the forest has been restored through forest conservation practices, revegetation, repair of eroded stream banks, construction of water control structures, and the implementation of less harmful agricultural practices. After Dorer’s death in 1974, the Minnesota Memorial Hardwood Forest was renamed the Richard J. Dorer Memorial Hardwood State Forest in his honor.



*Remnant Prairie*



*Restored Tall-grass Prairie*





*Oak savanna*



*Mesic hardwood forest*



*Floodplain forest*

## TROUT BROOK

Trout Brook is a Minnesota Department of Natural Resources Designated Trout Stream. Designated Trout Streams are established with the purpose of protecting and fostering the propagation of trout. During the spring and fall, Trout Brook serves as a purely recreational resource, with only catch-and-release fishing allowed. In the summer, it becomes a combination recreational and food resource but with a limit on the number of fish taken per person each season. Ongoing conservation and restoration efforts could help visitors experience the recreation and beauty of Trout Brook and Miesville Ravine Park Reserve.



## ARCHAEOLOGICAL POTENTIAL SUMMARY

In April of 2004, the project archaeologist conducted a windshield survey of the Miesville Ravine Park Reserve to identify areas of low and high archaeological potential. In addition, the project archaeologist compared historical documentation, such as plat maps and aerial photographs, with current field conditions to assess the potential within the park reserve for intact historical archaeological sites. In the fall of 2022, a project archaeologist refined this summary based on additional desktop research.

Areas of higher archaeological potential were generally defined as the undisturbed portions of the park reserve:

- Within 500 ft. (150 m) of an existing or former water source of 40 acres (19 hectares) or greater in extent, or within 500 ft. (150 m) of a former or existing perennial stream;
- Located on topographically prominent landscape features;
- Located within 300 ft. (100 m) of a previously reported site; or
- Located within 300 ft. (100 m) of a former or existing historic structure or feature (such as a building foundation or cellar depression).



*Farm equipment on the prairie terrace*

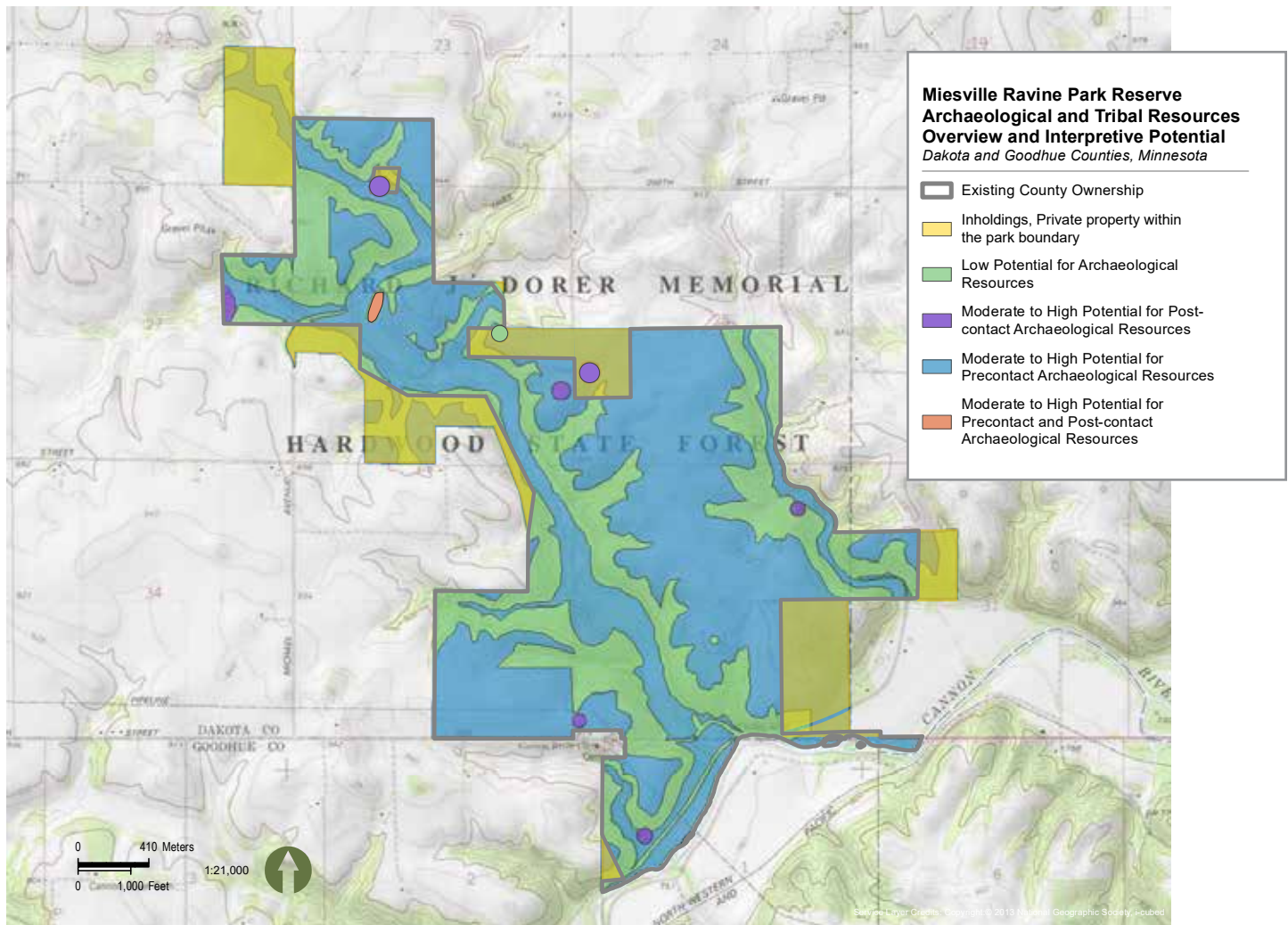


Figure 4.10 Archaeological Potential Summary Map





*Trout Brook*



*Floodplain*



*Cannon River shoreline*

Areas defined as having a relatively low potential for containing intact archaeological resources included inundated areas, former or existing wetland areas, poorly drained areas, and areas with a 20 percent or greater slope. Low potential areas and areas in which Holocene (less than 10,000 years old) deposits have been significantly disturbed are defined as having little or no potential for containing intact archaeological resources.

Miesville Ravine Park Reserve consists of woodlands, farmsteads and associated agricultural fields, former gravel mining areas, a portion of Miesville Trail and other roads, park buildings, Trout Brook, an intermittent stream, and wetlands. The southern edge of the park borders the Cannon River. The topography of Miesville Ravine Park Reserve is extremely variable, with the high bluffs surrounding the Trout Brook Valley sloping steeply down to the valley floor. The bluff tops are undulating, while the valley floor tends to be more level.

The only apparent areas of severe disturbance to the landscape are former gravel mining sites toward the northwest and northeast corners of the park reserve. Based on the level of disturbance in these areas, they are considered to have low potential for intact archaeological resources. The construction of park reserve buildings, roads, and the railroad would also have had moderate to severe impacts on the landscape, depending on the depth to which excavations and other ground-disturbing activities occurred. These locations, therefore, are also considered to have low potential for intact archaeological resources.

The locations of the eight former and existing historical farmsteads within the park reserve, including the farmstead that was removed between 1879 and 1896, likely suffered impacts during the late nineteenth century through the construction of the house and associated outbuildings. These locations are considered to have low potential for intact precontact archaeological resources; however, because these locations do not appear to have suffered significant impacts subsequent to the late nineteenth century, these locations are considered to have high potential for intact historic period archaeological resources. The intact foundations of the Jas Lawther/O. N. Larson (and later Minnie Larson) farm remain in the Goodhue County portion of the farm just west of the railroad grade. In addition, two farmsteads constructed in the 1970s and a structure depicted on the 1974 topographic map of the area are, due to their location, considered to have low archaeological potential. The remainder of the park reserve, not having been occupied during the historic period, is considered to have low potential for containing historic period archaeological resources.

The blufftops within Miesville Ravine Park Reserve are close to and overlook Trout Brook, the Cannon River, and an intermittent stream in the eastern portion of the park reserve. Portions of these blufftops in the southeast portion of the park reserve are within 500 ft. of previously recorded archaeological sites. Except for the gravel mining site and the farmsteads mentioned above, the blufftops are largely undisturbed, as it appears that impacts are limited to those caused by cultivation. While plowing fields and harvesting crops cause disturbance to the top layers of soil in a given area, the possibility remains that intact archaeological resources remain buried beneath the plow zone. Based on the topographic prominence of the blufftops and their proximity to the Cannon River, two of its tributaries and previously recorded archaeological sites, as well as the overall lack of disturbance to these locations, the blufftops are considered to have high potential for intact precontact archaeological resources.



The valley bottom within Miesville Ravine Park Reserve is the site of Trout Brook, which is bordered in many places by slightly higher, flat terraces. These terraces, protected by the steep slopes of the valley, are undisturbed. Previously recorded archaeological sites were located on similar terraces on the south side of the Cannon River approximately 400 ft. from the southeasternmost portion of the valley floor within the park. Based on the lack of disturbance to these terraces, their proximity to Trout Brook and previously recorded archaeological sites, and their similarity in topographic location to terraces where those sites were found, they are considered to have high potential for intact precontact archaeological resources.

The remainder of the park reserve consists of the steep slopes down to the valley floor, the tributaries of the Cannon River, and associated wetlands. These locations would have been unsuitable for occupation and are, therefore, considered to have low potential for archaeological resources.

One additional historical resource that bears further consideration is the Miesville Trail. This trail connected Trout Brook with the town of Miesville to the north of the

park reserve and demonstrates the continued importance and enjoyment of the resources provided by the brook to people living in the area. William LeDuc recounted a fishing expedition to Trout Brook in 1855; the trail connecting the brook with the town is still present today. If federal funds or permits are required for future work in the park reserve, and the trail may be affected by that undertaking, it may be necessary to determine if the trail is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

For those portions of Miesville Ravine Park Reserve considered to have high archaeological potential, 106 Group suggests that consideration be given to identifying the actual location of archaeological sites to try to prevent potential looting. In addition, if site identification has not previously occurred and ground-disturbing activities within the areas of high archaeological potential are planned, identification of archaeological sites within the areas of impact should be conducted. For portions of the Miesville Ravine Park Reserve that are within or in proximity to TCPs or culturally sensitive areas, 106 Group suggests ongoing consultation with tribal communities to properly manage these areas.



## FROM FIELDS TO PRAIRIE

Since 2005, hundreds of acres of former agricultural fields atop the bluff have been restored to prairie.

*Before and after landscape images*



# ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

The following issues and opportunities were compiled from information gathered through site visits, conversations with county staff, geographical information system mapping, and community engagement.

## FACILITIES AND AMENITIES

### ISSUES

- There are no facilities or public access sites at the northern end of the park reserve.
- Existing facilities and visitor areas do not have a strong connection to the Cannon River.
- Parking lots can fill on summer weekends.
- No drinking water.
- Limited cell service.
- Existing amenities are spread out and do not interact with each other.
- Increased visitors will require additional facilities like picnic shelters and restrooms.
- Electrical line easement clear cuts through the park reserve and is an eyesore.

### OPPORTUNITIES

- Directly connect amenities to the parking lots and to one another.
- Add rental facilities to support programming (back-country skis and snowshoes, paddlecrafts).
- Add unique amenities like a sauna to attract visitors.
- Evenly disperse amenities throughout park reserve to support visitors.
- Partner with nearby golf course to utilize club house for daily park reserve visitation or programmed events.

## INTERPRETATION AND EDUCATION

### ISSUES

- Little interpretation about the ecology and restoration efforts happening in the park reserve.
- No water trail map for the Cannon River, difficult to navigate or know how long routes/floats are. Limited water trail support facilities.

### OPPORTUNITIES

- Educate visitors on the uniqueness of the bluff prairies and other habitats within the park reserve.
- Explore history of old farmsteads on the upper terrace.
- Provide information on trout streams and their importance, supplemented by learn to fish programs.
- Explore the role of Native Americans in this landscape.
- The prairie here is more expansive than the one at Spring Lake Park Reserve. If bison introduction goes well there, and access and infrastructure needs can be accommodated, there is an opportunity to explore bison reintroduction at Miesville Ravine Park Reserve.
- Interpret the historic railbed that serves at the park reserve's main Cannon River walk trail.
- Possibilities to explore include virtual tours, designated areas for drone use, a park reserve perimeter driving tour with trailhead/rest area stopping points, or potential cart tours of the prairie terrace.



*Existing trail wayfinding*



*Eroded public water access site*



*Trout Brook footbridge damage*



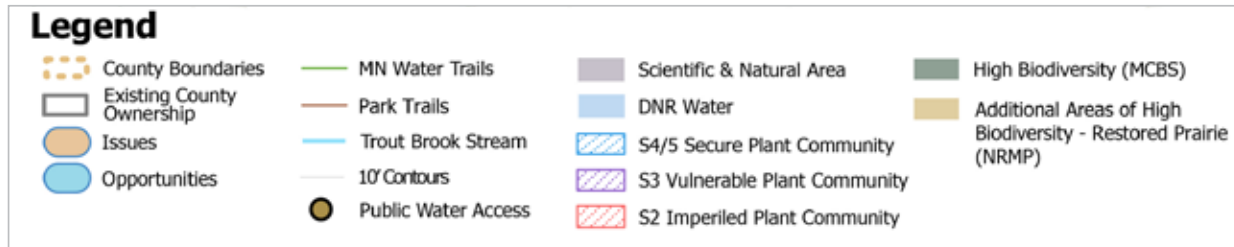
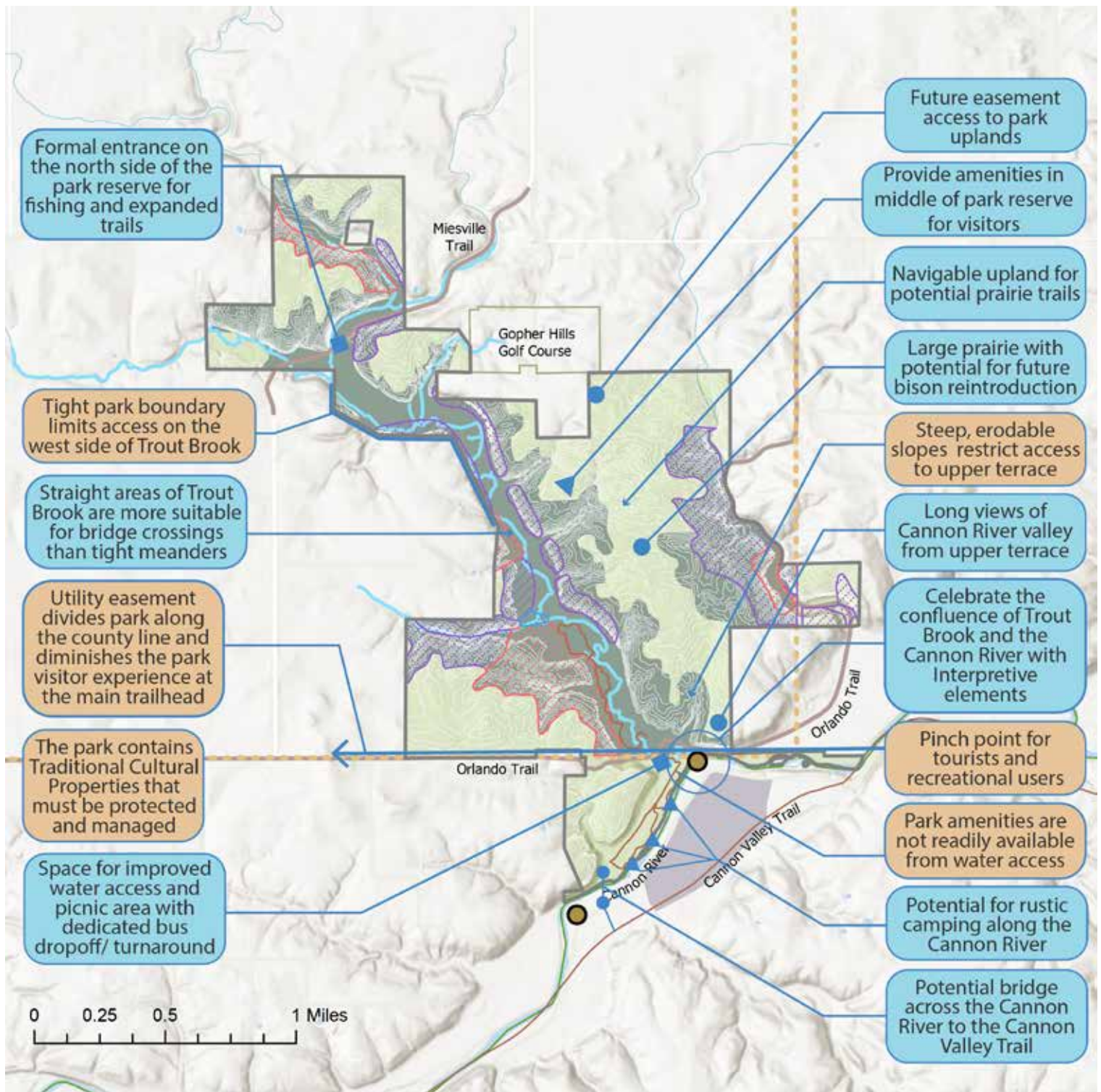


Figure 4.11 Issues and Opportunities Diagram





*Existing electric line easement*



*Small wayfinding trail sign*

## CONNECTIVITY AND CIRCULATION

### ISSUES

- Remote location, gravel roads, steep terrain, and lack of clear wayfinding signage make arrival at the park reserve feel unwelcoming to some.
- Park reserve is vast and has no public access in the northern two-thirds.
- Hard to tell where the boundaries are.
- Access to the Cannon River from the parking lots is difficult.
- Influx of traffic from Cannon River tubing overwhelms the park reserve at times. Outfitter drop-off on Miesville Trail outside of the park reserve is a potential safety concern and contributes to river bank erosion down stream from Miesville Ravine Park Reserve's boundary. No dedicated bus access within park reserve.
- Expanding the limited trail network will require clear signage, but will want to limit clutter.
- Some bridges on Trout Brook are in poor condition and beginning to wash out from beneath.
- Steep slopes throughout the park reserve make access to the upper terrace difficult and accessibility near impossible.
- Access to certain areas needs to be restricted during the hunting season.

### OPPORTUNITIES

- Improve access road, add signage, and design park reserve entry to be more welcoming.
- Name parking lots for clarity.
- Potential to provide multiple smaller parking lots to reduce impacts and get visitors closer to their destinations.
- Consider whether to provide bus access for paddlers and tubers within the park reserve boundary.
- Incorporate ADA access where feasible, adding flat terrain trail loops, improved access to high amenity areas, and strategic ADA-fishing platforms.
- Explore the possibility of trailhead access to the upper terrace via an access easement near the prairie's northern edge.
- Provide access to the park reserve's upper terraces with minimal impact to natural ecosystems and cultural sites. Possibilities to explore include virtual tours, designated areas for drone use, multiple small trailheads connected by public roads surrounding the park reserve, and cart tours.
- Create a northern parking lot as a gateway to the north half of the park reserve. Expand trail access.
- Create environmentally sensitive overlooks and areas of prospect/refuge off of trail loops both within the ravine and on the upper terrace.
- Site bridges in locations that do not exacerbate streambank erosion while allowing for natural stream meandering.
- Create a new trail connection across the Cannon River to the Cannon Valley Trail.
- It would be desirable for future powerline expansions to be underground to mitigate impacts to the park and the river valley.



# WATER QUALITY AND NATURAL RESOURCES

## ISSUES

- Erosion along Trout Brook and the Cannon River is a problem in high-traffic areas.
- Trout Brook Stream is critical habitat to two types of trout, one native and the other introduced.
- Areas of the stream wash out due to high water volume during rain events and disconnection to the floodplain (need to disperse energy).
- The park reserve offers nearly ideal beaver habitat, but they have been viewed as a pest and not as the ecosystem asset that they are or have the potential to be.
- Maintenance access road to the high bluff prairie is deeply rutted.
- While not pristine, the park reserve is a natural oasis surrounded by agriculture which can have detrimental effects on water quality.
- The park reserve has many acres of Imperiled and Vulnerable Native Plant Communities that require protection.
- Trout Brook's watershed is large, and land upstream is predominately privately owned. Any land management decisions that may improve water quality and reduce flooding are reliant on private landowner actions.

## OPPORTUNITIES

- Restore stream geomorphology and hydrology as much as possible. Use bioengineering techniques and other proven methods. Also consider new methods of stream restoration that include restoring beaver to the system, as is being successfully implemented throughout the country, for instance at Bridge Creek, Oregon.
- Create a formal canoe/kayak launch to reduce erosion.
- Celebrate the confluence of Trout Brook and the Cannon River with interpretive elements.
- Create a fishing platform to reduce erosion.
- Public/private partnerships to clean and protect Trout Brook starting at the top and within the greater watershed.
- To complement prescribed burning, reintroduce grazing, mowing, and haying to mimic the historical disturbance of prairie and savanna. Consider bison grazing and patch-burn cattle grazing.
- Opportunity to continue restoring habitat within the park reserve.
- Partner with the local watershed organization to educate and offer incentives to landowners to encourage best management practices.

# RECREATIONAL OFFERINGS AND PROGRAMMING

## ISSUES

- Park reserve is remote, and few programmed recreational opportunities exist, resulting in low awareness and lower visitorship than desired.
- Introduction of new amenities needs to respect natural systems and cultural sites, which require special consideration.
- Current trail mileage of just over two miles offers limited exploration of the park reserve.
- Less than five percent of the park reserve is accessible to visitors.
- Existing wayfinding maps are difficult to for many visitors to use.



*Informational sign about protecting water quality*



- Park reserve does not have basic facilities such as indoor shelter, running water, bus drop-off, and equipment storage needed to support guided programs.
- Visitors arriving via the water access site along the Cannon River are separated from the park reserve's amenities.
- Due to the high-quality, sensitive natural ecosystem and Indigenous Traditional Cultural Places, location, amount, and type of recreation must be carefully considered to minimize negative impacts.

## OPPORTUNITIES

- Miesville Ravine Park Reserve is directly adjacent to the Cannon Valley Trail and River Terrace Prairie Scientific & Natural Area and has the opportunity to make trail and/or bridge connections.
- Opportunity for rustic paddle-in/cart-in/bike-in campsites as part of the Cannon River Water Trail. None between Lake Byllesby and Red Wing.
- Increase awareness and market the park reserve as a destination on a day or weekend trip in the Cannon River Valley.
- Add outdoor recreation-focused programming: birding, fishing, guided hikes, paddling, night sky viewing/stargazing (see figure 4.12).
- Add intro to camping, fishing, and orienteering programs to get new generations comfortable with outdoor recreation.
- Improve the water access and add picnicking and gathering space along with easily accessible amenities.
- Add shore fishing platform upriver from the water access, where people are already fishing.
- Add hiking trails in currently inaccessible areas of the park reserve. Theme loops to create interest and let people know level of difficulty.
- Build partnerships with compatible organizations for birding, fishing, paddling, and other programs.

## HISTORIC AND CULTURAL SITES

### ISSUES

- While Dakota presence in Miesville Ravine Park Reserve and throughout the Cannon River Valley is documented, it is up to the Dakota People to tell the story of the land's significance to past, present, and future generations.
- The park reserve contains Traditional Cultural Properties that must be protected and managed.
- Stories of early Euro-American settlement in the park reserve and the Miesville area are not well known.

### OPPORTUNITIES

- Guided and self guided interpretation of historic and cultural history and significance.
- Expand relationships with local Tribes, exploring opportunities for co-management of the park reserve's cultural sites and natural areas and native-led programming within the park reserve.

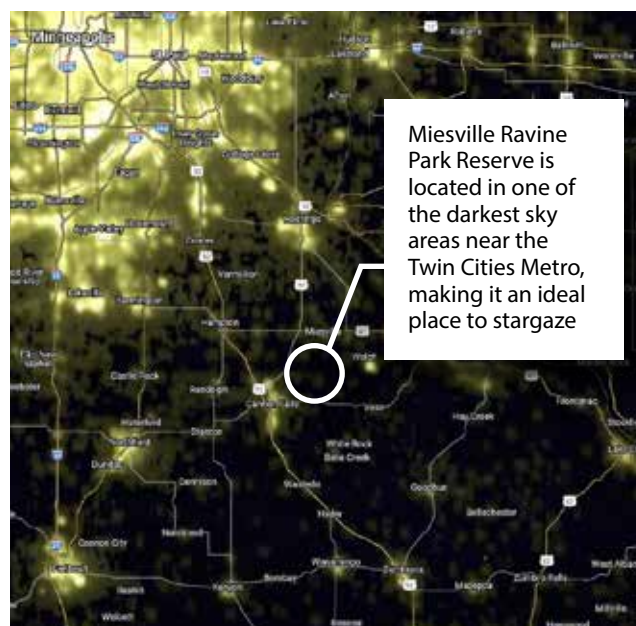


Figure 4.12 Stargazing Map



# VISION AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES OVERVIEW

In order to put detailed ideas into an appropriate context, this chapter describes the “big picture” thinking that will guide future park reserve development and programming recommendations. By clearly stating Miesville Ravine Park Reserve’s vision and guiding principles, this chapter sets the foundation for the remainder of the document, in which specific amenities, programs, and methods of stewardship in line with the sentiments of this chapter are proposed for future investment.

## THE PURPOSE OF THIS CHAPTER IS TO:

- Describe the long-term vision for the park reserve;
- Identify the over-arching approach to the development, programming, and management of the park reserve;
- Identify guiding principles that have directed suggestions in this document and will guide investments in the park reserve.







## APPROACH

Miesville Ravine Park Reserve's remote setting and expansive natural resources are key to its charm, but distance from the Twin Cities' population core, lack of visitor facilities, and limited activities have resulted in lower numbers of visitors than other Dakota County Parks. The plan's three-part approach seeks to direct financial and staff resources in a way that maintains the park reserve's high-quality landscapes, while improving the visitor experience:

1. Continue to stabilize and preserve the park reserve's natural ecosystems and cultural landscape through invasive species control, habitat restoration, respectful siting of features, sustainable construction practices, strategic acquisitions, and stewardship outreach with neighboring landowners.
2. Provide thoughtfully integrated, accessible amenities that welcome a broader range of users into the park reserve, including those who may not feel equipped to explore Miesville Ravine currently.
3. Embrace Miesville Ravine's remote setting within the Dakota County park system as a landing pad where visitors are given what they need to get comfortable exploring remote natural landscapes.

As more people look to the natural world for respite from increasingly urbanized lives, places like Miesville Ravine Park Reserve become even more precious. Outdoor recreation should not feel exclusionary; everyone deserves access to the knowledge, resources, and tools that allow them to enjoy the outdoors. By investing in preservation while helping visitors to comfortably navigate, respectfully explore, and learn to love the outdoors, a new generation of stewards for this remarkable landscape can be created.

## VISION & GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The vision statement and guiding principles establish the foundation for this plan. The vision statement expresses the long-range plan intent, while the guiding principles identify broad directives for development and management. Together they have guided what is proposed within this plan and will continue to guide decision making related to park development and management through the life of this document.

### VISION STATEMENT

#### ***Protecting Habitats and Connecting People to the Wonders of the Natural World***

*Miesville Ravine Park Reserve is a healthy and diverse ecosystem whose habitats are protected by strategic preservation and restoration, where native flora and fauna can flourish. Access to and through the park reserve is sensitively expanded in order to improve visitors' experience of this unique landscape, while preserving its character. Visiting Miesville Ravine Park Reserve expands people's comfort with and connection to the natural world, provides them a window into the past, and empowers them to be stewards into the future.*



## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

**1. Complement the rustic setting and provide a strong sense of arrival with entry improvements.**

*Miesville Ravine is a dramatic landscape that inherently puts its visitors in a different frame of mind as they approach. The visitor experience starts well before reaching the park reserve's borders. Landscaping and signage should reflect the park reserve's setting, while guiding visitors where they need to go.*

**2. Strike a harmonious balance between landscape preservation and human use.**

*Miesville Ravine's "park reserve" designation demonstrates that this place is about blending outdoor experiences with dedicated preservation of both natural and cultural landscapes. Because Miesville Ravine is an extraordinary and delicate ecological system with significant cultural sites, the potential impacts of providing human access must be weighed in every design decision.*

**3. Celebrate the park reserve's rugged setting while making it more inclusive.**

*Improve access throughout the park reserve in a thoughtful, sustainable way. Make Miesville Ravine Park Reserve feel safe and approachable for users by adding amenities that improve visitor comfort and empower them to explore, while keeping their footprint minimal.*

**4. Protect Miesville Ravine Park Reserve's vulnerable and imperiled habitats.**

*The park reserve's bedrock bluff prairies, maple basswood forests, and coldwater stream are among the region's most sensitive ecosystems. The park reserve must be managed in order to sustain these important pieces of Minnesota's natural heritage, and the County must partner throughout the watershed to mitigate further impacts to Trout Brook.*

**5. Embrace the park reserve's proximity to the Cannon River.**

*Many of Miesville Ravine's visitors first experience the park reserve by arriving via the Cannon River. Offering well-designed and accessible water access, convenient amenities, and dedicated circulation for water trail trips would provide invaluable services to visitors.*

**6. Enhance Miesville Ravine's connection to the broader Cannon River valley.**

*The wealth of nearby recreation opportunities that span the Cannon River, from Lake Byllesby Regional Park to the bluffs of Red Wing, offers visitors a variety of experiences. Miesville Ravine Park Reserve's offerings should make it an essential destination as part of a day or weekend trip to the area, without having to provide all desired recreational amenities and experiences at Miesville Ravine Park Reserve itself.*

**7. Highlight the park reserve's expansive upland terrace prairie.**

*After more than a decade of intensive habitat restoration, Miesville Ravine Park Reserve boasts the largest contiguous prairie in the regional park system. The establishment of this striking landscape is an achievement worth sharing with visitors.*

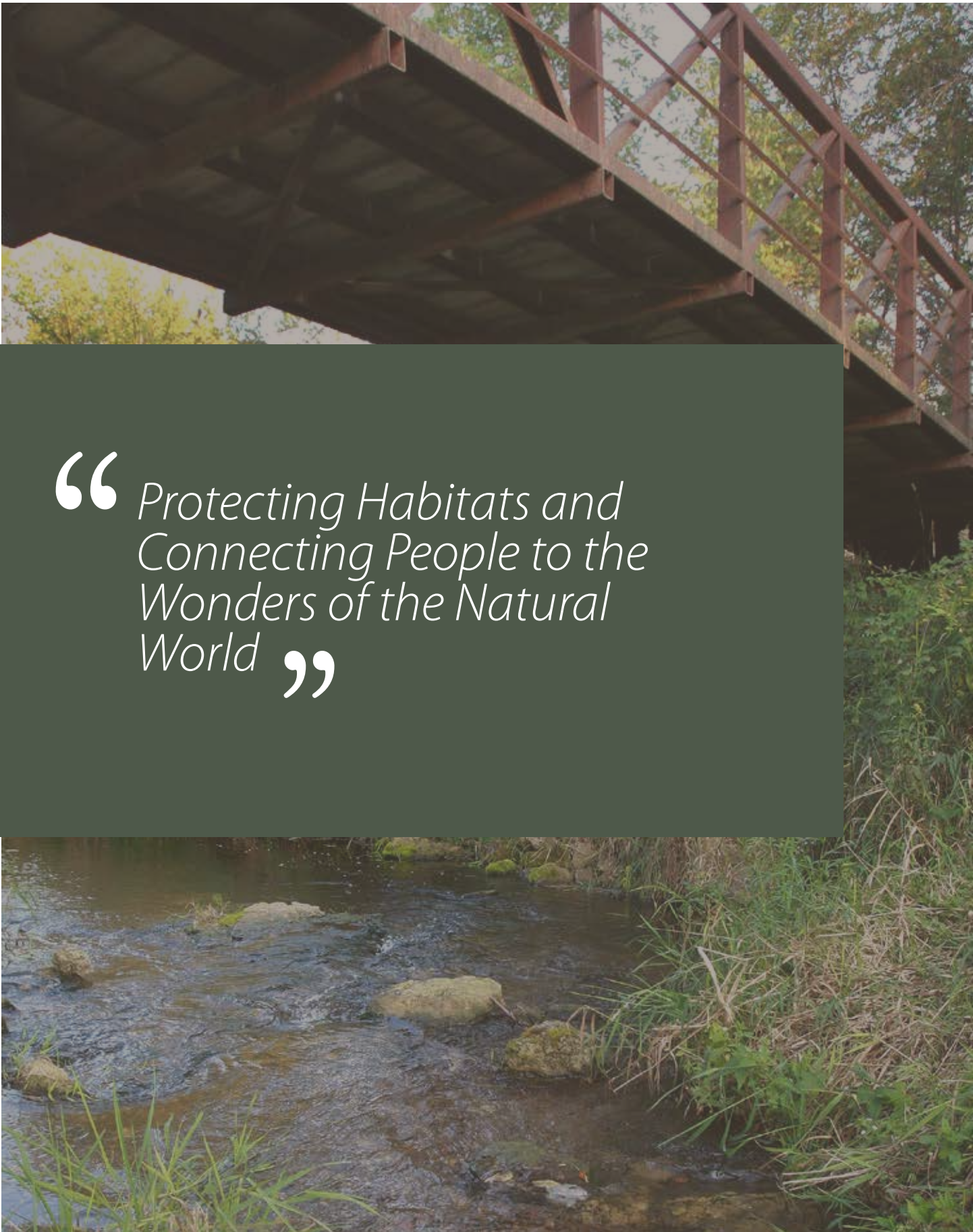
**8. Recognize those who have stewarded this landscape for generations.**

*Miesville Ravine Park Reserve exists as it does today, in large part, due to the kinship and care of native peoples. Dakota County recognizes the role that Traditional Ecological Knowledge has played in this landscape and would like to strengthen its partnership with the Dakota people by providing opportunities for native-led care or co-management of portions of the park reserve.*

**9. Keep the park reserve picturesque.**

*While exploring the park reserve, visitors should feel insulated from the outside world. Development within and at the fringes of the park reserve has the potential to impact that visitor experience. Maintain scenic views through vegetation management and plant buffers where necessary and ensure that development within the park is suitably low-profile.*





*“Protecting Habitats and  
Connecting People to the  
Wonders of the Natural  
World”*



# PARK DEVELOPMENT PLAN

## OVERVIEW

This chapter introduces 10-year and long-term concepts intended to guide Miesville Ravine Park Reserve's evolution. These concepts are grounded in the study and understanding of the landscape and community input and feedback. The long-term concept plan shows the park at full recreation development, while the 10-year priorities graphic shows improvements that are reasonably expected to be accomplished during the life of this plan, based on historic funding levels. The long-term plan is important to understanding 10-year phasing and allows for flexibility. Elements from the long-term plan that are not currently included in the 10-year plan may be accomplished sooner based on changing priorities or unforeseen funding opportunities. Park reserve development should be done in collaboration with Tribal Historic Preservation Officers in order to ensure that amenities and trails are sited appropriately, development occurs respectfully, and disturbance to any sensitive cultural areas in the landscape is avoided.

## RECREATION DEVELOPMENT PERCENTAGE

As a Dakota County park reserve, no more than 20 percent of Miesville Ravine's area is allowed to be developed for active recreation, and 80 percent of the land must be devoted to preservation and restoration of the natural environment. The long-term plan for Miesville Ravine Park Reserve embraces this challenge, balancing protection of the park reserve's natural resources with trails and amenities that provide a unique visitor experience within the Dakota County Park System. The long-term plan increases developed land from 2.1 to 3.4 percent of the park reserve's 1,850 total acres and endeavors to site new development in a way that minimizes impacts to sensitive areas.





# LONG-TERM

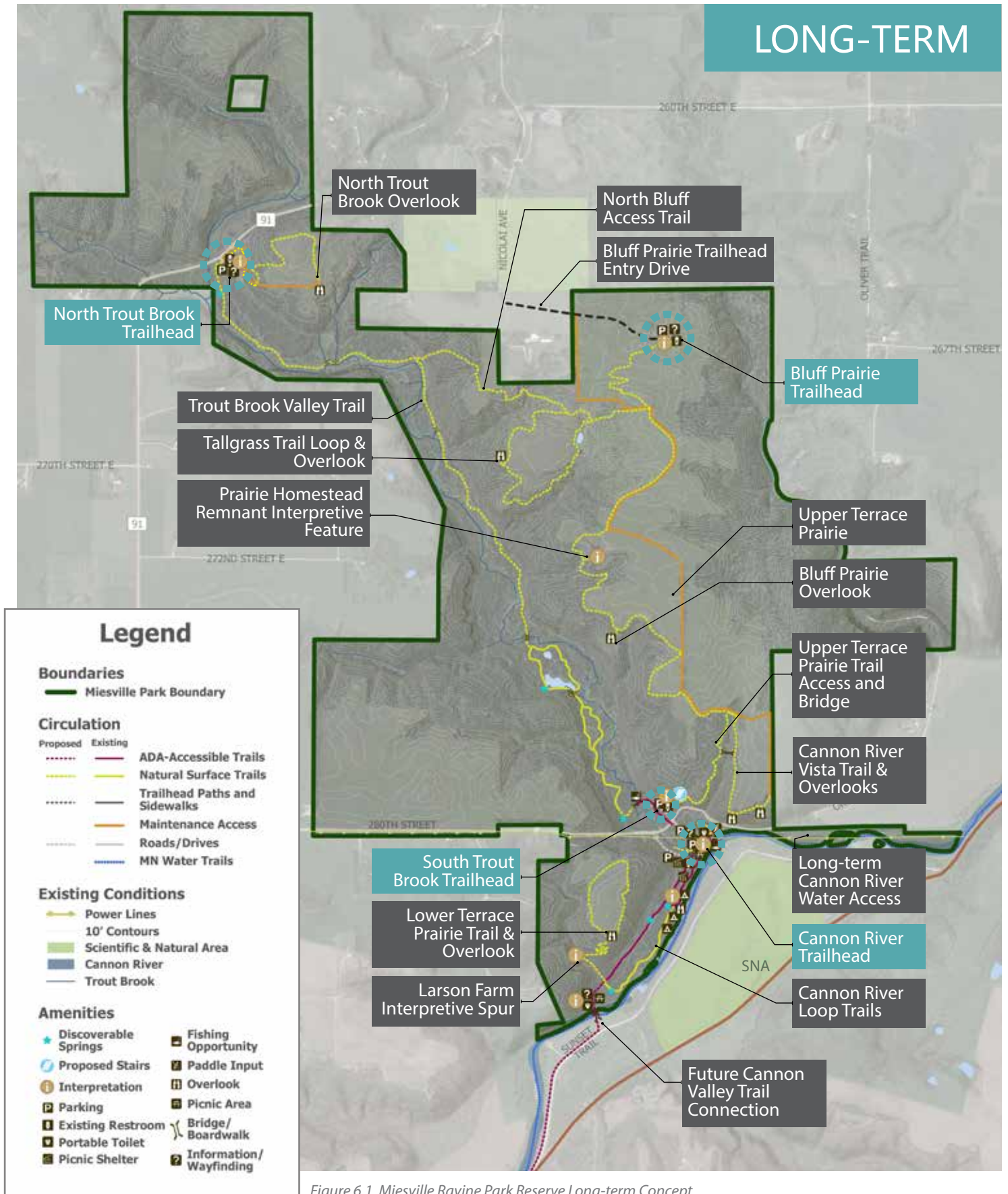


Figure 6.1 Miesville Ravine Park Reserve Long-term Concept





# LONG-TERM CONCEPT

## FUTURE IMPROVEMENTS

The long-term concept strives to find a balance between preserving the park reserve's natural features and designating access points for visitors to interact with and enjoy all that Miesville Ravine Park Reserve has to offer with dedicated fishing areas, water touch points, overlooks, picnic areas, three rustic campsites, and interpretive features.

### IMPROVED CIRCULATION AND ACCESSIBILITY

Miesville Ravine Park Reserve's expansive prairies, towering bluffs, and flowing waters make it both a beautiful place to visit and a difficult place to navigate. Visitors have found the park reserve's lack of clear wayfinding and limited trail frustrating. The long-term plan for Miesville Ravine Park Reserve, "Figure 6.1 Miesville Ravine Park Reserve Long-Term Concept", focuses on sensitively expanding the trail system to better accommodate visitors with a range of abilities, provide access to more of the park reserve's vast landscape, and establish a direct connection to the Cannon Valley Trail that will make Miesville Ravine Park Reserve an easy-to-reach destination for visitors exploring the Cannon River Valley.

Clear and thoughtful wayfinding is proposed throughout the park reserve both along the trails and at trailheads to help visitors reach their desired features and destinations. Branded directional signage along the roadways will be placed to clearly identify access points to vehicles.

### TRAILHEADS AND COMFORT AMENITIES

The long-term plan proposes four trailheads that offer convenient starting points to explore different areas of the park reserve. Each will offer parking, wayfinding, and screened portable restrooms. Options for providing drinking water at the North Trout Brook Trailhead, Bluff Prairie Trailhead, and long-term Cannon River water access east of the Cannon River Trailhead will be assessed as each of these areas are developed. Drinking water at the South Trout Brook Trailhead and Cannon River Trailhead will be implemented as part of the 10-year plan.



Natural surface trails



ADA-accessible trails

## LONG-TERM PLAN SUMMARY

- **Four trailheads to include:**
  - Branded wayfinding
  - Gravel parking lots
  - Screened portable restrooms
  - Picnic amenities
  - Drinking water
- **Enhanced Circulation:**
  - 9.5 miles of natural surface trails and trail loops
  - New Trout Brook bridges
  - Wayfinding
  - Maintenance road access
  - Boardwalks
  - Overlooks/vistas
  - Ravine bridge
  - Future Cannon Valley Trail connection
- **Enhanced ADA accessibility:**
  - 1.25 miles of ADA-accessible paths and trails
  - Accessible parking
  - Accessible watercraft launch, footbridges, overlooks, and fishing platforms
- **New recreation opportunities:**
  - Three rustic campsites along the Cannon River
  - Picnic area within a restored savanna
  - Fishing platforms
  - Watercraft launch

### INTERPRETATION:

- Themed trails
- Trout Brook touch-point
- Overlooks/vistas
- Discoverable springs
- Interactive educational panels
- Integrated interpretive elements

### NATURAL RESOURCES:

- Three phases of habitat restoration
- Two phases of Trout Brook restoration



## LONG TERM CONCEPT HIGHLIGHTS



### HIKING AND WALKING

The long-term plan proposes a modest expansion of trails and trailheads. Throughout Miesville Ravine Park Reserve, hiking and walking will be a main recreational focus for visitors. Proposed trails feature elements like overlooks and interpretation to add interest to the journey.

Dakota County is committed to offering universal accessibility at park facilities. While some of Miesville Ravine Park Reserve will have natural surface trails that will pose a challenging terrain for those with mobility limitations, the Trailheads and Cannon River loop trail will be designed with accessibility in mind.



### FISHING, DISCOVERABLE SPRINGS, AND WATER ACCESS SITES

Miesville Ravine Park Reserve boasts nearly a mile of shoreline along the Cannon River, a variety of wetlands, dozens of springs and seeps, and a popular trout stream. The long-term plan strives to showcase these incredible assets and provide a variety of ways to experience the park reserve's water resources.

Water access to the Cannon River is provided at its namesake trailhead, which offers an ADA-accessible shore fishing platform and watercraft launch. Accessible trout fishing is offered on Trout Brook from the South Trout Brook Trailhead, and the stream is open to anglers throughout the park.

Springs within reach of the park reserve's trail network are noted as "discoverable" and are intended to be artfully demarcated, calling attention to the sacredness of water and the role it plays in this landscape.



### OVERLOOKS AND LANDSCAPE INTERPRETATION

Low-impact overlook sites are proposed at multiple locations throughout Miesville Ravine Park Reserve. With its scenic bluffs and steep terrain, the long-term plan calls attention to a handful of areas with striking views. The design of these overlooks should take the safety of both visitors and habitat into consideration, proposing only selective vegetation removal to open up views, using natural materials for seating elements, and providing visual cues to delineate edges and inhabitable space that are low-profile and complement the rustic character of the park reserve.

Interpretive features placed at overlooks and other areas within the landscape will focus on highlighting natural and cultural resources of interest. More information regarding interpretive and educational elements can be found at the end of this chapter.



### CANNON VALLEY TRAIL CONNECTION

Miesville Ravine Park Reserve is adjacent to the popular Cannon Valley Trail but lacks a direct connection for trail users. The long-term plan includes a bridge across the Cannon River supported by a trailhead welcoming visitors. A portable restroom, bike parking, picnic tables, and wayfinding will ensure Miesville Ravine Park Reserve is a destination.





## PICNICKING AND GATHERING

A popular stop for large groups exploring the Cannon River by tube or watercraft, the Cannon River Trailhead is designed to accommodate a variety of picnicking and gathering needs.

Access to the park reserve's two existing reservable picnic shelters will be improved. The re-imagined picnic lawn adjacent to the water access and the new savanna picnic area along the Cannon River will be equipped with picnic tables and fire rings and are supported by other amenities such as restrooms, drinking water, and parking.

The future Cannon Valley Trail connection and east Cannon River water access are also proposed to provide picnicking amenities.



## CAMPING

Three reservable, themed, and scenic riverside campsites are proposed along the Cannon River. These sites can be accessed by car or watercraft via the Cannon River Trailhead parking lot and water access site. Campsites will be sensitively sited for optimal placement of tents, fire rings, picnic tables, and water views. Campers will have easy access to the Trailhead's restrooms, drinking water, and trail network.



## HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL SITES

Miesville Ravine Park Reserve has a rich Native American history. Dakota people hunted game in the Trout Brook area into the 1860s, and Native Americans have stewarded this land for thousands of years. Interpretive features will strive to highlight Dakota history while overall park design will take sensitive cultural sites into careful consideration.

When the first Euro-Americans came to the area in the mid-1800s, they established farmsteads within Miesville Ravine Park Reserve. The long-term plan highlights existing remnants from that era along the trails with interpretive and educational elements.



## WINTER ACTIVITIES

Miesville Ravine Park Reserve is open to the public year-round. Although the trails and amenities are not formalized for winter use (i.e. no heated restrooms or groomed ski trails), winter hiking, snowshoeing, camping, and use of the picnic areas and fire pits are available in the winter months.



## STARGAZING AND DARK SKIES

Miesville Ravine Park Reserve is located in one of the darkest sky areas near the Twin Cities Metro, making it an ideal place to stargaze. All future lighting should follow dark sky principles such as directing light only where needed, utilizing the lowest light level needed, using timers or motion control, and using warm color lights.



# 10-YEAR

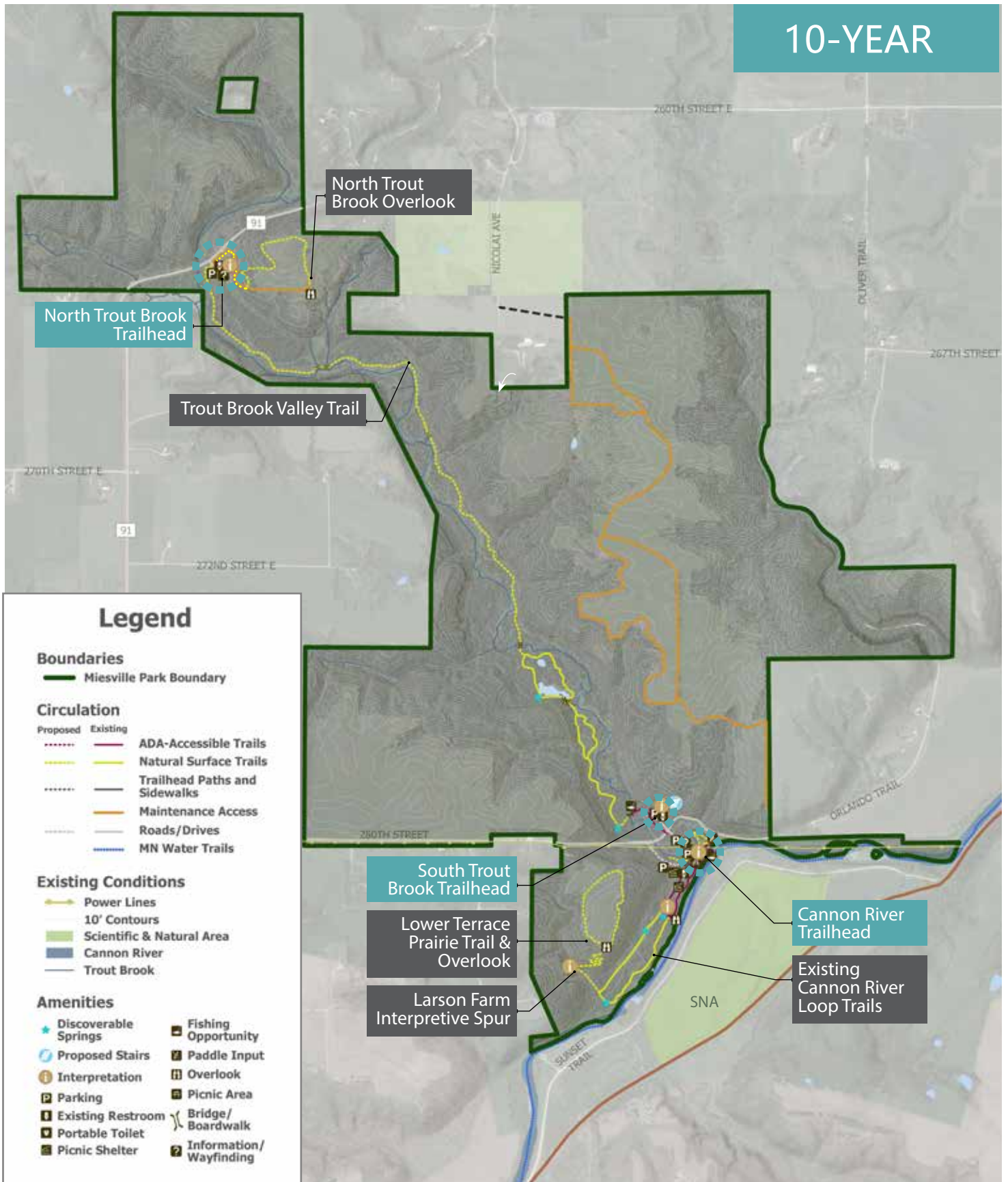


Figure 6.2 Miesville Ravine Park Reserve 10-year Concept





# 10-YEAR CONCEPT

## FUTURE IMPROVEMENTS

### CIRCULATION

#### Accessibility

Existing natural surface trails around the Cannon River and South Trout Brook Trailheads will be converted to ADA-accessible trails that can be enjoyed by guests who experience mobility challenges. An ADA-accessible watercraft launch and convenient handicapped parking spaces are proposed at the Cannon River Trailhead, along with an ADA-accessible shore fishing platform on the Cannon River. An ADA-accessible fishing platform at Trout Brook will also be provided near the South Trout Brook Trailhead.

#### Trails and Trail Loops

Visitors will be able to follow Trout Brook as it flows through the park, view birds, beaver, and other wildlife, and enjoy fall color beneath the forest canopy. New loops and connections provide visitors with options for hikes of varying distances, allowing them to customize their experience. The expanded natural surface trails offer opportunities to experience parts of the northern portion of the park reserve that are not easily accessed today. Bridges and boardwalks are proposed sparingly throughout the park reserve to bring guests closer to natural features and help them navigate new areas without negatively impacting habitat.

#### Trailheads

Tubing, kayaking, and canoeing are popular activities along the park reserve's southern border. The enhanced Cannon River Trailhead proposes a relocated entry drive that provides closer access to the river, with ample parking near the picnic shelters and a bus turnaround for large groups. Improved circulation provides guests with safe access to the Cannon River, restrooms, picnic areas, trails, and water views.

The North Trout Brook Trailhead opens up easy access to the north side of the park reserve and a starting point for the proposed Trout Brook Valley Trail.

#### Water Access

The 10-year plan includes dedicated fishing opportunities on both Trout Brook and the Cannon River, an ADA-accessible watercraft launch, a

## 10-YEAR PLAN SUMMARY

- **Expanded natural surface trails**
  - Trout Brook Valley Trail, including boardwalk where necessary, and two bridge crossings
- **Cannon River Trailhead Improvements:**
  - New entry drive, turnaround, and parking
  - Picnic area improvements
  - ADA-accessible shore fishing
  - ADA-Accessible watercraft launch
  - Screened portable restrooms
  - Drinking water
  - ADA-accessible trail loop and overlook
- **Larson Farm interpretive Spur**
- **Lower Terrace Prairie Trail Loop and Overlook**
- **North Trout Brook Trailhead & Overlook:**
  - Gravel parking lot
  - Screened portable restrooms
  - Wayfinding
  - Overlook
- **South Trout Brook Trailhead Improvements:**
  - Screened portable restrooms
  - Wayfinding
  - Fishing platform
  - Accessible footbridge replacement
- **Enhanced wayfinding**

### INTERPRETATION:

- Themed trails
- North Trout Brook Overlook
- Discoverable springs
- Interactive educational panels
- Integrated interpretive elements
- Trout Brook touch point

### NATURAL RESOURCES:

- Phase I and II of habitat restoration
- First phase of Trout Brook restoration



ADA-accessible water access



Trail bridges and dedicated fishing spots



Wetland boardwalk





*Restrooms*



*Picnic area in restored savanna*



*Rustic fire ring gathering areas*



*Drinking water*



*Trail seating*

touch point on Trout Brook, and an overlook along the Cannon River shoreline. These features will enable visitor to engage with the water without increased risk of erosion or other degradation of the park reserve's natural resources.

## COMFORT AMENITIES

### Picnic Areas

While visitors can technically picnic anywhere within the park reserve, two improved picnicking areas with tables, grills, and waste receptacles will be offered along the Cannon River.

In addition, Miesville Ravine Park Reserve offers two reservable picnic shelters for larger groups near the Cannon River Trailhead area. The plan proposes to improve access to these shelters with expanded parking, ADA-accessible sidewalks and trails, and wayfinding.

### Restrooms

The plan proposes having screened, ADA-accessible portable restrooms available at each of the trailheads. The existing vault restrooms, which are available at the Cannon River Trailhead to serve visitors and groups renting the picnic shelters, will be upgraded to meet current ADA standards and provide adult changing tables and handwashing. The possibility of providing full restrooms with septic, running water, and adult changing stations at each trailhead will be evaluated when improvements are made.

### Drinking Water

Drinking water will be provided near the picnic shelters and vault toilets at the Cannon River trailhead. The exact location will be determined by well access. Options for providing drinking water at the North Trout Brook Trailhead will be assessed as this area is developed.

### Fire Pits

Fire pits are proposed within the park reserve's picnicking areas. These informal gathering places will include interpretive elements etched into stone or metal fire rings in order to create a recognizable marker and conversation piece. Fire pits may also include seating to accommodate visitors arriving by bike or watercraft who may not have the capacity to bring personal seating.

## CANNON RIVERFRONT

The Cannon River Focus Area and trailhead is located off of Orlando Trail in the southern portion of Miesville Ravine Park Reserve. Accessible by road or river, this portion of the park reserve is anticipated to be one of the busiest, welcoming both individuals and large groups. Items within the 10-year plan are featured in Figure 6.4, along with long-term investments (highlighted in red). A zoomed graphic of the Cannon River Trailhead is shown in Figure 6.5. Improvements for this area include:

- **New entry and parking:** This will bring people closer to park amenities. It includes a bus turnaround for larger groups tubing or paddling the Cannon River and parking for those with canoe/kayak trailers. Turnaround circle is wide enough for through-traffic movement as well as loading/unloading on the right side. No parking signs will be posted in the drop off and unloading area.



- **Improved visitor circulation:** Additional walkways and trails will have wayfinding and focus on ADA-accessibility.
- **Improved water access site:** The existing, highly eroded water access will be relocated to a more sheltered location. An ADA-accessible watercraft launch, non-motorized boat landing/staging (approx. 1,000 sf) will be located along the river between the overhead power line crossing and Trout Brook Confluence (best location will be determined with future design). Additional improvements will include drinking water, picnicking, and portable restrooms. Cannon River wayfinding landmarks will welcome people to the park reserve from the Cannon River.
- **Trail loops:** A portion of the existing natural surface trails will become ADA-accessible for users with mobility limitations.
- **Discoverable springs:** Highlighted by artful markers, these trail stops call attention to the park reserve's unique hydrology and geology.
- **Larson Farm interpretive spur:** Established around the base of an old farmstead foundation, interpretive elements will help visitors understand how this landscape has been used over time.
- **Lower Terrace Prairie overlook and trail:** These offer hikers a wide-ranging experience of the park reserve's habitats, taking them from river's edge, to hardwood forest, to savanna and prairie as they ascend this small bluff. An overlook will reward guests with views of the Cannon River valley, and a natural surface trail loop provides approachable access to restored prairie.

## NORTH TROUT BROOK TRAILHEAD

The North Brook Trailhead is included in the 10-year plan for Miesville Ravine Park Reserve. Clear, branded vehicular wayfinding will mark a new access point off of County Road 91 (also known as Miesville Trail). The trailhead will provide visitors with access to the northern portion of the park, which has previously been difficult to reach and explore. A new trail loop will utilize an existing maintenance road that has been previously closed to foot-traffic, creating a short but unique trail experience right off of the trailhead. An overlook is proposed about midway around the trail loop to take advantage of views from the small bluff, where seating and interpretive features will offer a place to rest within the restored prairie with views of the ravine below.

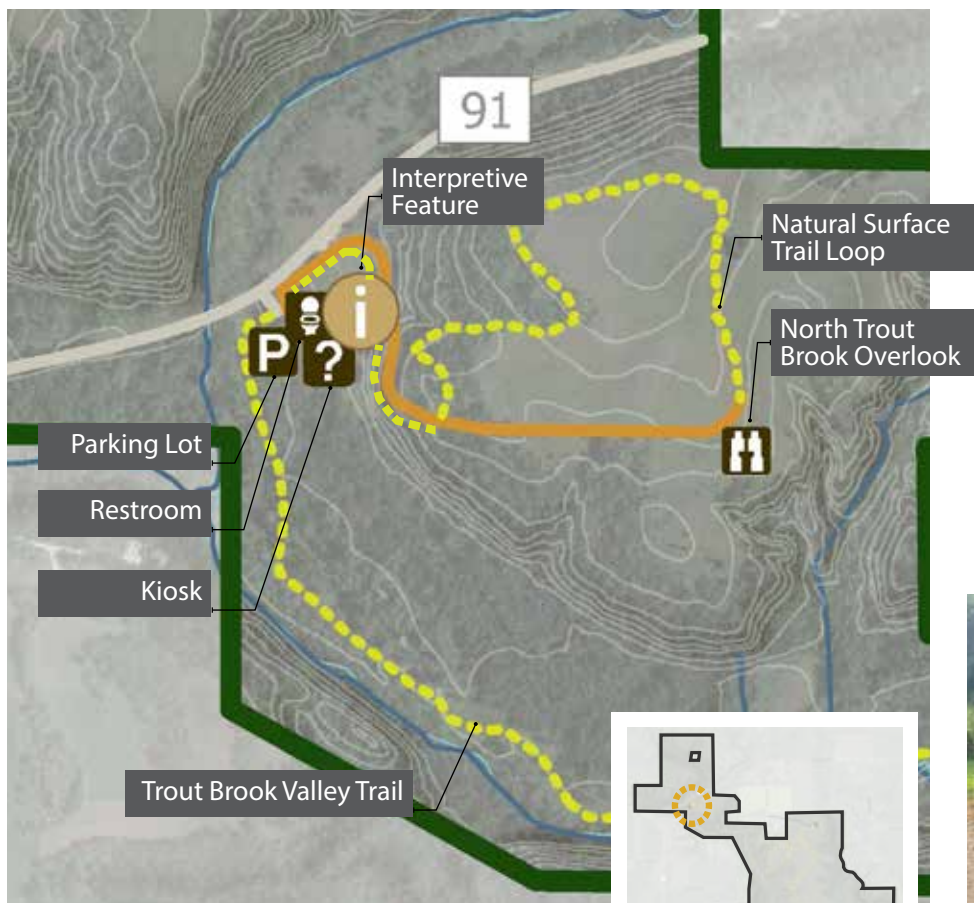


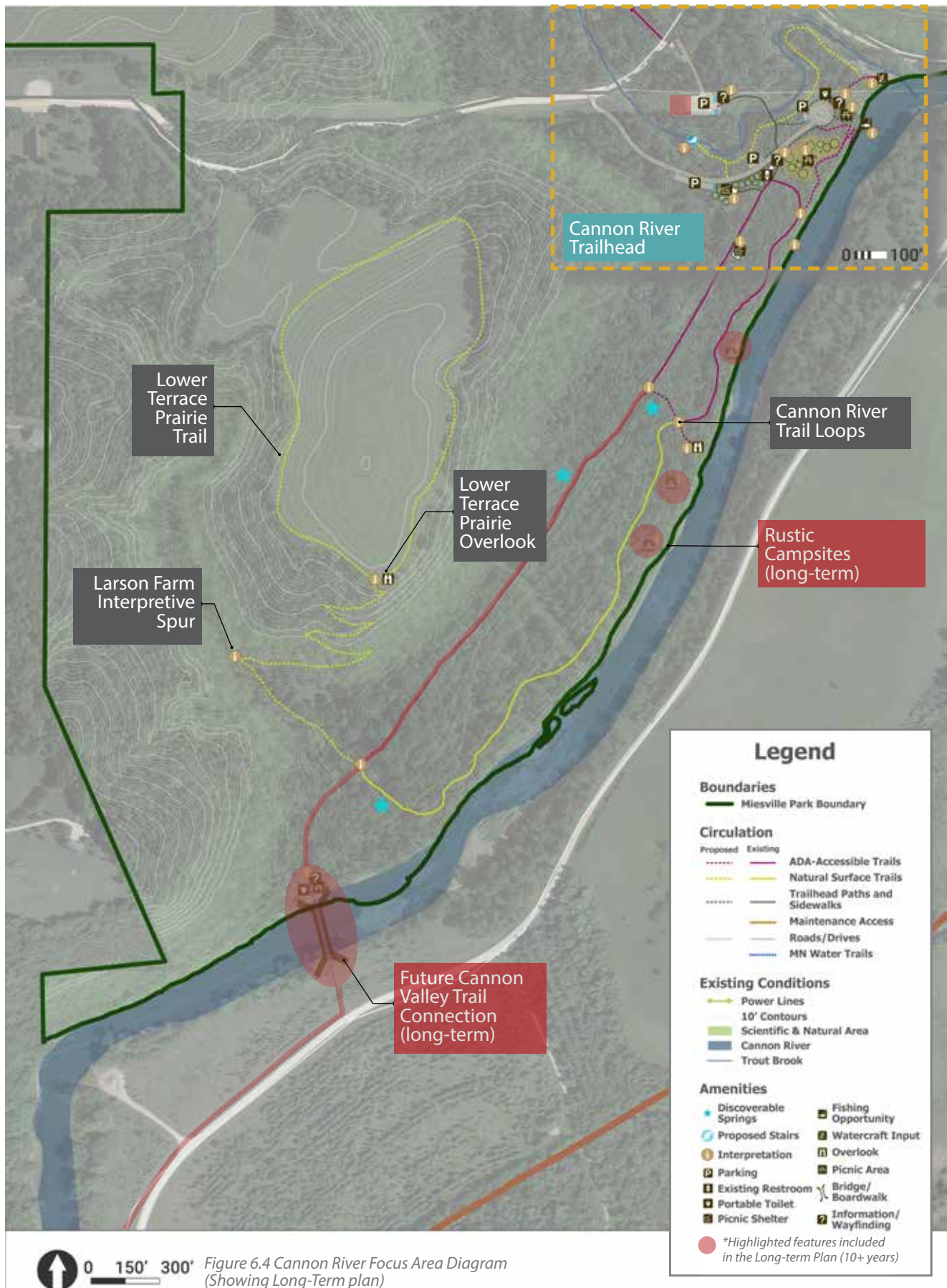
Figure 6.3 North Trout Brook Trailhead Focus Area Zoom View (10-Year Plan)

The new Trout Brook Valley Trail will extend south from the trailhead along Trout Brook, following the route created during its restoration. The trail will offer great fishing access and wildlife viewing and ultimately connect the northern portion of the park reserve with existing trails to the south.



Trailhead gravel parking lot







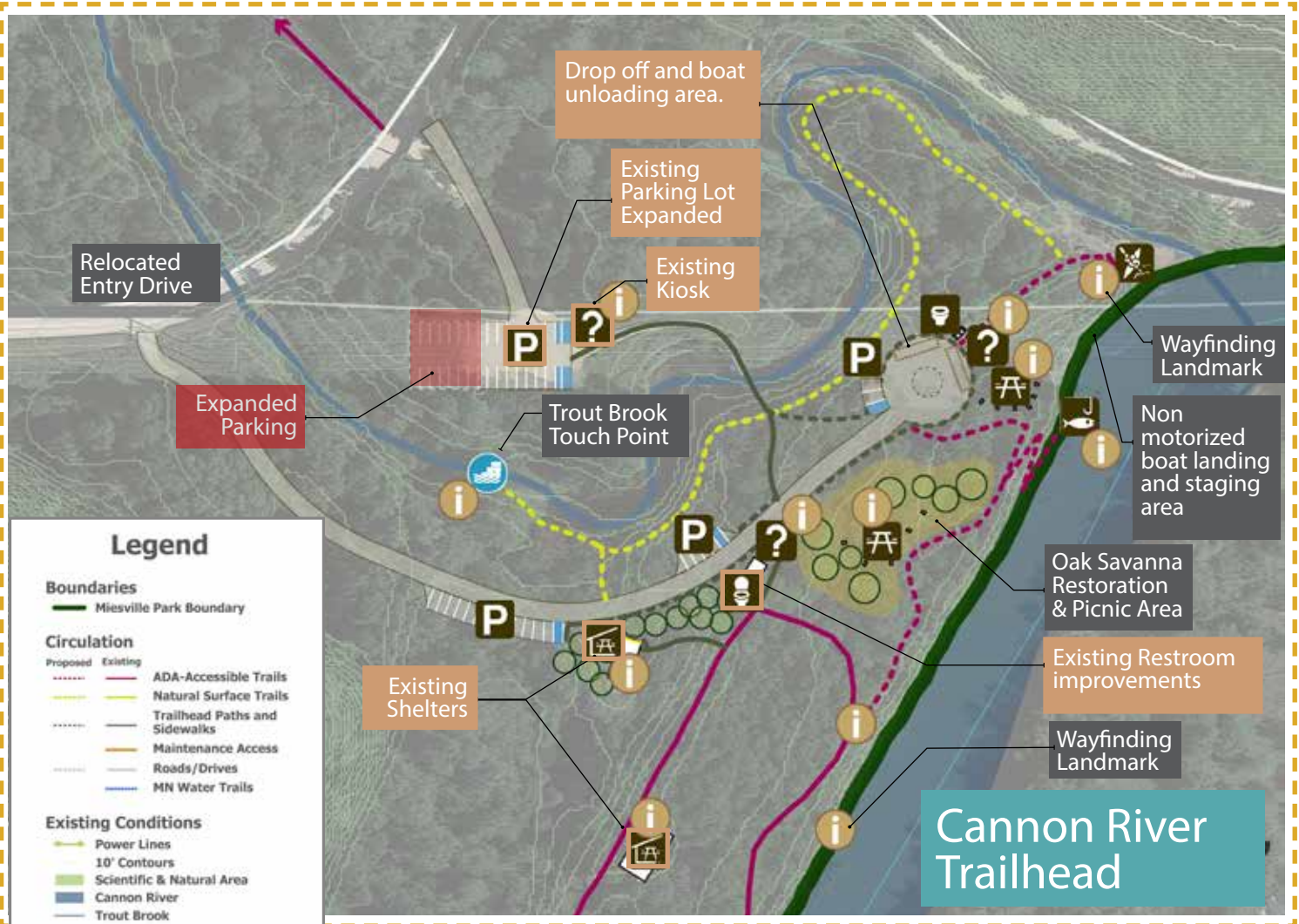


Figure 6.5 Cannon River Trailhead Zoom View (Showing Long-Term Plan)

Long-term, the eastern Cannon River water access provides a larger space that can better accommodate river access for commercial groups. This location is also away from the overhead powerlines, unlike the current location. The 2005 concept, shown here, continues to guide potential recreation at this site.



Figure 6.6 Long-term concept for a river access east of the Cannon River Trailhead (from 2005 plan)



## SUSTAINABLE TRAIL DESIGN

The following considerations emphasize the development of physically and ecologically sustainable trails that serve the needs of users while preserving the sense of place and protecting the unique natural and cultural environment within Miesville Ravine Park Reserve. The placement of any trail within the park reserve will have an ecological impact. The goal of the long-term plan is to minimize impacts while providing the desired trail experience for visitors. All natural surface trails should be viewed as low-impact recreational experiences with a built footprint only as needed, field-fit to the designated area. The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources' [Trail Planning, Design, and Development Guidelines](#) identifies three key factors common to sustainable trails:

- **Ecological Sustainability:** Minimizing the ecological impacts of trails, especially in sensitive areas.
- **Physical Sustainability:** Designing trails to retain their form over years of use and natural forces acting on them.
- **Engendering Stewardship:** Fostering a sense of individual responsibility for stewardship.



## TRAIL CLASSIFICATIONS

Trail design within Miesville Ravine Park Reserve should appropriately respond to existing issues and opportunities, sensitivity of cultural and natural resources, and the character of the park reserve. While essential to expanding recreational opportunities for visitors, trails can separate habitats, create a corridor from which invasive species spread, and contribute to erosion if not planned carefully. The long-term plan for Miesville Ravine Park Reserve strives to strategically place and design trails to lower their overall impacts to environmentally sensitive areas and wildlife while allowing guests to experience the wonder of the park reserve's natural environment.

Low-Impact trail design requires careful study of Miesville Ravine Park Reserve's topography, natural and cultural resources data, and aerial imagery to "field-fit" each trail appropriately within the desired location. This allows the design of new trails to respond sensitively to existing surface conditions and adjust trail material, route, or width based off of elevation subtleties, drainage needs, plant habitat, trees of a significant age, and other critical features as much as possible. Existing trails should be modified to follow similar low-impact design principles. Low-impact trails will be more aesthetically pleasing to visitors and will also have embedded best management practices (BMPs) for improved longevity.

### Natural Surface Trails

Natural surface trails are classified as having natural surface materials (e.g. mown turf, aggregate, packed earth) and are designed for non-motorized uses. Natural surface trails typically accommodate walking, hiking, running, and bird watching, with potential seasonal uses like snowshoeing and cross-country skiing in the winter months. Natural surface trails and trail loops are proposed throughout Miesville Ravine Park Reserve in varying mileages and materials. All of the natural surface trails proposed are designated for pedestrian use only. A small number of maintenance roads will be upgraded to accommodate both trails and maintenance access. Mowed trails are maintained at 4'-8' width.

### ADA-Accessible Trails

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires that newly constructed "places of public accommodation" be readily accessible to and usable by individuals with disabilities. Accessibility guidelines are developed by the Architectural and Transportation Barriers Compliance Board (Access Board). Most accessibility standards, however, are not readily applicable to the natural environment, and natural surface trails may not always meet accessibility guidelines. The United Forest Service (USFS) has developed Forest Service Trail Accessibility Guidelines (FSTG) based on the guidelines on outdoor developed areas. The FSTG are helpful because they "provide guidance for maximizing accessibility of trails while recognizing and protecting the unique characteristics of their natural setting." Dakota County seeks to provide



a range of challenge levels for trails in its system. These guidelines encourage design for increased accessibility but do not require unreasonable efforts to provide an accessible route for hiking trails on the steep terrain commonly found within Miesville Ravine Park Reserve.

Accessible trails will be available off of the South Trout Brook and Cannon River Trailheads, offering access to fishing, paddling, picnicking, camping, and overlooks.

### Water Trails

A portion of Miesville Ravine Park Reserve’s southern boundary lies along the Cannon River. Popular for tubing and paddling activities, the Cannon River has a dedicated water trail, also known as a ‘blueway’. Water trails are designated routes along lakes, rivers, and other waterbodies that are specifically designed for use by small watercrafts like kayaks, paddleboats, paddle boards, or swimming tubes.

### Winter Use

While Miesville Ravine Park Reserve does not have any proposed trails designed or designated specifically for winter recreation (i.e., groomed ski trails), many of the proposed trail types will accommodate uses such as walking, running, snowshoeing, and birdwatching in the winter.

|                                   | Existing Miles | Existing Miles Converted to Another Trail Type | Proposed Miles | Total Miles |
|-----------------------------------|----------------|--|----------------|-------------|
| Trailhead Paths & Sidewalks       | 0.13           | 0  | 0.15           | 0.28        |
| ADA Trails                        | 0.00           | 0  | 0.93           | 0.93        |
| Natural Surface Trails            | 2.21           | 0.64   | 7.92           | 9.48        |
| Recreational Trail Mileage Totals |                |  | 9.0            | 10.7        |

Table 6.1 Existing and Proposed Trail Mileage





# WAYFINDING

Wayfinding is an important component of park design that orients commuters and visitors, provides park identity, and helps to ensure that visitors have a safe and enjoyable experience. In rustic natural settings like Miesville Ravine Park Reserve that can feel daunting to the everyday visitor, there is a need for wayfinding along the major roadways to help identify the multiple entry points and signage within the park reserve that offers reassurance to visitors and aids in exploration.

T



## PARK MONUMENT SIGNS

Identity signs should be located at every major vehicular entrance into the park and comply with park branding efforts. They should convey a strong sense of quality and character with

choice of materials, welcoming visitors and clearly identifying where guests begin to enter or leave the park boundary.

K



## INFORMATION KIOSKS

Kiosks should be located at each of the trailheads within Miesville Ravine Park Reserve. They should comply with park branding efforts and contribute to the identity of the park with the use of consistent materials. Kiosks

should include a map that marks the precise location of the kiosk within the park reserve. Labels and icons depicting important amenities and programming should be clear on the map and labeled within a legend. Information should be available in multiple languages.

V



## VEHICULAR DIRECTIONAL SIGNS

Vehicular directional signs should be located at all major intersections along roadways leading to the park (or

where drivers will have to make a 'choice' in direction).

C



## TRAIL DIRECTIONAL SIGNS

Directional signs should comply with park branding efforts and be located at the intersections of all trails and trail loops. They should depict whether a trail is accessible and point visitors to particular destinations or amenities that are nearby or along the way and reflect summer and winter use. Trail

signs can also feature maps and should also show users the approximate distance to the next location. Information should be available in multiple languages.

M



## TRAIL MARKERS

Trail markers are important to wayfinding systems to communicate succinct information while taking up little space in the landscape. Additionally, they can communicate trail mileage, what use the trail is designated for, and boundaries and act as a 'reassurance' that a visitor is still within the park reserve on their desired path. Allowed winter and

summer uses should be communicated.



## PARK BOUNDARY SIGNS AND MAPS

The park boundary should be clearly marked, and kiosks and other public wayfinding maps should depict Dakota County-owned land as the park boundary (not

private inholdings).



# LONG-TERM

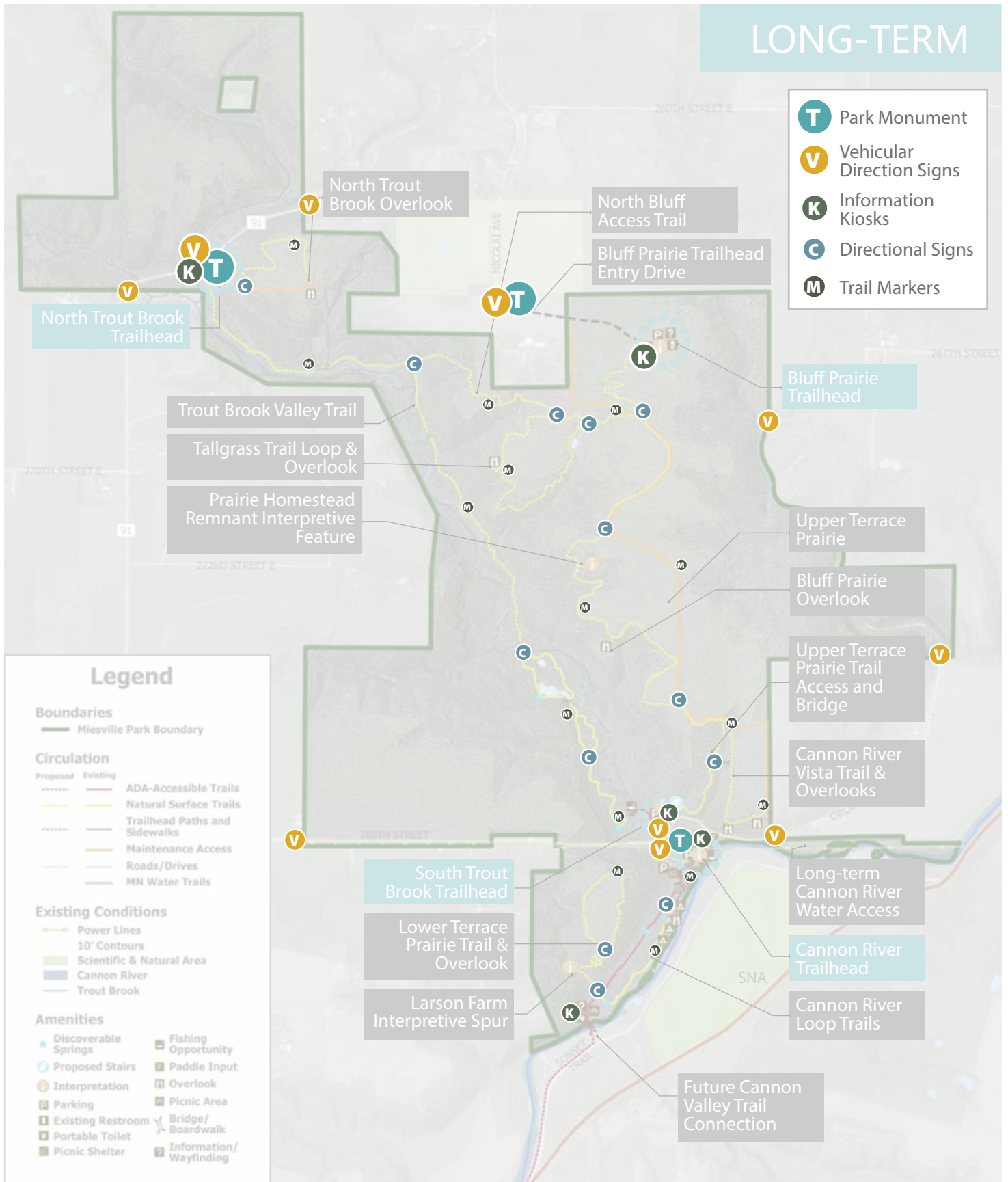


Figure 6.8 Wayfinding Diagram (Depicting Long-Term Plan)



## OVERALL PARK MANAGEMENT GOALS

- **Restore and manage plant communities at a landscape scale** to provide a mosaic of appropriate communities with soft edges/transitions and explore the reintroduction of grazing methods.
- **Increase native plant diversity and abundance within communities** by restoring ecosystem structure and processes, establishing native groundcover, and diligently revegetating depauperate sites.
- **Minimize invasive species presence and abundance** through prevention of establishment, by prioritizing sensitive habitats, by identifying populations that are likely to spread (e.g., upstream), and by identifying feasible target areas.
- **Provide habitat for rare species and SGCN known or likely to occur in the park reserve** by restoring and managing the native plant communities that provide their critical habitat.
- **Enhance landscape connectivity** through native plant community restoration.
- **Restore natural hydrology and habitat to the Trout Brook channel and floodplain and tributaries** via landscape-level management practices and partnerships.
- **Restrict recreation to low-impact activities** to preserve sensitive natural resources and highlight the natural heritage of the park reserve to the public.
- **Nurture collaboration and outreach to address landscape-level issues** by working with public and private stakeholders to accomplish shared or overlapping goals.
- **Practice adaptive management** to learn from and apply lessons of management outcomes while exploring alternative means of meeting objectives based on current state of knowledge.
- **Integrate climate change adaptation into management actions** by managing for diversity, monitoring site-specific and regional responses to climate change, and practicing adaptive management.



## NATURAL RESOURCES STEWARDSHIP

As a parallel process to the Miesville Ravine Park Reserve Plan, a Natural Resources Management Plan (NRMP) was prepared. The NRMP identifies the long-term vision for natural resources and recommends an implementation strategy to achieve that vision. This natural resources section seeks to provide an overview of the direction set forth in the NRMP.

### THE VISION FOR THE PARK RESERVE IS TO BE A LANDSCAPE THAT:

- Fosters and builds resilient, mature, and high-functioning ecosystems
- Supports natural hydrology and high-quality habitat within Trout Brook
- Provides habitat for native biota, including Species in Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN)
- Allows people to experience the natural heritage of the area via low-impact activities, sensitive to the park reserve's unique resources
- Includes and engages stakeholders, such as public agencies and adjacent landowners, to achieve the best joint management of natural resources in the area
- Mitigates impacts of climate change
- Achieves regionally outstanding ecological quality

The Miesville Ravine Park Reserve NRMP aligns with the Dakota County Natural Resource Management Vision for the Park System:

“The water, vegetation, and wildlife of Dakota County parks, greenways, and easements will be managed to conserve biodiversity, restore native habitats, improve public benefits, and achieve resilience and regionally outstanding quality, now and for future generations.”



## RESTORATION AND MANAGEMENT

The goal of the Natural Resource management Plan is to restore and manage the plant communities in the entire park over the next 30 years. It is anticipated that approximately 300 additional acres will be restored and managed over the next 10 years. Target native plant communities are show in Figure 6.9, and strategies are summarized in the section below. Priorities for restoration included 1) sensitive and rare habitats such as overgrown bluff prairies, degraded Southern Dry-Mesic Pine-Oak Woodland, and seepage meadows, 2) prioritizing upstream areas of the watershed that influence downgradient areas, and 3) low-hanging fruit restorations such as altered grasslands or riparian areas adjacent to managed areas or priority stream restorations. Estimated costs for restoration projects by phase are presented in Table 7.1, and operations costs are presented in Table 7.4.

### MISSISSIPPI RIVER CORRIDOR CRITICAL AREA (MRCCA)

MRCCA rules limit public recreation uses in a 200' setback from the Mississippi River and 100' setback in the Bluff Impact Zone. Miesville Ravine Park Reserve is not within the MRCCA.

### STRATEGIES BY PRIORITY FEATURE

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <div>TROUT BROOK</div>                | <div>Strategies:</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Work with upstream landowners and partners to implement watershed BMPs and restoration</li><li>• Restore channels at priority locations</li><li>• Approach beaver dam removal versus preservation on a case-by-case basis and integrate MN DNR partners in finding appropriate solutions</li><li>• Prioritize beaver conservation, since beavers are a keystone species to wetlands and riparian ecosystems, even trout streams</li><li>• Consult with MN DNR and beaver and salmonid experts on system-wide as well as specific management and conservation methods</li><li>• Integrate vegetation management</li></ul> |
| <div>MESIC HARDWOOD FOREST</div>     | <div>Strategies:</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Control garlic mustard and wild parsnip in priority locations via removal and revegetation</li><li>• Control invasive woody vegetation in priority locations via removal and revegetation</li><li>• Implement native revegetation of bare soils</li><li>• Map and prioritize spring ephemeral patches</li><li>• Monitor plant communities</li></ul>  |
| <div>REMNANT PRAIRIE/ SAVANNA</div>  | <div>Strategies:</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Assess priority remnant sites for restoration reserve-wide</li><li>• Continue removal of woody vegetation from historical prairie and savanna</li><li>• Continue and expand use of prescribed fire to maintain prairie and savanna</li><li>• Suppress woody vegetation with alternatives to fire</li><li>• Continue vegetation management and establishment in restored areas</li></ul>  |



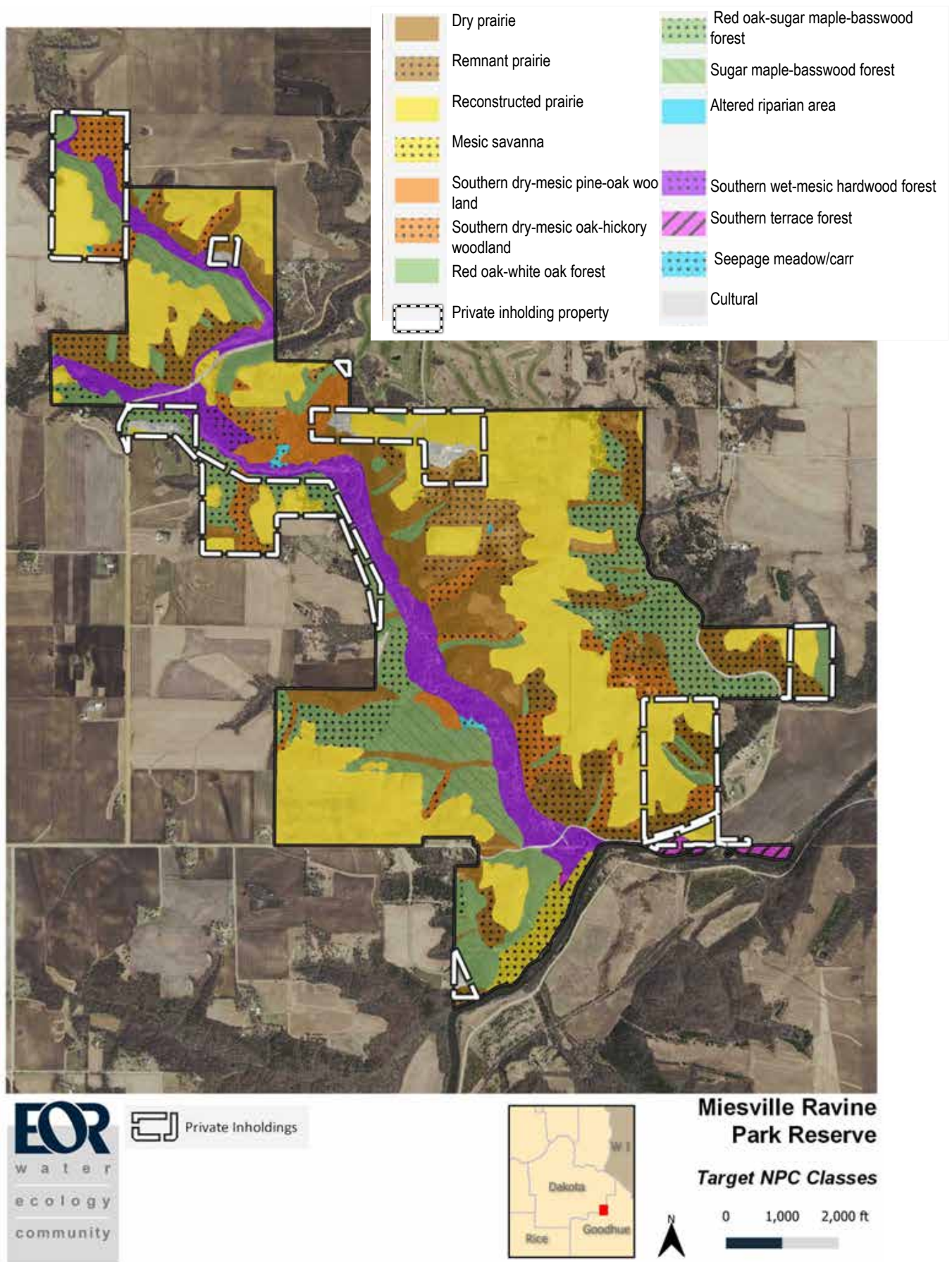


Figure 6.9 Target Native Plant Community Classes



## ALTERED GRASSLANDS



### Strategies:

- Thin or clear trees and shrubs to restore prairie and savanna habitat
- Only plant trees if appropriate to a given target NPC

## RECONSTRUCTED PRAIRIE



### Strategies:

- Continue vegetation management using prescribed fire, mowing, and spot-invasive treatment
- Establish burn units with a diversity of management regimes
- Introduce/continue grazing, mowing, and haying
- Consider consistent diversity of management
- Introduce and establish additional native plant and certain animal species

## SEEPAGE MEADOWS



### Strategies:

- Conduct floristic inventory and geomorphic assessment
- Control reed canary grass in seepage meadows and riparian areas
- Monitor and plan for beaver activity

## ALTERED RIPARIAN AREAS



### Strategies:

- Integrate riparian and surrounding floodplain restoration with stream restoration
- Prioritize restoration of upstream areas and tributaries
- Promote beaver colonization which will help restore riparian areas
- Thin canopy to stage community restoration toward mature forest; promote beaver colonization to assist with this goal, as beavers will naturally thin tree canopies for habitat materials
- Remove dense patches of reed canary grass
- Control reed canary grass with methods used successfully at Whitetail Woods Regional Park (a combination of winter raking, controlled burning, and spot spraying)
- Control garlic mustard and wild parsnip

## ALTERED UPLAND FOREST



### Strategies:

- Thin or clear trees and shrubs to blend with adjacent prairie, savanna, or woodland habitat
- Restore target NPCs using strategies described for prairie, savanna, woodland, and mesic hardwood forest priority features



## CLIFFS AND ROCK OUTCROPS



### Strategies:

- Map distribution, extent, and condition of cliff and rock outcrop communities
- Remove woody vegetation encroaching on ROs12 communities
- Restore and maintain adjacent communities and ecological processes

## OVERGROWN OAK WOODLAND/SAVANNA



### Strategies:

- Thin and remove non-oak tree and woody brush
- Control common buckthorn, Tatarian honeysuckle, and wild parsnip following initial woody removal
- Control garlic mustard

## CANNON RIVER



### Strategies:

- Implement watershed and stream restoration practices within the Trout Brook subwatershed
- Assess the recreational tubing launch and Orlando Trail

## RAVINES



### Strategies:

- Inventory and monitor ravines
- Control garlic mustard and wild parsnip
- Develop plans to address concerns, garner funding, and quantify returns
- Implement strategies to increase understory cover and abundance where it is low or declining

## RARE SPECIES AND WILDLIFE



### Strategies:

- Continue and expand native plant community restoration
- Assess rare plant species prior to management actions and park development activities
- Assess Blanding's turtle presence and habitat
- Manage deer to reduce impacts on native plant communities
- Restore beaver populations throughout Trout Brook in the park reserve and throughout the Trout Brook watershed
- Consider bison reintroduction to reconstructed prairie
- Consider reintroductions of dry prairie specialist wildlife
- Coordinate with the DNR to review fisheries data and, if necessary, conduct a fisheries survey and habitat assessment



## STRATEGIES BY BROADER ATTRIBUTES & ACTIVITIES

### CONNECTIVITY



#### Strategies:

- Continue native plant community restoration, especially removal in overgrown woody areas
- Continue to purchase inholdings, as feasible, to connect and to buffer habitat

### PARTNERSHIPS



#### Strategies:

- Continue and expand conservation and restoration project partnership
- Pursue partnerships to secure management access to park reserve lands
- Pursue opportunities for cooperative management of the park's natural systems with tribal partners
- Continue to seek grants that promote best practices across the watershed to affect broader habitat, conservation, and water quality initiatives, especially as identified in the newly adopted North Cannon MWMO Watershed Management Plan

### CLIMATE CHANGE RESILIENCY



#### Strategies:

- Continue native plant community restoration with emphasis on plant and habitat diversity
- Monitor for shifts in plant and wildlife populations to inform and adapt management
- Manage overgrown woodlands and second growth forest to restore more open woodland and savanna conditions
- Selectively and carefully apply assisted migration of plant species or ecotypes that may be climate adaptive
- Consider a "regional admixture" approach to seed sourcing
- Prioritize surface water and groundwater projects throughout the watershed

### CITIZEN OUTREACH, STEWARDSHIP, AND EDUCATION



#### Strategies:

- Coordinate with this plan to work toward common goals
- Continue to organize and amplify volunteer efforts consistent with current County efforts
- Develop volunteer opportunities that combine education, outreach, and stewardship
- Pilot a site stewardship program and recruit one to two volunteer site stewards
- Identify MRPR-specific volunteer tasks
- Coordinate land owner outreach and tours
- Continue restoration and management of the native plant communities within the park reserve and educating visitors about its ecology and value
- Pursue opportunities for cooperative management of the park's natural resources with tribal partners



# CULTURAL LANDSCAPE STEWARDSHIP

The Traditional Cultural Properties and culturally sensitive areas will require ongoing coordination with Indigenous communities associated with the park. Stewardship recommendations are outlined below.

## GENERAL

1. All park improvements will occur with further cultural and environmental study, Tribal consultation, and monitoring.
2. Manage vegetation based on the park's Natural Resources Management Plan, with consideration of vegetation that is important to associated Indigenous communities, and reintroduce culturally important plants through reestablishment of wild rice, traditional/ medicinal gardens, or other plantings.
3. Work with Tribal Historical Preservation Officers (THPOs) to establish consultation protocols and a collaborative relationship between Dakota County and Indigenous communities associated with the park to address decision-making on access, condition, maintenance, use, safety, and interpretation.
  - Schedule regular consultation and collaboration meetings between Dakota County and THPOs.
  - Communicate with THPOs on a quarterly basis and meet bi-annually.
  - Consult with THPOs as part of developing scopes of work and making decisions about maintenance and management of the landscape. Topics to address may include:
    - Development of consultation protocols and a collaborative relationship plan.
    - Development of a list of work that can be undertaken without further consultation with THPOs, clearly explaining the reasons the work does not need further review.
    - Development of a list of work that must always be reviewed with THPOs prior to planning or implementation.
    - Identification of activities and access appropriate (and possibly those that are not appropriate) in locations that are important to associated Indigenous communities.
    - Ways to acknowledge and respect significant sites while also protecting them from unwanted attention or vandalism.
    - Ways to increase outreach, access, and connections to this landscape for associated Indigenous community members, including opportunities for private activities on site.
    - Maintenance and monitoring practices for specific locations and actions, including monitoring of ground disturbing activities.
    - Protocols for inadvertent discoveries.
    - Ownership of cultural materials.
- Reintroduction of culturally important vegetation.
4. Expand the relationship between Dakota County and representatives of associated Indigenous communities to address significant properties throughout the County through a more holistic approach.
  - Work with THPOs to develop broad-scale strategies and processes for specific types of sites throughout the county.
  - Discuss individual project plans and process with representatives of associated communities before developing a scope of work. Build flexibility into the process to allow for adjustments based on tribal requests. Whenever possible, include representatives of associated communities on project teams.
  - Make efforts to create Indigenous partner committees or include Indigenous community members on advisory committees and county staff, project team and project advisory groups.
  - Consider creating a staff position to address significant properties.
5. Work with THPOs to determine level and type of messages to convey to visitors about the significance of the site and to encourage appropriate behavior and respect without sharing private or sensitive information. Possible messages to consider:
  - Acknowledgment of Dakota land;
  - Ways to show respect for the spiritually significant landscape while discouraging unwanted attention or vandalism;
  - Connection between living associated communities and significant plants for traditional use;
  - Integration of Dakota language in place names and messaging;
  - Consideration of opportunities for integrated technology and multi-tactile messaging.





## TRADITIONAL CULTURAL PROPERTIES

6. Work with representatives of associated Indigenous tribes and nations, the Minnesota Office of the State Archaeologist (OSA), and the Minnesota Indian Affairs Council (MIAC) to determine additional understanding. Possible next steps may include:
  - Meet with representatives of associated Indigenous communities, MIAC, and OSA within the landscape so that all parties can work together to address protection, use, and impacts.
  - Follow recommendations from the 2022 TCP Study.
  - In locations where additional study is required to determine landscape treatment, work with THPOs, MIAC, and OSA to identify and assess additional TCPs and culturally sensitive sites.
  - Consider conducting a cultural landscape planning study to determine appropriate long-term landscape treatment priority locations.
    - Work with representatives of associated communities to develop the scope of work. Include disciplines, expertise, and processes that should be incorporated to develop a vision, program, and locations for appropriate facilities.
    - Include representatives of associated communities on the project team.
7. Work with representatives of associated Indigenous communities, the Minnesota Office of the State Archaeologist, and the Minnesota Indian Affairs Council (MIAC) to delineate cemeteries within the park and develop burial, cemetery, and Mound Management Plans.
  - Dakota County will send a formal request to MIAC, asking that cemeteries be delineated.
  - The Mound Management Plans will be legally binding documents between the State (represented by MIAC) and Dakota County.
8. Work with representatives of associated Indigenous communities to develop appropriate maintenance and monitoring practices for significant sites, vegetation, circulation routes, views, and other important landscape elements.
  - If new development or disturbance is required, consult with THPOs to determine design, process, and protocols.
9. Develop policies that address ownership of cultural materials from the site.
  - Work with representatives of associated Indigenous communities to place any materials discovered on site in the care of designated associated Dakota communities.



# INTERPRETATION

Dakota County Parks’ outdoor education program interprets the natural, recreational, and cultural resources of the parks system and broader community through engaging, relevant, and equitable experiences, both guided and self-guided, to inspire future generations and create stewards of our parks and resources.

This plan describes the key features in Miesville Ravine Park Reserve (whether they are natural, recreational or cultural), identifies key locations, and suggests methods to interpret these features for park visitors. The County’s outdoor education program will bring the landscape to life through various methods including guided opportunities, such as programming and events, self-guided experiences, and interpretation integrated into landscape and building design. The methods and representative examples included are for inspiration, but as park development is undertaken, the interpretation may evolve.

## INTERPRETIVE FRAMEWORK

Interpretation seeks to connect visitors to a place. It is an experience more than a sign. It is a story more than conveying facts. Interpretation answers the questions “So what?” and “Why should I care?” Interpretation forges emotional and intellectual connections between the interests of the audience and the meanings inherent to place. The Miesville Ravine Park Reserve planning process considers the place-specific historical, cultural, and natural features to be interpreted and park visitor needs to develop relevant messages and integrate those messages into the visitor experience.

This interpretive framework builds on the themes in the 2005 previous park reserve plan and input from Dakota County staff and the project team. It also takes into consideration the Dakota County Parks’ mission and vision.



Wrapped column graphic

### On-site Messaging

Interpretation helps to organize the visitor experience by identifying a theme and supporting subthemes. A theme is the key message of all interpretation at a site. It may or may not appear in writing, exhibits, and programming, but all interpretive efforts should fall within the scope of the interpretive theme. A theme provides organizational structure and clarity to the main message that visitors encounter when they visit the Park. After their experience, visitors should be able to summarize the main point of interpretation in one sentence—this is the interpretive theme.

A theme is different from a topic in that it expresses a complete idea or message. A topic is a broad general category, such as recreation, waterways, or natural resources. A theme should answer the question, “So what?” It should tell visitors why a specific topic is important.

### Interpretive Theme

The interpretive theme for Miesville Ravine Park Reserve was developed through research, on-site assessment, and staff and project team collaboration.

*“From the soaring views at the blufftop to the deep ravine with its meandering brook, Miesville Ravine Park Reserve nourishes our relationship to the land and waterways, to the plants and animals who live here, and to each other.”*



Layered interpretive graphic

### Subthemes

Subthemes, which are organized by topic, support the primary theme and further organize the on-site experience.



## PEOPLE: WE ALL THRIVE HERE

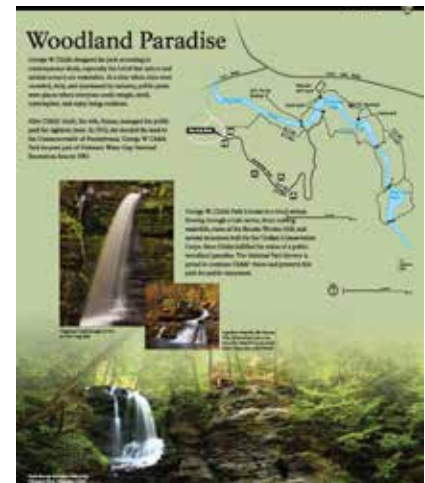
The ravine with its year-round water supply and the surrounding woodlands and prairies have attracted and sustained people and animals throughout time.

### Potential Storylines

- Miesville Ravine Park Reserve, like other properties managed by Dakota County, is significant to the cultural identity of current and future generations of Dakota people. The significance of the history, cultural identity, spirituality, and lifeways of the Dakota Oyate (Dakota Nation) is unmeasurable (From the 2022 Traditional Cultural Property draft report).
- Mitakuye owas'in* ("all my relations" or "we are all relatives"): In a Dakota worldview, we are all relatives and connected to each other. We have relationships with all human beings, the land, and all things, seen and unseen, that exist on the land, in the air, and in the water.
- European-Americans established farms and a small community on the bluffs in the mid-1800s.
  - Farming communities (especially related to the ruins on the site): Family names changed over time from the 1879 plat map until 1916, from Almgreen, Estergreen, Gardner, Cornell and Grosvenor, to Nelson and Larson families.
  - In the 1870s, E.W. Grosvenor ran a trout farm at the head of Trout Brook.
  - The Chicago Milwaukee & St. Paul Railroad Railways arrived in 1884 and connected family farms to regional markets.
- The park reserve's natural landscape provides a positive visitor experience through conservation initiatives, educational programs and recreational opportunities.

### Opportunities for Further Research:

- How do we recognize the significance of this space, the Cannon River Valley, in particular?
- Fur-trade Era (1600-1850)



Trailhead interpretation



Railroad ties

| Potential Storylines   | Self-Guided Interpretation<br>Panels/signs, unique or interactive elements, landscape and/or structural  |
|--|--|
| (1870s) E.W. Grosvenor ran a trout farm at the head of Trout Brook.  | North Trout Brook Trailhead: Interpretive panel  |
| (1884) The Chicago Milwaukee & St. Paul Railroad Railways connected family farms to regional markets.  | Cannon River Loops: Small signs on RR ties with sculptural elements on the top   |
| <i>Mitakuye owas'in</i> ("all my relations" or "we are all relatives"). This place is significant to the cultural identity of current and future generations of Dakota people. | Cannon River Trailhead: Interpretive panel   |
| The park reserve's natural landscape provides a positive visitor experience through conservation initiatives, educational programs, and recreational opportunities.            | Cannon Valley Trail Future Connection: Interpretive panel/mini-trailhead/or other "welcome to DC-MRPR" that expresses "things to see and do/worth coming back for" |
| Euro-American farming communities ("look for signs of homesteads: daylilies, lilacs, what else seems "out of place" in a native prairie landscape?")                           | Homestead structure/wall remnant: Small graphic panel  |
| Cultural history: Dakota and Euro-American   | Furnishings (e.g., fire ring details, picnic table, and/or bench details)  |

Table 6.2 Interpretation Table Theme 1





Discoverable spring



Seating graphic

## 2

### PLACE: AN OASIS FOR NATURE

Protected and restored, the park reserve's landscape comprises dramatic and varied topography that support many plant communities from maple-basswood forest to dry bluff prairies, as well as cold trout streams, springs, and remnant upland bedrock bluff prairies. These natural features are an oasis replete with biodiversity.

#### Potential Storylines

- European-Americans cleared woodlands, plowed prairies, and established small farmsteads here during the mid-1800s, drastically altering the landscape surrounding the park reserve.
- Today, the park reserve is surrounded by agricultural fields.
- The steep topography of the valley precluded farming. Without farming, the valley was somewhat protected and remained relatively intact, ecologically. The result is the refuge that it has become today.
- Plant Relatives: Certain plants are culturally significant for Indigenous people. Dakota people use plants in positive ways to promote physical and spiritual well-being, so it is important to preserve these plants, along with their Dakota name, for harvesting and medicinal use.
- Animal Relatives: In a Dakota worldview, all living beings are considered equals or relatives and possess a mind, language, and spirit.

#### Opportunities for Further Research:

- Potential storylines about additional negative impacts of European-American history and settlement.

| Potential Storylines   | Self-Guided Interpretation<br>Panels/signs, unique or interactive elements, landscape and/or structural   |
|--|---|
| MRPR is surrounded by agricultural fields. European-Americans cleared woodlands, plowed prairies and established small farmsteads here during the mid-1800s, drastically altering the landscape. | Bluff Prairie Trailhead: Interpretive panel & relocated farm machinery  |
| Plant communities from maple-basswood forest to dry bluff prairies and remnant upland bedrock bluff prairies.  | Bluff Prairie Trailhead: Interpretive panel (content links to the overlook interpretation—possible “scavenger hunt” or seasonal awareness message)  |
| Plant and animal identification / plant and animal relatives.  | Upper Terrace Prairie Overlooks: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Option 1: border stones etched with plant or animal outlines with names in English and Dakota</li> <li>- Option 2: small plant/animal ID graphic panels attached to limestone seating stones with photos and names in English and Dakota</li> </ul> |
| The steep topography of the valley precluded farming so the valley was somewhat protected and remained relatively intact, ecologically, resulting in the refuge that it has become today.        | South Trout Brook Trailhead: Interpretive panel   |
| Wildlife identification.   | Furnishings (e.g., fire ring details, picnic table, and/or bench details)   |
| Local geology creates springs and seeps throughout the park reserve that reveal the movement of groundwater.   | Artful markers at “discoverable” springs along the trails which call attention to the presence of water sources   |

Table 6.3 Interpretation Table Theme 2



## STEWARDSHIP: CARING FOR THE FUTURE

Since the 1940s, people have sought to reverse some of the negative impacts of human actions and activities that have altered the landscape. Visitors today become part of the Reserve's conservation legacy when they participate in stewardship events and support conservation initiatives.

### Potential Storylines

- Dakota people relate to the land in a different way from the Western worldview. Living in harmony, the land and Dakota people influence and sustain each other. Despite environmental degradation from European settlement, the relationship between the land and Dakota people continues today.
- Dakota and other Indigenous people lived, died, and were buried in this whole region, moving between places on waterways and trails. Caring for these homelands is a distinctive cultural expression that visitors need to understand.
- Layers of and ongoing protection: Richard J. Dorer Memorial Hardwood State Forest; Wild and Scenic designation at Cannon River; Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MN DNR) Trout Stream designation.
- Prairie and other landscape restoration activities: not only ecological activities, but also through the lens of social justice, because they are intertwined.
- Protecting Trout Brook through MN DNR trout stream designation and the work of many private landowners and government agencies (e.g., Soil and Water Conservation Districts, MN DNR, University of Minnesota) to preserve this distinctive landscape feature.
- River landscapes: How they function and change.
- Outdoor recreation (being active outdoors; not "formalized" recreation, natural resource-based activities).
- Trout Brook watershed and ongoing challenges with erosion and pollution in Trout Brook and Cannon River.
- Multiple Truths: In a Dakota worldview, there are multiple right answers and multiple good paths. People do not need to believe the same things; they can include many beliefs as part of their worldview. Even within Dakota communities you may find differences in how Dakota people define and live out their worldview.



*Interpretive bench graphic*



*Fire ring*



*Wrapped column*

### Opportunities for Further Research:

- Opportunities for conservation and stewardship activities at Miesville Ravine Park Reserve.



*Wrapped graphic*



*Bridge interpretation*



*Etched boulder*



| Potential Storylines   | Self-Guided Interpretation<br>Panels/signs, unique or interactive elements, landscape and/or structural   |
|--|---|
| Trout Brook watershed and ongoing challenges with erosion and pollution in Trout Brook and Cannon River. Dakota connection to this place through care (stewardship) as a cultural expression. Multiple Truths: There are multiple right answers and multiple good paths.   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>North Trout Brook Trailhead: Interpretive panel with messaging about seeps and streams throughout the MRPR, stewardship (caring) approaches through Western and Dakota lens (“multiple truths” messaging)</li> <li>Link to more information online (e.g., stewardship activities and approaches, changes over time)</li> </ul>   |
| Trout Brook MN DNR designation and trout species identification.   | North Trout Brook Trailhead: Interactive fish spinners  |
| River landscapes: how they function and change.  | South Trout Brook Trailhead: Bridge details (e.g., wrapped graphics or laser-cut bridge siderails)  |
| Dakota people relate to the land in a different way from the Western worldview. Living in harmony with nature: the land and the Dakota people influence and sustain each other. Despite environmental degradation from European settlement, the relationship between the land and the Dakota people continues today. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cannon River Trailhead: Interpretive panel and furnishings (e.g., etched ground surface, fire ring details, picnic table, and/or bench details)</li> <li>Etched topography of the ravine to convey that there is more here</li> </ul>  |
| Outdoor recreation (being active outdoors; not “formalized” recreation, natural resource-based activities).  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1.2-Mile Loop Overlook: Etched stones (from here, park visitors may be able to see people hiking, camping, picnicking, fishing, paddling, swimming, sitting by a campfire)</li> <li>At trail intersections: Column or timber pole with wrapped graphic that has a map of immediate trails/surroundings on one side, “how to read a blaze” on another, featured plant or animal to watch for on the other two sides.</li> </ul> |
| Recreation opportunities at the park.  | Furnishings (e.g., fire ring details, picnic table, and/or bench details)   |

Table 6.4 Interpretation Table Theme 3



Sculptural element at overlook



Etched river map



Interactive fish graphic



# PARK RESERVE INTERPRETIVE FRAMEWORK



Figure 6.10 Miesville Ravine Park Reserve Interpretive Framework Diagram (Depicting Long-term Plan)



| Location  | Icon   Subtheme  | Storyline   | Interpretive Method/Location  |
|---|--|---|---|
| <b>CANNON RIVER TRAIL</b>   |  |   |   |
| Cannon River Trailhead  | 1<br>3 People<br>Stewardship   | Dakota identity<br>Differing worldviews (Dakota/<br>Western)                    | Interpretive Panel<br>Interpretive features integrated into site furnishings (e.g., benches)  |
| Campsites (themed sites)  | 1<br>2<br>3 People<br>Place<br>Stewardship                           | Dakota and Euro-American History<br>Wildlife<br>Recreation                      | Furnishings (e.g., fire ring details, picnic table, and/or bench details)   |
| Cannon River Loops  | 1 People   | Railroads   | Railroad ties with sculptural element and panel   |
| Cannon Valley Trail Future Connection                                 | 1 People   | Visitor experience  | Trailhead panel (or other “welcome” or “You Are Here” element)  |
| <b>CANNON RIVER VISTA TRAIL</b>                                       |  |   |   |
| Cannon River Vistas   | 1<br>2 People<br>Place   | Dakota worldview<br>Cannon Valley Geology                                       | Etched stones or seating  |
| Suspension Bridge   | 3 Stewardship  | Erosion and Water   | Integral bridge panels / detailing  |
| <b>TROUT BROOK VALLEY TRAIL</b>                                       |  |   |   |
| South Trout Brook Trailhead   | 2<br>3 Place<br>Stewardship  | Steep topography/ecological refuge<br>River landscapes                          | Trailhead panel<br>Bridge detail  |
| North Trout Brook Trailhead   | 1<br>3<br>3<br>3 People<br>Stewardship<br>Stewardship<br>Stewardship | Trout Farm<br>Watershed<br>Trout ID<br>Dakota cultural care and multiple truths | Trailhead panel<br>Trailhead panel<br>Fish spinners<br>Trailhead panel and QR codes linking to online resources/information   |
| <b>BLUFF PRAIRIE TRAIL</b>  |  |   |   |
| Bluff Prairie Trailhead   | 2 Place  | Agriculture and farmsteads  | Trailhead panel and farm machinery  |
| Bluff Prairie   | 3 Stewardship  | Dry bluff prairie plant and animal ID   | Etched stones or seating stone graphics; bird sculpture   |
| Homestead remnant (wall)  | 1 People   | Farming communities/homestead plant ID clues                                    | Small sign on wall  |
| <b>TALLGRASS TRAIL LOOP</b>   |  |   |   |
| Tallgrass Trail Loop  | 3<br>2 Stewardship<br>Place  | Outdoor recreation<br>Plant communities   | Etched stones or seating stone graphics   |
| <b>LARSON FARM INTERPRETIVE LOOP</b>                                  |  |   |   |
| Larson Farm Interpretive Spur   | 1 People   | Homesteads and Railroads  | Panel or etching along foundation   |
| <b>TRAIL INTERSECTIONS</b>  |  |   |   |
| Interpretive Features Located at Trail Intersections/ Decision Points | 3<br>2 Stewardship<br>Place  | Outdoor recreation<br>Plant/animal identification                               | Column or timber pole with wrapped graphic that has a map of immediate trails/ surroundings on one side, “how to read a blaze” on another, featured plant or animal to watch for on the other two sides |

Table 6.5 Interpretive Framework Diagram Locations Table



# IMPLEMENTATION OVERVIEW

The purpose of the Implementation Chapter is to describe in detail how the items proposed in the plan will be accomplished. The following sections identify actions, timing, and resources that are needed.

## PHASING AND PRIORITIES

Park improvements have been prioritized into three categories: five-year, 10-year, and long-term. The prioritization was drafted by staff, reviewed by the Planning Commission, and confirmed by the County Board. The prioritization process considered a number of factors: consistency with the park vision and guiding principles, level of community support, construction cost, and anticipated operations and maintenance needs.

Park improvements identified in the long-range have been grouped into 17 projects, for which planning level cost estimates were prepared in 2023 dollars. Although park improvements have been designated as five-year, 10-year or long-term, it is feasible that any park development may be constructed as opportunities or funding become available. Priorities and cost estimates are shown in Figure 7.1 and included in Table 7.1.

Cost estimates are based on a combination of past practice, work done in other park systems, and expert opinion. Refined cost estimates will be established in the future, as individual projects move into more detailed design prior to construction. Cost estimates should be considered preliminary, as many variables can influence the actual cost of projects.





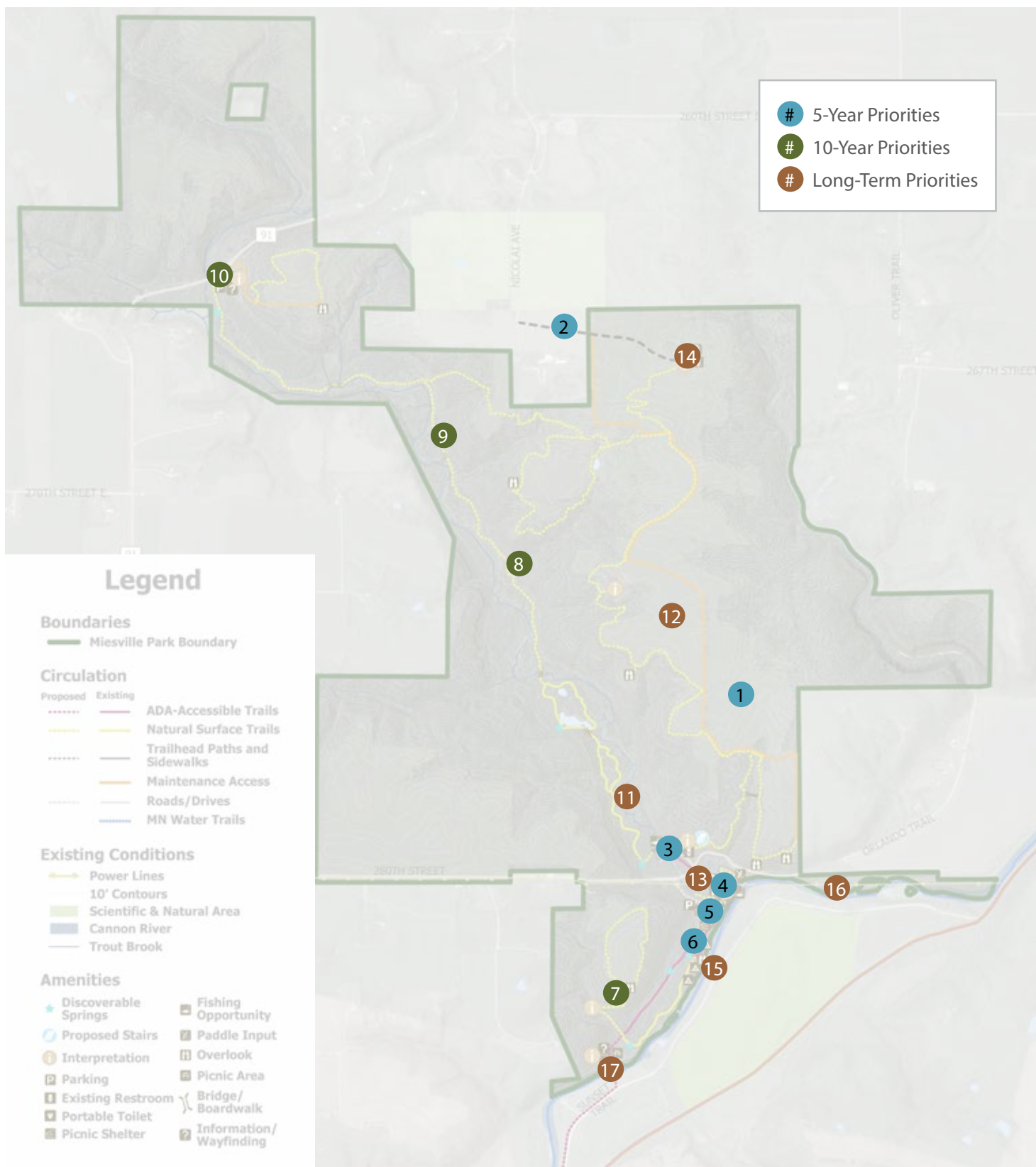


Figure 7.1 Miesville Ravine Park Reserve Project Phasing Diagram





|           | Description   |                |                           |                             | Community Support |
|-----------|---|----------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------|
|           |   | Project Number | County Funding Assumption | External Funding Assumption |                   |
| 5-Year    | 5-year target is \$1.2 million - \$1.86 million   |                |                           |                             |                   |
|           | Habitat Restoration I   | 1              | \$ 190,000                | \$ 758,000                  | high              |
|           | Bluff Prairie Natural Resource Management Access Road   | 2              | \$ 110,000                |                             | high              |
|           | Trout Brook Valley: Trout Brook footbridge replacement with ADA-accessible overlook and fishing platform, Southbrook Trailhead improvements   | 3              | \$ 281,000                |                             | high              |
|           | Cannon River Trailhead and Boat Launch: Drinking water, ADA-accessible kayak launch, improved riverside picnicking (additional picnic tables and grills), trailhead sidewalks and paths   | 4              | \$ 667,000                |                             | high              |
|           | Cannon River Trailhead: Accessible shore fishing, Trout Brook touch point and rest area, restored savanna picnicking  | 5              | \$ 146,000                |                             | high              |
|           | Cannon River half mile ADA-accessible trail loop  | 6              | \$ 215,000                |                             | high              |
|           | 5-year Anticipated Cost:  |                | \$ 1,609,000              | \$ 758,000                  |                   |
| 10-Year   | 10-year target is \$1.86 million - \$6 million  |                |                           |                             |                   |
|           | Cannon River Area trails: Larson Farm interpretive spur; Lower Terrace Prairie natural surface trail loop and overlook  | 7              | \$ 359,000                |                             | high              |
|           | Habitat Restoration II and Trout Brook Restoration I  | 8              | \$ 260,000                | \$ 1,040,000                | high              |
|           | Trout Brook Valley trail: natural surface trail with boardwalk sections, spring destination rest areas, and bridge crossings  | 9              | \$ 940,000                |                             | high              |
|           | North Trout Brook Trailhead and overlook trail  | 10             | \$ 559,000                |                             | high              |
|           | 10-year Anticipated Cost:   |                | \$ 2,118,000              | \$ 1,040,000                |                   |
| Long-term | Long-Term   |                |                           |                             |                   |
|           | Habitat Restoration III and Trout Brook Restoration II  | 11             | \$ 884,000                | \$ 4,811,000                | high              |
|           | Upper Terrace Prairie trails: Upper Terrace Prairie Trail access from South Trout Brook Trailhead, Ravine tributary bridge, Bluff Prairie Trail, Cannon River Vista trail and overlooks, Prairie homestead remnant interpretive feature | 12             | \$ 1,870,000              |                             | high              |
|           | Existing Cannon River Trailhead parking lot expansion   | 13             | \$ 34,000                 |                             | low               |
|           | Bluff Prairie Trailhead: Public entry drive, parking, North Bluff access trail, Tallgrass trail loop  | 14             | \$ 1,008,000              |                             | high              |
|           | Riverside campsites (3)   | 15             | \$ 14,000                 | \$ 14,000                   | medium            |
|           | East Cannon River canoe/tube launch   | 16             | \$ 2,600,000              | possible                    | high              |
|           | Cannon Valley Trail connection: Bridge over cannon river, trail entry improvements, ADA accessible trial from parking to bridge   | 17             | \$ 4,965,000              | possible                    | high              |
|           | Long-term Anticipated Cost:   |                | \$ 11,375,000             | \$ 4,825,000                |                   |

Table 7.1 Miesville Ravine Park Reserve Projects Cost Estimates Table



# ACCESSIBILITY AND AFFORDABILITY

Dakota County recognizes the need to provide accessible facilities and amenities to all park users, regardless of resources, age, or ability and is committed to Universal Design. The steep bluffs and sensitive ecosystems present throughout Miesville Ravine Park Reserve present challenges to the development of accessible facilities. The Cannon River Trailhead in the southernmost portion of the park reserve is planned to provide a variety of accessible amenities with an ADA-complaint trail loop, accessible paddle launch, fishing area, overlook, campsite, and picnic grounds.

All new or substantially altered improvements will utilize the U.S. Access Board's guidelines for Outdoor Developed areas as minimum standards for accessibility.

Dakota County believes that everyone should have the opportunity to benefit from participation in parks programs and services. Dakota County provides access to park facilities, programs, and services regardless of economic situation. Financial needs-based assistance is available to qualifying organizations, families, and individuals.

# ADDITIONAL GUIDANCE

Plans such as this one can only reasonably be implemented to a certain extent before a new planning process is begun and the old ideas are reexamined. Future plans should consider the following items that are beyond the scope of this current document's reasonable implementation time frame.

## LOOP TRAIL EXPANSION

The preferred concept in this plan maintains several maintenance access routes that may be well-suited for conversion to trail loops in the future.

## NATURAL RESOURCES STEWARDSHIP

The Miesville Ravine Park Reserve Natural Resources Management Plan (NRMP) guides natural resource stewardship in the park. The NRMP was developed in tandem with this plan.





# BOUNDARIES AND ACQUISITION

Acquisition of inholding properties and enhanced stewardship of lands outside the park reserve boundary are priorities. Surrounding agricultural lands make acquisition and stewardship more feasible during the life of this plan than in the future when Miesville Ravine will inevitably be surrounded by much higher value and potentially more environmentally degrading development patterns.

Dramatic topography, tributary ravines, and springsheds that stretch far into the landscape mean that Trout Brook's water quality is affected by land uses throughout the watershed. This plan balances resource protection desires and a realistic park boundary with opportunities for voluntary partnerships with private landowners for land stewardship in the surrounding area.

| Map ID | Parcel ID                          | Acreage Affected                   | Property Description   | Status               | Notes  |
|--------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|--|----------------------|--|
| 1      | 037-090220075010                   | One parcel, 79.18 acres            | Trout brook, wooded slopes, agricultural land                          | Current Inholding    |  |
| 2      | 037-090260026013, 037-090260026014 | 2 parcels, 4.99 acres              | Single-family home   | Current Inholding    |  |
| 3      | 037-090260002012                   | Portion of one parcel, 0.93 acres  | Woodland slope   | Current Inholding    |  |
| 4      | 037-090260076011                   | One parcel, 25.24 acres            | Agricultural land, single-family home, existing public access easement | Current Inholding    |  |
| 5      | 037-090250050013                   | 1 parcel, 31.67 acres              | Agricultural land, single-family home, existing public access easement | Current Inholding    | MPCA ID 037-88497 Feedlot; prior to acquisition, the County should pursue additional information and clean up this site if it poses a threat to surface or ground water quality, habitat, or public health |
| 6      | 460310202                          | Portion of one parcel, 22.13 acres | Agricultural land, wooded steep slope east of Orlando Ave              | Remove from boundary |  |
| 7      | 037-090360076010                   | One parcel, 68.16 acres            | Agricultural land, wooded slopes, ravine                               | Current Inholding    |  |
| 8      | 037-090360077010                   | One parcel, 8.81 acres             | Agricultural, Cannon River access                                      | Current Inholding    |  |
| 9      | 460310703                          | Portion of one parcel, 1.57 acres  | Cannon River frontage, floodplain                                      | Current Inholding    |  |
| 10     | 280010400                          | One parcel, 0.16 acres             | Cannon River frontage, floodplain                                      | Current Inholding    |  |
| 11     | 289919800                          | Portion of one parcel, acres 2.85  | Wooded slopes  | Current Inholding    |  |
| 12     | 037-090350025020, 037-090260078020 | Portions of 2 parcels, 40.19 acres | Ravine tributary, wooded slopes, upland setback                        | Current Inholding    | If easements for natural resource protection, access, and restoration and viewshed protection can be obtained, removal from park boundary will be considered   |
| 13     | 090260050022                       | Portion of one parcel, 8.87 acres  | Trout brook ravine tributaries   | Current Inholding    | If easements for natural resource protection, access, and restoration and viewshed protection can be obtained, removal from park boundary will be considered   |
| 14     | 037-090260050016                   | Portion of one parcel, 19.23 acres | Wooded slopes, ravine tributaries                                      | Current Inholding    | If easements for natural resource protection, access, and restoration and viewshed protection can be obtained, removal from park boundary will be considered   |
| 15     | 037-090260050014                   | Portion of one parcel, 1.35 acres  | Steep wooded slopes  | Current Inholding    |  |
| 16     | 037-090260050012                   | One full parcel, 14.97 acres       | Single-family home, Trout Brook, wooded ravine slopes                  | Current Inholding    |  |
| 17     | 037-090270075012                   | Portion of one parcel, 1.80 acres  | Woodland portion east of Miesville Trail                               | Current Inholding    |  |



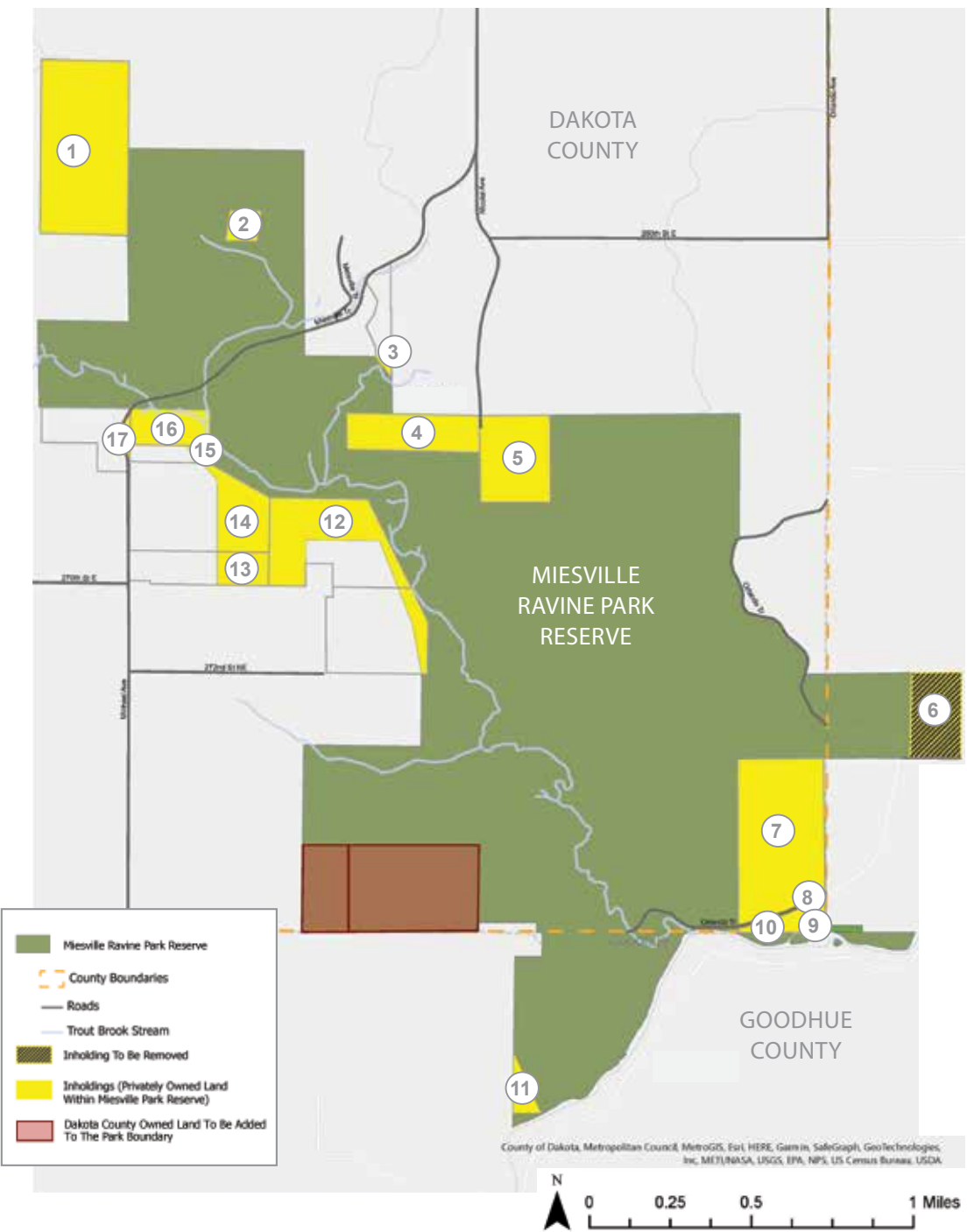
CURRENT INHOLDINGS

There is one inholding that is identified for removal from the park reserve boundary: Parcel 6, east of Orlando Trail and within Goodhue County. Because this area is separated from most of the park by Orlando Trail and has minimal recreational value, it is recommended for removal from the park reserve boundary. There are two parcels on the east side of the park boundary that are owned by Dakota County and operated by the Dakota County Parks Department as part of Miesville Ravine Park Reserve. These will be added to the Metropolitan Council park boundary definition (Dakota County Parks has recognized the two parcels as part of the park since they were acquired).

The total estimated market value of all inholding parcels is \$5,100,000. Note that this cost includes the total estimated value of the parcel and buildings, even when the recommendation would be only to acquire a portion of it. The parcels which

this affects are noted in the table under Parcel(s) Description as “portions of.” The Acreage Affected column shows the acreage estimated to be acquired. All identified inholdings are currently privately owed and managed. If they are acquired by Dakota County, it is anticipated that they will be owned and managed by Dakota County.

Inholding parcels are privately owned. Public wayfinding maps of the park will depict the park boundary as the land currently owned by Dakota County and exclude private inholdings to reduce public confusion and trespassing on private land.



SUMMARY OF PARK BOUNDARY CHANGES

|                     |           |
|---------------------|-----------|
| Existing inholdings | 331 acres |
| Removals            | 22 acres  |
| Net                 | 309 acres |

Table 7.3 Summary of Park Boundary Changes

Figure 7.2 Miesville Ravine Park Reserve Boundaries and Acquisition



## STEWARD PARTNERSHIP LANDS

Steward partnership lands are outside the park boundary and within the Trout Brook Watershed and springsheds and have a significant impact on the quality of the natural resources within the park reserve. The plan suggests close coordination with owners of these lands to enhance conservation and stewardship practices to lessen negative environmental and visual impacts on the park reserve.

Stewardship will be accomplished through programs such as the Dakota County Soil and Water Conservation District's (SWCD) technical assistance and financial incentives, Dakota County Land Conservation program, and the Dakota County Agricultural Chemical Reduction Effort (ACRE). These programs offer a range of voluntary stewardship incentives. Examples include incentive payments for nitrate

reduction practices, cooperative stewardship agreements, conservation easements, purchase of development rights, and acquisition of land from willing sellers. Stewardship methods are flexible and allow for unique agreements that meet both the property owner's need for continued use and enjoyment of the land and the County's need for enhanced stewardship.

The County works with other public entities, such as the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources and cities, to acquire land outside the County park and regional greenway system. In addition, the County may acquire land for current or planned public recreational uses. Protected land is then eligible for a combination of state grant and County grant-match funding to restore and enhance natural resources.

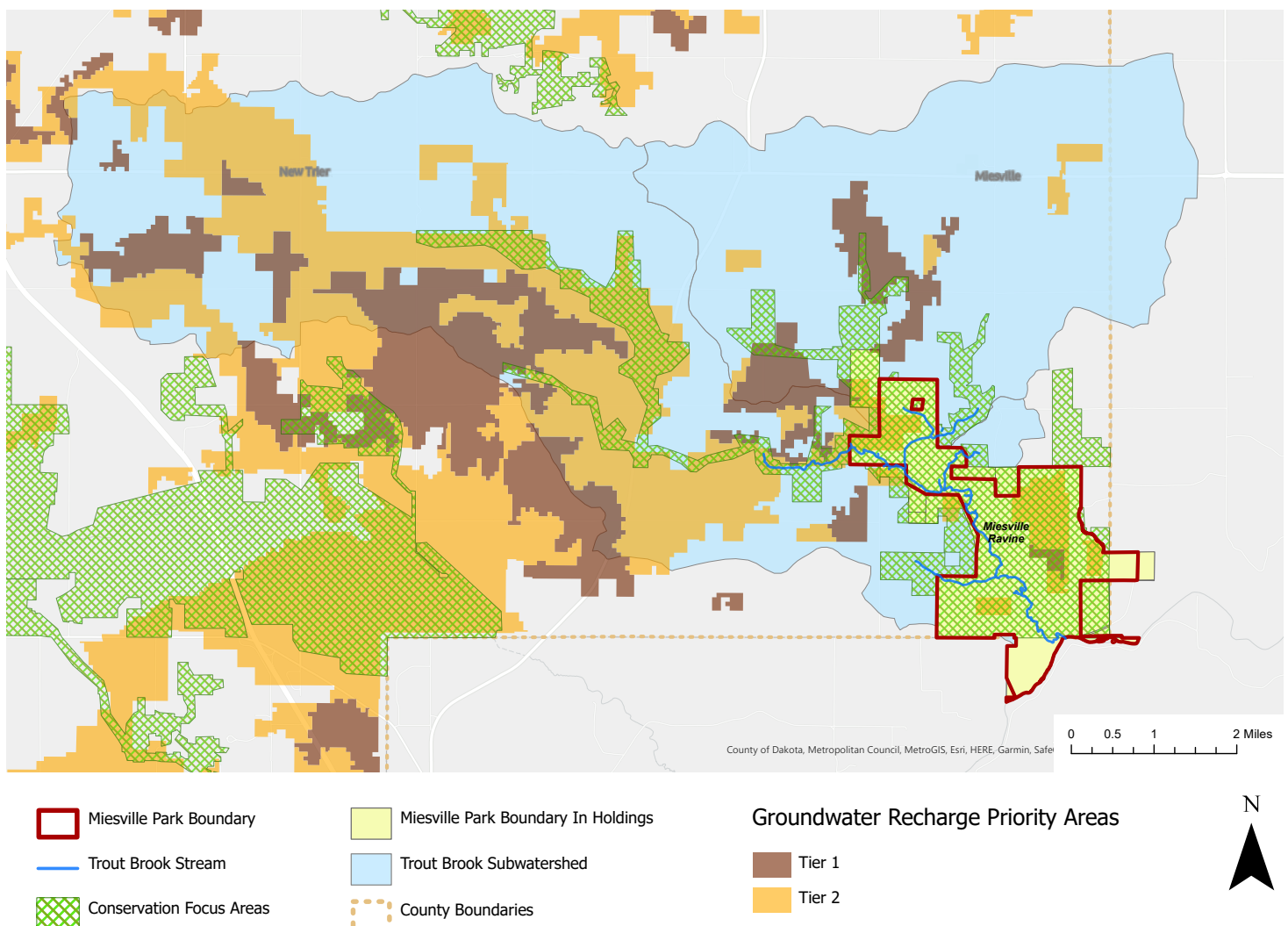


Figure 7.3 Priority Stewardship Partnership Lands That Impact Miesville Ravine Park Reserve



# INTERPRETATION IMPLEMENTATION AND CULTURAL LANDSCAPE INTERPRETIVE PLAN

The interpretive plan section provides recommendations for enhancing the visitor experience and achieving goals for interpretation at Miesville Ravine Park Reserve. In order to bridge the gap between the interpretive framework presented in this plan and interpretive features informing design, it is recommended that a full interpretive plan be completed for the park reserve prior to implementing improvements. It is envisioned that interpretation of the area and history of the park reserve, natural resources, and cultural context inform the design of all future improvements.

Successful and sustainable interpretation requires an ongoing process of planning, implementation, and evaluation. The County should evaluate its progress toward achieving its goals annually by identifying what actions were completed related to the interpretive recommendations in this plan and how much time and money were invested to complete the action.

## IMPLEMENTATION PRIORITY BY ELEMENT TYPE

The priority for implementation of interpretive elements is based on park development by area or structure. For example, as Dakota County Parks develops the different trailhead locations throughout Miesville Ravine Park Reserve, the interpretive elements proposed to be located in those areas there should also be developed.

## SELF-GUIDED INTERPRETATION

### Graphic Panels

#### (Interactive Signs and Tactile Elements):

Graphic panels and associated other elements, such as tactiles, should be developed as the park area in which they are located is developed.

### Integrated Interpretation

Integrated landscape elements promote a holistic park experience and provide surprises in the landscape that support interpretive messaging, such as the “discoverable spring” locations identified along the trails or scenic overlooks. Integrated elements, such as view frames, should be implemented as the location or locations that suit them best are developed.



Graphic panels



Interactive interpretive element



# PUBLIC AWARENESS, OUTREACH, AND MARKETING

Dakota County publicizes its park system through a semi-annual County newsletter that is mailed to every household in the county, the County's website, a listserv with more than 3,500 subscribers, a Facebook page with over 11,000 likes, limited advertising for fee-based rentals, and news releases. Nevertheless, research conducted for the 2008 Park System Plan found that many county residents were unaware of the park system and its services.

In response, Dakota County Communications developed a marketing strategy and brand for parks to raise awareness and recognition of the system. The "Forever Wild" brand distinguishes Dakota County's parks as a unique system. Dakota County prepares an internal parks communication plan each year to ensure that the public has access to timely updates on parks-related topics and major events. In 2019, Dakota County Parks established a Parks Outreach Coordinator position to focus on building relationships and community outreach.

In 2022, Dakota County Parks developed a marketing plan based on broad community engagement conducted for the Parks Awareness and Promotion Plan, which has the goals of building awareness of the park system services and increasing use. The marketing plan focuses on building an effective, multi-year, inclusive promotion for the Dakota County Parks system with a focus on reaching underrepresented populations and secondarily on increasing awareness among the general public. Underrepresented audience segments include Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI), Black, Indigenous, Latinx/Hispanic, Low-Income, Somali, and People with Disabilities. Tactics for reaching underrepresented communities include:

- Roaming Parks Experience
- Co-create programs, activities, and volunteer experiences with community partners
- Elevate Dakota County Parks' presence using cultural media
- Create multilingual communications
- Hire multilingual staff
- Address and create communications that address specific concerns
- Add accessibility information to Parks' communications
- Promote existing ability inclusive offerings
- Create communications in collaboration with Indigenous partners
- Conduct activities and cultivate parks as a place to intentionally bring people together
- Highlight, appreciate, and amplify park champions
- Create a parks ambassador program
- Host a "bring a friend to the parks" week

Over the next 10 years, enhanced outreach to Cannon Valley communities and recreation partners is envisioned to establish the area as a cohesive destination within this popular recreational corridor. There may be future opportunities to participate in coordinated marketing among interested partners.



Parks marketing



Community outreach event



Community engagement marketing materials



# PUBLIC SERVICES, UTILITIES, AND CONFLICTS

The following public services exist at Miesville Ravine Park Reserve and may be expanded during future development to serve park users and facilities:

## SANITARY SEWER/SEPTIC

There currently is no sanitary sewer or septic within the park. Restrooms will continue to be vault toilets, and opportunities for septic can be explored.

## WATER

There is currently no drinking water at the park. Water will be provided at the Cannon River Trailhead and other trailheads as they are developed, sourced from on-site wells.

## STORMWATER

Water quality in the park, in particular Trout Brook, is affected by agricultural land uses outside of the park. Dakota County, Dakota SWCD, and the North Cannon River Watershed Management Organization (NCRWMO) are working with landowners in the Trout Brook watershed to protect land and improve water quality. As new recreational amenities are built, best management practices to capture stormwater onsite, sustainable trail design, and shoreline and bluff buffer zones will be used to minimize impacts.

## UTILITY SERVICE NEEDS

There is currently utility service to the park. Any electrical service needed at trailheads will come from connection to the existing power system.

## UTILITIES

Power line 711, a 69KB transmission line, is within Miesville Ravine Park and connects to the Welch Substation. The line runs directly through the Cannon River Trailhead, picnic, and river access area and detracts from the park reserve's aesthetics and visitor experience. Long-term, Dakota County would like to see the lines relocated or the current double pole design transitioned to a mono pole design to reduce impacts. Dakota County staff will continue to discuss long-term relocation or line burial if there are opportunities for expansion, decommissioning, or changes in area service. Underground burial of any future power lines should be explored to mitigate visual impact to the park and river valley but will need future assessment to evaluate potential impact to cultural sites. There are underground pipelines within the park south of Orlando Trail. These lines are not impacted by existing or planned recreation improvements.

## DAKOTA COUNTY ENVIRONMENTAL SITES INVENTORY

There is one site in the Dakota County Environmental Site Inventory within the park boundary on a private inholding: MPCA ID 037-88497 Feedlot. A feedlot is a farm where livestock are confined in lots or buildings where manure may accumulate. Prior to acquisition, the County should pursue additional information about potential contamination and clean up this site if it poses a threat to surface or ground water quality, natural resource habitat, or public health.

## CONFLICTS

Miesville Ravine Park Reserve is bordered by single-family homes, agricultural land, and roadways. Residential uses are generally compatible with the park, and this plan minimizes recreation use near the park's edges. Land uses, particularly agriculture, within the Trout Brook Watershed affects the habitat and water quality within the park and views from the park.

Dakota County, Dakota SWCD, and the North Cannon River Watershed Management Organization are working with individual landowners to address land conservation and water quality within the larger Trout Brook watershed.

Because recreation activities will impact the park's sensitive natural and cultural landscape, increased access and recreation recommended in this plan have been carefully considered. Recreation is sited to minimize impacts, and sustainable trail design will be utilized. Minimizing impacts to the natural and cultural landscape will continue to be a priority as recreation and access features are developed.



# SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT, AND ENERGY

## SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT

Dakota County's 2018 Solid Waste Master Plan seeks to increase recycling and diversion of organic waste from landfills. The County provides labeled recycling containers in its parks and promotes "green events" with compostable materials and reusable service ware. Dakota County also uses recycled tear-off shingles in hot-mix asphalt for trail paving projects. In securing waste hauling services for its own facilities, Dakota County developed and uses resource management contracts to promote handling waste at preferred levels of the waste management hierarchy.

## ENERGY

Dakota County's 2009 Energy Management Plan adopted the following principles for its own operations:

- Reduce energy use and greenhouse gas emissions from buildings through design, construction, operations, and user habits.
- Reduce energy use and greenhouse gas emissions in transportation through transportation fuel alternatives, fleet-related business practices, and transportation system design and use.
- Manage waste, land, and water to conserve energy and sequester carbon.
- Increase renewable energy use to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and reliance on fossil fuels.
- Inform, advocate, and anticipate the future with others to collectively conserve energy, transition to renewable resources, and sequester carbon.

## PARK ORDINANCES

Dakota County Ordinance No. 107, the Park Ordinance, controls the public use and enjoyment of the County park system. Revised in 2023, it incorporates pertinent Minnesota statutes and addresses the following:

- Regulation of Public Use
- Regulation of General Conduct
- Regulations Pertaining to General Parkland Operation
- Protection of Property, Structures, and Natural Resources
- Regulation of Recreational Activity
- Regulation of Motorized Vehicles, Traffic, and Parking

## PARK ACCESS

Located in a rural and remote part of the county, most visitors currently arrive at Miesville Ravine Park Reserve by personal vehicle or bus as a part of recreational tours. There is an opportunity to increase access to the park via watercraft, walking, and biking travel modes. Plan recommendations support this by strengthening the connection between the park reserve and the Cannon River and Cannon Valley Regional Trail. A reconfigured entrance along Orlando Trail and new trailheads along County Road 91 and Nicolai Avenue provide additional access points for vehicle arrivals. A planned bus turnaround and expanded parking opportunities at the Cannon River Trailhead will improve access and circulation for groups arriving at the park reserve. Better located and connected accessible parking stalls and enhanced visitor circulation at the Cannon River Trailhead will allow for more comfortable access and use of the park reserve by those with physical disabilities.

## ROADWAYS

Access to Miesville Ravine Park Reserve is primarily provided by local roadways rather than an internal park roadway system. The South Trout Brook and Cannon River Trailheads can be accessed off of Orlando Trail. The North Trout Brook Trailhead will be accessed from Miesville Trail, and the Bluff Prairie Trailhead is accessed from Nicolai Avenue. Orlando Trail and Nicolai Avenue are Douglas Township Roads, and Miesville Trail is a Dakota County Road.

## TRANSIT AND NON-MOTORIZED TRANSPORTATION

There is currently no transit service to Miesville Ravine Park Reserve. Due to low population density surrounding the park, it is unlikely there will be transit service to the park in the foreseeable future. For guided programs, the County should explore providing shuttle services to the park.

## PARKING

Parking will be provided at trailheads throughout the park. Small parking lots for 10-20 vehicles will be located at the Bluff Prairie, North Trout Brook, South Trout Brook, and Cannon River Trailheads. The Dakota County Parks Department will work with the Dakota County Transportation Department and Douglas County to post no parking signs on roads adjacent to the park, when needed.



# VISITOR SERVICES

Visitor Services manages outdoor education, interpretation, facility and equipment rentals, events and food, customer service and permitting, and volunteerism. The 2017 Dakota County Park Visitor Services Plan guides provision of services throughout the park system. The visitor services vision for Miesville Ravine Park Reserve is minimalist, focused on experiencing nature, with introduction of mobile and self-guided education. This long-range plan includes facility recommendations that support visitor services at Miesville Ravine Park Reserve including:

- Enhanced riverfront area and bus drop off
- Improved accessibility, including an accessible riverside trail loop
- Self-guided interpretation on nature and history
- Improved trail wayfinding
- Picnic facilities that can be utilized to support guided programs



## FACILITY RENTALS

Miesville Ravine Park Reserve features two rental facilities, the two existing picnic shelters at the future Cannon River Trailhead. These facilities provide a natural setting for family and group events, support an extended visit in natural setting, and can introduce new visitors to parks.



## VOLUNTEERISM

Volunteerism engages people who want to support their parks with meaningful work and can help build a shared sense of community centered on parks. Volunteerism also can help introduce new people to the park system, and important work is accomplished through engaging dedicated volunteers.



# PARK OPERATIONS ANALYSIS

The operations analysis helps to determine the effect of the long-range plan's preferred concept on the operational budget. It takes into account impacts to visitor services, natural resource management, grounds maintenance, facility maintenance, and law enforcement. Impact is expressed as the change between the operational baseline (2022 financials) for Miesville Ravine Park Reserve and the estimated required increases/decreases in revenues and expenses at the park for implementation of the plan's preferred concept.

## SUMMARY

Following implementation of the five-year plan, operational costs at Miesville Ravine Park Reserve are estimated to increase from a 2022 baseline of \$288,700 to \$374,600. This represents a total estimated increase of \$85,900 (30%). The additional FTE requirements total an estimated 0.96-1.82 FTE. The largest increase is in the functional area of natural resources (\$46,600).

Following implementation of the 10-year plan, operational costs are estimated to total \$498,700 and increase \$124,100 (33%) over the five-year plan requirement. The additional FTE requirements total an estimated 1.39-2.36 FTE. The largest increase is in the functional area natural resources (\$48,000).

## FIVE-YEAR PLAN

### OVERVIEW

The five-year plan is characterized by the following improvements that have a bearing on park operations.

| ID | Description   | Operational Impact |                   |                     |                 | Revenue Potential |
|----|---|--------------------|-------------------|---------------------|-----------------|-------------------|
|    |   | Visitor Services   | Natural Resources | Grounds Maintenance | Law Enforcement |                   |
| 1  | Natural Resource Enhancement / Restoration Phase 1  |                    | Medium            |                     |                 |                   |
| 2  | Bluff Prairie Natural Resource Management Access Road   |                    |                   | Low                 | Low             |                   |
| 3  | Trout Brook Valley: Trout Brook footbridge replacement with ADA-accessible overlook and fishing platform, Southbrook Trailhead improvements   | Low                |                   | Low                 |                 |                   |
| 4  | Cannon River Trailhead and Boat Launch: Drinking water, ADA-accessible kayak launch, improved riverside picnicking (additional picnic tables and grills), trailhead sidewalks and paths | Low                |                   | Low                 | Low             | Low               |
| 5  | Cannon River Trailhead: Accessible shore fishing, Trout Brook touch point and rest area, restored savanna picnicking  | Low                |                   | Low                 | Low             | Low               |
| 6  | Cannon River half-mile ADA-accessible trail loop  | Low                |                   | Low                 |                 |                   |

Table 7.4 Miesville Ravine Park Reserve Business and Operations Five-Year Plan Cost Estimates Table



## FIVE-YEAR PLAN ASSUMPTIONS

Based on the potential operational impact summarized in the table above, the following assumptions were used to estimate financial and staffing requirements. Financial impact is expressed as the estimated increase or decrease from the 2022 operational baseline for Miesville Ravine Park Reserve. FTE impact is expressed as an estimated range, assuming 1.0 FTE for every \$45,000 (highest impact) to \$85,000 (lowest impact) of new staffing costs.

### Visitor Services

Assumptions for increased operational **expenses** include:

- Outdoor education programming will increase from four programs a year to eight programs.
- Trout Brook Valley ,Cannon River Trailhead and Boat Launch amenities will increase park operations and guest services support oversight.

Combined, it is estimated that a 35% (\$17,100) increase in operational staffing and non-staffing expenses over the 2022 estimated total of \$48,900 will be required for these improvements. This equates to an estimated staffing impact of 0.18-0.35 FTE.

Assumptions for increased operational revenues include Cannon River Trailhead and Boat Launch, particularly revenue from commercial canoe/tube outfitters and additional outdoor education. It is estimated that a 200 percent (\$5,800) increase in revenue over the 2022 estimated total of \$2,900 will be generated from these improvements.

### Natural Resource Management

Assumptions for increased operational expenses include implementation of Phase 1 of natural resource enhancement and restoration throughout the park. It is estimated that a 28 percent (\$46,600) increase in operational staffing and non-staffing expenses over the 2022 estimated total of \$168,300 will be required for these improvements. This equates to an estimated staffing impact of 0.52-0.98 FTE.

### Grounds Maintenance

Assumptions for increased operational expenses include:

- Half-mile accessible trail
- Cannon River trailhead and boat launch
- Increased visitation requiring more time maintaining the park (restroom cleaning, picnic area maintenance, trash removal)

Assumptions for decreased operational expenses include the reduced maintenance associated with relocation of the natural resource maintenance access road to the Bluff Prairie to a more sustainable location.

Combined, it is estimated that a 35 percent (\$21,000) increase in operational staffing and non-staffing expenses over the 2022 estimated total of \$59,865 will be required for these improvements. This equates to an estimated staffing impact of 0.47-0.89 FTE.

### Law Enforcement

Assumptions for increased operational expenses include general increases due to additional visitation at the Cannon River trailhead and boat launch. It is estimated that a 10 percent (\$1,200) increase in operational staffing and non-staffing expenses over the 2022 estimated total of \$12,800 will be required for these improvements. This equates to an estimated staffing impact of 0.01-0.03 FTE.



# 10-YEAR PLAN

## OVERVIEW

The 10-year plan is characterized by the following improvements that have a bearing on park operations.

| ID | Description  | Operational Impact |                   |                     |                 | Revenue Potential |
|----|--|--------------------|-------------------|---------------------|-----------------|-------------------|
|    |  | Visitor Services   | Natural Resources | Grounds Maintenance | Law Enforcement |                   |
| 11 | Natural Resource Enhancement / Restoration - Phase 2   |                    | Medium            |                     |                 |                   |
| 12 | Trout Brook Restoration I  |                    | Low               |                     |                 |                   |
| 13 | Cannon River Area trails: Larson Farm interpretive spur; Lower Terrace Prairie natural surface trail loop and overlook       | Low                |                   | Low                 |                 |                   |
| 14 | Trout Brook Valley trail: natural surface trail with boardwalk sections, spring destination rest areas, and bridge crossings | Low                |                   | Low                 |                 | Low               |
| 15 | North Trout Brook Trailhead and overlook trail   | Low                |                   | Low                 |                 | Low               |

Table 7.5 Miesville Ravine Park Reserve Business and Operations 10-Year Plan Cost Estimates Table

## 10-YEAR PLAN ASSUMPTIONS

Based on the potential operational impact summarized in the table above, the following assumptions were used to estimate financial and staffing requirements. Financial impact is expressed as the estimated increase or decrease from the five-year estimate. FTE impact is expressed as an estimated range, assuming 1.0 FTE for every \$45,000 (highest impact) to \$85,000 (lowest impact) of new staffing costs.

### Visitor Services

Assumptions for increased operational **expenses** include increased opportunities for outdoor education programs along Trout Brook and ongoing management of interpretive elements.

Combined, it is estimated that a 50 percent (\$33,000) increase in operational staffing and non-staffing expenses over the five-year requirement of \$66,000 will be required for these improvements. This equates to an estimated staffing impact of 0.35-0.67 FTE.

Assumptions for increased operational revenues includes revenue from additional outdoor education utilizing the Trout Brook trail and additional shelter rentals as more trail and fishing opportunities are added to the park. It is estimated that a 45 percent (\$3,900) increase in revenue over the five-year estimated total of \$5,800 will be generated from these improvements.

### Natural Resource Management

Assumptions for increased operational expenses include implementation of Phase 2 of natural resource enhancement and restoration throughout the park and Trout Brook restoration. It is estimated that a 22 percent

(\$48,000) increase in operational staffing and non-staffing expenses over the five-year requirement of \$214,900 will be required for these improvements. This equates to an estimated staffing impact of 0.54-1.01 FTE.

### Grounds Maintenance

Assumptions for increased operational expenses include:

- Natural surface trails, rest areas, and overlooks
- North Trout Brook Trailhead
- Bluff Prairie Trailhead

Combined, it is estimated that a 50 percent (\$40,500) increase in operational staffing and non-staffing expenses over the five-year requirement of \$80,900 will be required for these improvements. This equates to an estimated staffing impact of 0.47-.89 FTE.

### Law Enforcement

Assumptions for increased operational expenses include general increases due to additional patrol areas and visitation. It is estimated that a 20 percent (\$2,600) increase in operational staffing and non-staffing expenses over the five-year requirement of \$12,800 will be required. This equates to an estimated staffing impact of 0.03-0.06 FTE.



## FIVE-YEAR PLAN AND 10-YEAR PLAN OPERATIONAL EXPENSES (ESTIMATED)

| Functional Areas            | Category                                   | Baseline (2022) | Five-Year Plan Requirement (estimated) | Increase over Baseline | 10-Year Plan Requirement (estimated) | Increase over Five-Year |
|-----------------------------|--|-----------------|--|------------------------|--------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Visitor Services            | Staffing/Personal Services                 | 44,600          | 62,000                                 | 15,600                 | 90,300                               | 30,100                  |
|                             | Materials, Supplies, Operational Contracts | 4,300           | 5,800                                  | 1,500                  | 8,700                                | 2,900                   |
|                             | <b>Subtotal</b>                            | <b>48,900</b>   | <b>66,000</b>                          | <b>17,100 (35%)</b>    | <b>99,000</b>                        | <b>33,00 (50%)</b>      |
| Natural Resource Management | Staffing/Personal Services                 | 159,900         | 204,200                                | 44,300                 | 249,800                              | 45,600                  |
|                             | Materials, Supplies, Operational Contracts | 8,400           | 10,700                                 | 2,300                  | 13,100                               | 2,400                   |
|                             | <b>Subtotal</b>                            | <b>168,300</b>  | <b>214,900</b>                         | <b>46,600 (28%)</b>    | <b>262,900</b>                       | <b>48,000 (22%)</b>     |
| Grounds Maintenance         | Staffing/Personal Services                 | 59,300          | 80,100                                 | 20,800                 | 120,200                              | 45,600                  |
|                             | Materials, Supplies, Operational Contracts | 600             | 800                                    | 200                    | 1,200                                | 2,400                   |
|                             | <b>Subtotal</b>                            | <b>59,900</b>   | <b>80,900</b>                          | <b>21,000 (35%)</b>    | <b>121,400</b>                       | <b>40,500 (50%)</b>     |
| Law Enforcement             | Staffing/Personal Services                 | 11,600          | 12,800                                 | 1,200                  | 15,400                               | 2,600                   |
|                             | Materials, Supplies, Operational Contracts | 0               | 0                                      | 0                      | 0                                    | 0                       |
|                             | <b>Subtotal</b>                            | <b>11,600</b>   | <b>12,800</b>                          | <b>1,200 (10%)</b>     | <b>15,400</b>                        | <b>2,600 (20%)</b>      |
| Overall                     | Staffing/Personal Services                 | 275,400         | 357,300                                | 81,900                 | 475,700                              | 118,400                 |
|                             | Materials, Supplies, Operational Contracts | 13,300          | 17,300                                 | 4,000                  | 23,000                               | 5,700                   |
|                             | <b>GRAND TOTAL</b>                         | <b>288,700</b>  | <b>374,600</b>                         | <b>85,900 (30%)</b>    | <b>498,700</b>                       | <b>124,100 (33%)</b>    |

Table 7.6 Miesville Ravine Five-Year and 10-Year Plan Operational Expenses Cost Estimates Table

## FIVE-YEAR PLAN AND 10-YEAR PLAN OPERATIONAL REVENUES (ESTIMATED)

| Functional Areas | Category                                 | Baseline (2022) | Five-Year Plan Requirement (estimated) | Increase over Baseline | 10-Year Plan Requirement (estimated) | Increase over Five-Year |
|------------------|--|-----------------|--|------------------------|--------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Visitor Services | Facility Rentals                         | 1,900           | 7,600                                  | 5,700 (300%)           | 11,400                               | 3,800 (50%)             |
|                  | Permits                                  | 900             | 900                                    | 0 (0%)                 | 900                                  | 0 (0%)                  |
|                  | Outdoor Education                        | 100             | 175                                    | 200 (100%)             | 300                                  | 100 (50%)               |
|                  | <b>TOTAL</b>                             | <b>2,900</b>    | <b>3,057</b>                           | <b>8,700 (200%)</b>    | <b>12,600</b>                        | <b>3,900 (45%)</b>      |
|                  | Cost Recovery (Revenues / Expense ratio) | 1%              | 2%                                     | 1%                     | 3%                                   | 1%                      |

Table 7.7 Miesville Ravine Five-Year and 10-Year Plan Operational Revenue Estimates Table



# APPENDIX A

## PHASE 1: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT APPENDIX

1. Stakeholder Meeting Summaries
2. POLCO Survey Results

### STAKEHOLDER MEETING SUMMARIES

#### Caminatas Domingueras - 5/29/2022

##### Attendees: Approximately 30

Caminatas Domingueras is a Latinx walking club. Members meet at parks in the Twin Cities metro area to walk on weekends. During and after the Miesville Ravine Park Reserve walk participants shared informal input regarding what they like about the park and what improvements they would like to see.

- The morning of the walk there was a severe weather warning. The walk was delayed until the storm passed. Participants sheltered in their cars as there is no shelter in the park. Because there is weak cell service in the park and on-site staff could not track the storm, a Dakota County Parks staff person at Lebanon Hills Regional Park phoned with weather updates.
- This walking group normally likes to walk 5 miles, Miesville only offers two miles of hiking trails.
- The mowed trails were wet, and one family had a child in a stroller. The stroller had to be carried in several places to avoid puddles and muddy conditions.
- Some participants walked down to Trout Brook. The best locations to access the brook were not obvious without a guide. Because of the wet conditions, the steep bank was slippery, and many participants chose not to go down to the brook.

- One participant said that she started walking to improve her health and she has improved her fitness because of regularly attending the walks.
- Many of the participants enjoy taking pictures of each other at scenic overlooks. More photo opportunities at scenic spots would be appreciated.
- The group gathered after the walk for coffee and snacks at the picnic table near the parking lot. Many mentioned that a more formal picnic area by the river and a playground would be great additions.

#### Huellas Latinas - 7/9/2022

##### Attendees: Approximately 30

Luisana Mendez leads Spanish Language Hikes in the Twin Cities. The Miesville hike was attended by families and youth participants in the US Fish and Wildlife Internship program.

- The Miesville hike was not as well attended as hikes in other parks, likely due to driving distance.
- None of the walk participants had been to Miesville Ravine Park Reserve before and were curious to know more about the Cannon River – basic information such as where to put in your canoe or kayak, what the name of the river is, water conditions, distance to the next downstream boat landing are lacking. The morning of



the walk there were many people tubing on the river, but no information in the park about how to participate in that activity.

- Desired improvements mentioned included: better trail wayfinding, better vehicular wayfinding, particularly after leaving the paved roads, improved riverfront picnic area.
- Desired activities: hiking, tubing, kayaking, foraging.

### Outdoor Career Success - 8/26/2022

**Attendees:** approximately 10 youth participating in the Dakota County Parks Outdoor Career Success Program  
Participants had not been to Miesville Ravine Park Reserve but during their weeklong program had visited other Dakota County Parks.

After a brief introduction to the park and planning process, participants identified activities they may like to participate in if they did visit Miesville Ravine Park Reserve. (numbers indicate number of hands in favor of each activity).

- Hiking (2)
- Fishing (7)
- Picnicking (7) – shade and BBQ grills were mentioned as important
- Hanging out in nature (6)
- Canoeing, kayaking, or tubing on the Cannon River (9)
- Snowshoeing (5)

### MnDNR and Cannon Valley Trail Staff Listening Session - 11/7/2022 (teams meeting)

#### Attendees:

Taylor Huinker (Area Hydrologist MnDNR), Scott Roepke (Cannon Valley Trail Manager), Rachel Hintzman (MnDNR Parks and Trails Area Supervisor), Lil Leatham (Principal Planner, Dakota County), Niki Geisler (Parks Director, Dakota County), Grant Fleetwood (Parks Operations Coordinator), Sarah Evenson (HKGi)

#### Connection to the Cannon Valley Trail (CVT)

- Would give trail users another place to go and explore
- Miesville Ravine Park Reserve is a natural park which fits well with the natural character of the Cannon Valley Trail
- This area is mile 6 approximately (halfway between Cannon Falls and Welch), and so a natural stopping location
- Mile 6.1 there used to be an interpretive DNR loop that CVT wants to revitalize and revamp. Updated park plan should note this location. There's a DNR road off Sunset Trail back to 6.1.
  - This would be a good turnaround point for people to

go back to Welch/Cannon Falls

- There is already a turnaround on the eastern half of the CVT and they've been looking for one on this western half
- Right now there's a small bench and kiosk at mile 6.1, but no restroom or water.
- Land between CVT and Miesville Ravine Park Reserve is MnDNR land (State Forest dept and SNA), so there's a possibility of a spur connection to the park
- The CVT master plan mentions connection to Miesville Ravine Park Reserve and it is still of interest
- Existing Cannon Valley Trail use
  - Mainly groomed for cross country skiing. The area near Miesville Ravine Park Reserve is groomed for cross country skiing
  - Some portions plowed for pedestrians
  - Some sections allow fat tire biking
  - Around 100,000 people per year pre COVID-19. Currently there are about 125,000 per year.

#### Cannon River

- Wild and Scenic River (WSR) designation is managed by Bob Storely from the MnDNR- Rachel will provide his contact and follow up with others, including the forester for the Richard J Dorer Memorial Harwood Forest, the MnDNR Area Fishing Supervisor, and Scientific and Natural Area Supervisor.
  - Canoe establishments in the WSR designation require a Conditional Use Permit (CUP). Inner tube establishments are prohibited.
  - The purpose of the WSR is to limit intrusions on the scenic quality of the river, so crossings in any form should be heavily scrutinized. Some things we would be looking for would be that the crossing is placed close to an existing crossing or placed in the most unobtrusive location.
  - If there are any new or reconstructed public roads in the WSR district, the local government must review and approve through a CUP.
- Dakota County and MnDNR have partnered on public water access sites before and would likely be interested in doing so at Miesville Ravine Park Reserve
- State water trails encourage sustainable public access regardless of water level
- More amenities you can provide, the better. Standard amenities include rest area, picnic tables, fire ring, drinking water, waste receptacles. Paddle camping is provided in some places and interpretation would be of interest

#### General Comments

- There are gravel road cyclists on the gravel roads around Miesville. The numbers of riders are not known; group rides and races are also present in the area
- Any work along trout stream needs a permit except for certain bridge designs.
- Scott Roepke lives close to Miesville Ravine Park Reserve.



He forgets about it because it is so remote, but when he goes there, he fishes the trout stream. When fishing, you don't need any built facilities

- Rachel Hintzman has been to Miesville Ravine Park Reserve as ending point kayaking from Cannon Falls. Easy parking access is important as part of any paddle trip.
- Taylor Huinker has biked the CVT from Cannon Falls and agrees it would be to provide a connection to the park from the CVT.

#### Contacts for future follow up

- Cannon River State Water Trail, Sunset Trail Public Water Access Site, public water access partnerships
  - Bob Storlie, PAT Area Supervisor
  - bob.storlie@state.mn.us
  - 507-206-2845
- Richard J. Dorer Memorial Hardwood State Forest
  - Joe Brown, Forestry Area Supervisor
  - joseph.r.brown@state.mn.us
  - 507-522-5062
- Fishing
  - Kevin Stauffer, Area Fisheries Supervisor
  - kevin.stauffer@state.mn.us
  - 651-299-4032
- River Terrace Prairie SNA
  - Kit Elstad-Haveles, Regional SNA Management Supervisor
  - kit.elstad-haveles@state.mn.us
  - 651-259-5763

#### Cannon Falls Canoe and Bike Rental - 11/3/2022 (phone conversation)

Attendees: Lil Leatham, Principal Planner Dakota County and Willie Lacefield, owner of Cannon Falls Canoe and Bike Rental

- Is interested in a boat launch within the park, both loading and pick up would be easier. Is supportive of



Figure 5.8 CVT Mile 6.1

concept in 2005 Miesville Ravine Park Reserve Master Plan

- The current location (on Orlando Trail outside of the park) works pretty well. The bad part is people with their own equipment park off to the side of the road for 2-3 hours. Also, people with their own equipment sometimes take a long time to get in/out of the water
- Requests for restrooms don't typically come up
- Doubtful the County will make any improvements before Willie Lacefield retires
- Cannon Falls Canoe and Bike Rentals does not keep records of how many people they are picking up at Miesville/renting equipment to
- He has 49 Kayaks (10 tandem, 20 six person rafts, and 32 canoes) on summer weekend all boats are in the river. The rafts are by far the most popular
- Would like to discuss concepts in the spring, in person meeting works best
- Is interested in more information about when the new Cannon River boat launch at Lake Byllesby Regional Park will open

#### Cannon Falls Chamber of Commerce - 11/4/2022 (phone conversation)

Attendees: Lil Leatham, Principal Planner Dakota County and Kayle Paulson, Cannon Falls Chamber of Commerce

- Currently the Cannon Falls Chamber of Commerce promotes the Lake Byllesby Campground. It is listed in the Discovery Guide (57,000 are distributed) and the campground brochure is distributed at the Chamber office.
- Dakota County cannot join the Chamber and staff devotes as much time as possible to the 191 paying members.
- The Chamber has been focusing on an advertising campaign which includes: AAA, Minnesota Monthly, MN Trails, Minneapolis St. Paul Magazine, and on-line advertising in the region (Iowa, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Minnesota).
- The Chamber has a billboard with the slogan "Worth the Trip"
- Hiking trails, water sports, and biking are all activities in the region that can draw visitors to the area.
- Chamber of Commerce members may be interested hearing more about potential future plans for Miesville Ravine Park Reserve at their April 18 breakfast meeting. Meeting agendas are planned 6 weeks in advance. Lil and Kayle will touch base at the end of January.



## Dakota County Public Art Citizen Advisory Committee - 11/15/2022

Lil Leatham introduced the Miesville Ravine Park Reserve planning project to the Public Art Citizen Advisory Committee followed by discussion

- The Arts Committee is interested in project updates at milestones during the planning process
- Only one member of the committee has visited the park. The committee member mentioned that part of the park's appeal is that it is rugged and not well known. Keeping it as pristine as possible is desirable.
- Committee members discussed integrating art into park destinations, as part of interpretive features, and integrating art into park signage.

## Resident Phone Interview - 11/22/2022

### General

- Visits the park several times a week
- Has noticed more visitors since COVID. Prior to COVID she used to see 1-2 people on weekdays and more on weekends. Now will see approximately 5 people on weekdays and 15 more on weekends
- On weekends the parking lot fills up. Not everyone is hiking on the trails, some are fishing and some are picnicking
- More people of color are visiting the park, notably Hispanic and Hmong groups. They tend to visit in larger family groups and gather near the sandy areas – like a beach.
- Lake's husband and children are black. One thing that would make the park more welcoming to people of color is to see other people of color in the park. When Lake and her husband are in the park and see other black people, they are often surprised but it increases the comfort level
- In general, the park is safe, but over the years there have been a couple of incidents with suspicious people. Lake walks with her dog who is very protective.

### What do you like about Miesville Ravine Park Reserve?

- Likes that the hiking trails provide access to the Cannon River, Trout Brook, prairie, and forest
- Walks on the maintenance access road to get to the upper terrace prairies
- Likes that this park is left as nature and would not like to see a lot of recreational development, for example a campground in the park
- Likes that the trails are shaded in summer
- Really enjoys that the park doesn't have a lot of visitors and traffic

- Really likes that Dakota County Parks keeps its parks natural

### What would make the park better?

- Would like to see the trail between the river and the eastern prairie re-opened
- Now that the park has more visitors, the trash needs to be emptied more often
- At times she sees dog poop and garbage on the trails
- The trails do not need to be mowed as wide as they are currently being mowed
- The walnut trees on the riverside at the base of the bluff are diseased
- More programs with school and senior groups that combine introducing the park and natural resource stewardship
  - Last summer there was a noticeable decline in butterflies and other pollinators in the park. Working with school groups to raise butterflies and releasing them in the park
  - Birding programs- the park is a great place to see birds, for example hummingbirds and scarlet tanager. Providing information about the right time of year to see certain birds and hosting birding programs
  - Partnership programs with the Mn Deaf School, and inter city schools
  - Offer free swimming lessons at all Dakota County Parks with swimming
- Pave at least one trail with a surface that someone in a wheelchair and seniors can use and experience the park

## Xcel Energy - 11/28/22 Teams Meeting

Attendees: Lil Leatham, Dakota County Principal Planner; Niki Geisler, Dakota County Parks Director; Kurt Chatfield, Dakota County Planning Manager; Kristin Sersland, Xcel Energy Community Relations Manager; Chris Berglund, Xcel Energy

- Power line 711 within Miesville Ravine Park Reserve is a 69KB transmission line and is substantial. It connects to the Welch Substation and may also serve houses in the area.
- Relocating the lines is possible. Dakota County would have to obtain new land rights (the current land rights have been in place since the 1920s), would need to pay for the materials and relocation.
- Relocating the Cannon River crossing would need to go through a MnDNR process, which could be challenging.
- It is possible to bury lines. This is costly and is not typical as it introduces maintenance challenges. It is difficult to locate and fix any breaks in the line. The conduit would need to be designed for cooling. In this area, it would be very difficult to bury the lines.



- It is possible to build roads and parking lots. Typically, buildings would not be allowed under the line easement (likely 50', 25' on each side of the line)
- There are currently no plans to expand, decommission, or otherwise change service in this area.
- Because of the location near the Cannon River this area does require a lot of maintenance. If a new location in the park could be found, Xcel may be interested in moving this line away from the river.
- Chris will follow up with Xcel staff about: where line 711 travels and purpose in the power transmission network; and if the pole design in Miesville could transition to a monopole design.
- Next steps for the planning process are to develop recreation development concepts. Lil will share these with Xcel Energy staff when they completed in Spring 2023.

## Douglas Township Board of Supervisors - 12/5/2022

### Douglas Township Hall

#### Notes

- Appreciate the park's natural areas and natural features.
- Generally, they would like to see a more amenities that benefit area residents.
- Town Board Supervisors asked how the Parks Department is managing the wooded areas and if we are managing to prevent accidental fire. There are a lot of downed trees and if there is an unintentional fire, it could burn and burn beyond the park boundary.
- The springs are beautiful, and it would be great to be able to walk back to them.
- Wild parsnip is prevalent in many areas and should be managed better to prevent spreading.
- Adding interpretation would be very interesting.
- They may be able to help with local contacts who know the early farming history/farm families.
- Camper cabins would be a great addition to the park.
- Would like Dakota County to take on 280th and Orlando Trail as county park roads. The Township spends a lot of money maintaining these roads primarily for park and Cannon River Outfitters.
- Would like more of the park to be accessible. The Clerk used to swim in the river and wade up the creek and does not do this anymore because she can't physically navigate the riverbank entrance.
- Not concerned about the power lines, one Township Supervisor mentioned that seemed like a high cost endeavor and if the County has that kind of money, it should consider giving back to the taxpayers instead.
- Curious how challenging it would be to provide a trail to

the upper bluffs.

- Interested in better Cannon River access within the park boundary.
- 

## Inholding Landowner Meeting - 2/15/22, Zoom

### Attendees

Niki Geisler, Dakota County Parks Director

Lisa West, Senior Project Manager, Environmental Resources

Lil Leatham, Dakota County Principal Planner

Peter Schwamb, park inholding landowner

Linda Schwamb, park inholding landowner

### Summary

- Most of the Schwamb's questions about the planning process and direction were addressed in the research summary. They were impressed with the community outreach and agree with the direction of providing more access to the park while keeping it as natural as possible.
- They are interested in trail development in the far western part of the park and north of Miesville Trail. The creek is a beautiful place to snowshoe, summer hiking is wonderful, and they would appreciate trails. Downed trees and brush make walking in this section of the park difficult. There is a beautiful overlook at the edge of the field just northwest of their property.
- Improving trail accessibility for those who have a disability is also a priority. Some parks have motorized scooters that increase access, that could be an idea for this park.
- Natural resource restoration, invasive species removal, and natural resource management is important. There is oak wilt and a fair amount of dead wood on the north side of their property on a south facing slope.
- The Schwambs suggested staff review the article titled "Freedom to Roam" in the Minnesota Conservation magazine which discusses public access to private land.
- From the Editor: Freedom to Roam | January–February 2023 | Minnesota Conservation Volunteer | Minnesota DNR (state.mn.us)
- Feature: Trail Share | January–February 2023 | Minnesota Conservation Volunteer | Minnesota DNR (state.mn.us)
- The Schwambs are considering building a new home on their property. The County is supportive of this if the Schwambs wish to do it. If they do build new and remove the trailer, it could be an opportunity to remove the minor encroachment on county owned park land. A new home would likely increase the appraised value of the property.
- The Schwambs would like to provide additional input when the plan is more developed. They are interested in advising about potential trail locations and destinations.



## Project Healing Waters - 4/11/2022 Teams Meeting

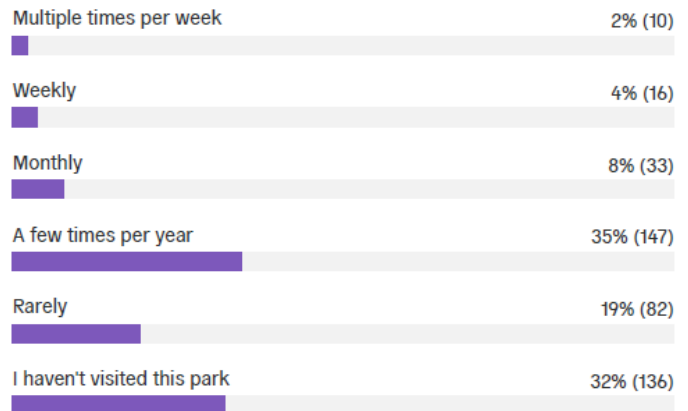
Attendees: Lil Leatham, Dakota County Principal Planner,  
David Winkler, Project Healing Waters

- Facilities needed for shore fishing include basic park facilities such as accessible restrooms and shelter in case of bad weather.
- For fishing, the main thing needed is a flat, clear, stable place on the shore to cast from. All participants have a person helping them, so getting very close to the water is unnecessary.
- Accessible trails to fishing locations are needed.
- Parks are often chosen based on proximity and travel time for participants.

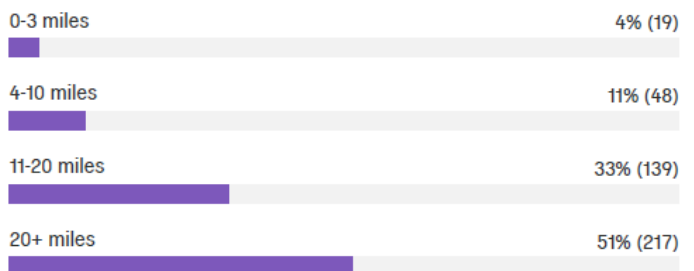
## POLCO SURVEY RESULTS

Miesville Ravine Park Use and Preferences Survey  
September 2022

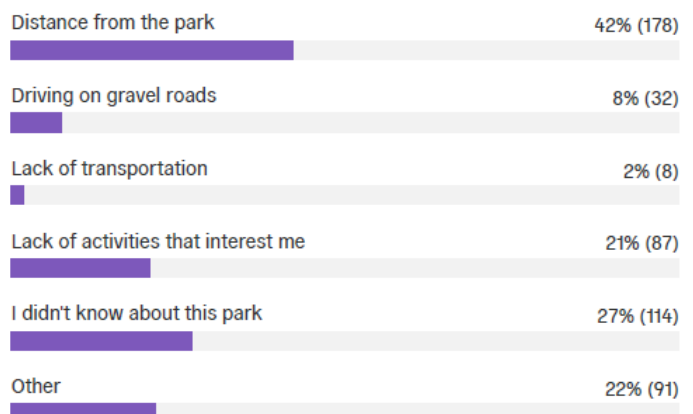
### How often do you visit Miesville Ravine Park Reserve?



### How far do you or would you have to travel to reach Miesville Ravine Park Reserve?



### What prevents you from visiting Miesville Ravine Park Reserve more frequently? (Select all that apply)





**If you answered "other" the the preceding question, please tell us more about reasons you don't visit this park more often.**

We tend to alternate between parks to allow for change of scenery. Love that Miesville has 2 options currently :)

It's far away

We have a young child that can be difficult to convince to go on a hike. It has nothing to do with the facilities.

Lack of time for recreation

Lack of soft surface trails for hiking to the high quality natural resource areas in the park reserve.

We just try to experience as many different places with our toddler as we can. Went once a year prior to 2020, but not since we moved and our son was born.

Newborn

Life is busy and there are lots of places to visit and activities to do. I like to change things up and not visit the same area all of the time too.

We have a lot of good, state, regional and city parks we already visit regularly.

Short & limited walking trails

Not sure what the activities are at the park

I just don't think about going there, although the few times I've been there, I liked the park.

I hike different trails everyday

I use the park mostly during winter (weekly) for snowshoeing. Occasional use in the summer.

Nothing

Work schedule dictates visiting parks closer to hime

Not enough activities, sparse trails, no biking, disc golf

A lot of parks aren't handicap friendly. I use either crutches or wheelchair and I don't like going somewhere and find out I can't do anything. Usually stick to city parks.

Park is dangerous place, too many people with guns.

Disabled veteran in a wheelchair.

Coordinating a trip with other errands in the area, other Dakota Co parks or outdoor experiences are closer to other things I need to do like meet friends or get groceries.

More scenic options closer to home

Other parks are closer

other parks are closer. I need to visit it more often as it is a very neat and inviting area with lots of environmental qualities

This park is often forgotten by my family compared to the other county parks

Visit daily, should not be developed. Keep natural.

Work and other commitments.

N/a

I am an avid mountain bike rider and the trails do not exist here.

I would visit weekly if there were mountain bike trails

Prefer locations that offer quality mountain biking designated trails in addition to other activities such as hiking.

I ride my bicycle for exercise and entertainment. I specifically ride gravel roads to avoid traffic and often ride to parks as a destination. However, bikes are not allowed in Miesville Ravine so I have not ventured that way. If my bike were allowed in the park, I'd go there.

No Mountain Biking Trails

Like to check out other parks

Busy

Busy running kids to activities

Busy with life

Mountain bike trails

Bus traffic from private tubing companies that launch and retrieve their customers at trout brook leave trash, block traffic, and are exceptionally dusty and noisy. This is one of the most beautiful parks I've seen and the buses from the tubing companies prevent myself and many others from visiting more frequently.

The gravel road conditions are unsafe. It seems like the tubing busses from Cannon Falls and Welch really damage the roads and they never get fixed. The dust can be overwhelming at times from bus traffic.

The busses running the tubers are dangerous during the summer. They run frequently and fast. The tubers, traffic, noise and dust really ruin the park experience.

I own a nearby farm so time is split.

Dodging the tubing bus. Very dangerous on the roads that are already subpar

The bus traffic (tubers, etc.) on the road to the park makes it a lot harder/more stressful to access the park. Additionally, the fact that the road is gravel makes me less likely to want to drive my car to get there. I don't want to damage my car, but I am also more cautious driving on a gravel road, especially after rain or snow. I love the park, and I think it's a great place to visit, but the bus traffic combined with the gravel road make me less likely to visit. I come down to the park probably 4-5 times per year, but I could see myself going once or twice a month if the road was paved and the bus traffic was less frequent or if the bus drivers did not drive down the middle of the road. I also want to clarify when I'm referring to "bus traffic," I am not talking about the school buses that pick up and drop off students. I am specifically talking about the tubing companies' buses.

Lots of bus traffic on the gravel roads

The bus traffic from the tubing companies is very intrusive to an otherwise peaceful park. The gravel roads to the park are dangerous to travel when the busses are speeding by loaded with tubers. Additionally the hill descending down toward the parking area is rutted and dangerous.

Bus traffic

Noise and dust from tubing bus is a major deturant from visiting more often.

We use it to either launch kayaks or land, so it depends on the water level of the Cannon river

Life is busy!

A lack of Free time

Too many people allowing their dogs to run off leash



busy farming

Just moved to the area

I live with a couple miles of the park so a few times a year is plenty

For lack of a better place to put this suggestion: I have had problems with GPS access and also cellular access in the past at this park. Frustrating. Ex. 2 cars of friends after hiking at the park wanting to meet someplace for warm food- but don't know the area and no internet to locate a restaurant. Also making plans via phone, needing to let someone know I'm running late, or I would like to stay at the park longer—but no cell coverage!!! Bummer!!!

We only recently discovered this park and loved it so we will return in 2023

Cell phone service is not great, so I don't like to travel there when I am alone.

General time constraints

I love to trout fish and pick agates in the spring!

Not good weather on days off from work.

No RV camping

Horseback Riding is not allowed.

Closer to Lebanon Hills.

Limited trails

Lack of access to Cannon Valley Trail. I am a Cyclist.

The trails do not seem well maintained.

We love to hike but for the drive the amount of hiking is quite minimal. Pleasant but it would be nice if there was more. Also, cell phone reception is dismal so spending any amount of time there can be hard if you can't communicate. It would be nice if there were restrooms on the north side of the road, too.

Pretty full schedule

Don't like the tubers, from Welch, in the area.

Busy on weekends

Time available

Just don't have the time

Because a man has started letting his dog run off-leash and out of sight the past few times I've tried to visit. . I totally understand having your dog off-leash if no one is there, but this has happened multiple times where there are other dogs on leash. As a female that walks alone, the last thing I want to do is have a confrontation in the woods with some guy.

So many parks, so little time

Time

Probably weather if anything

Nothing

We visit a variety of parks.

I'm not as mobile as I once was.....

Time constraints

Limited time the conditions are favorable for fishing

Not enough time

I'm fairly busy and can only get away every once in awhile

Visiting other parks in the state.

Seen more people trout fishing trout brook. Less fish with smaller sizes. I'm a catch and release fly fisherman and I've seen a lot of trout kept. Otherwise the stream is small and beautiful. It's a gem but I believe it may need special regulations to protect it in the future.

Fishing there hasn't been very good lately.

Each time I visit, I need to re-figure out how to get there. I've only visited the area of Trout Brook at the confluence, as I have never known how to get to the north lot.

Trails are rather limited

There's only so much time.

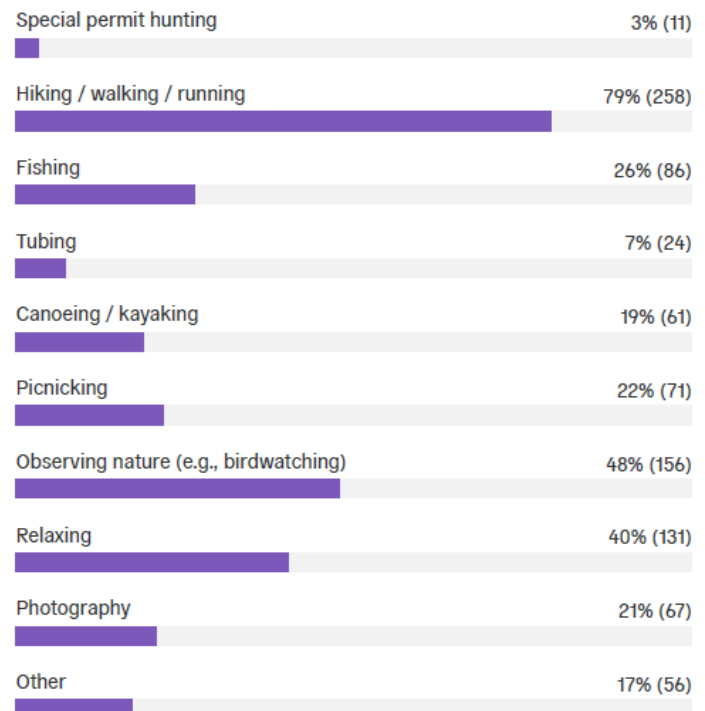
Visit daily

Lack of extra time

### Which seasons do you prefer to visit Miesville Ravine Park reserve? (Select all that apply)



### What activities have you done at Miesville Ravine Park Reserve? (Select all that apply)



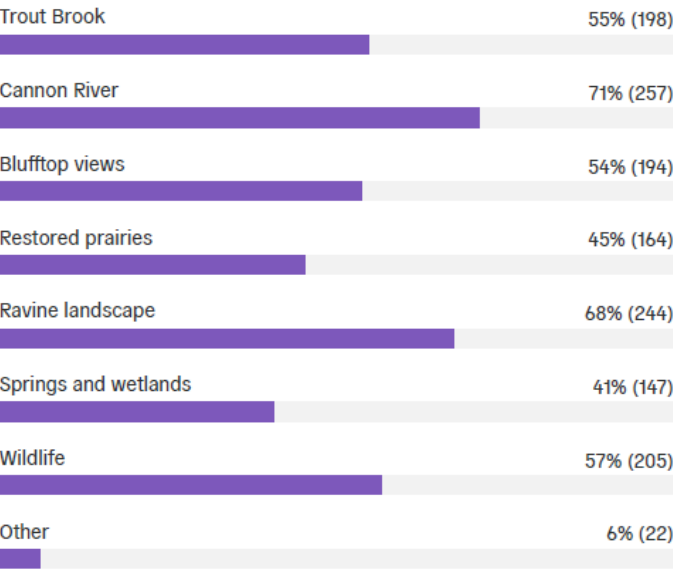


If you answered "other" to the preceding question, please tell us about other activities you do at Miesville Ravine Park Reserve.

- Not applicable. Haven't visited this park.
- Cycling around the park
- ATV thru the area
- Geocaching
- Biking
- None
- None
- None (yet)
- Have not yet visited it
- Snowshoeing
- Snowshoeing
- We love to swim in the cool creek with out kids it's A great place for a kid sized adventure.
- Walk with our dog
- Nothing
- Creek exploring
- None of the above.
- I have not been there
- Biking
- Gravel biking
- Snowshoeing
- OHV trails
- Gathering water cress
- Playing in the water with my kids.
- Trailhead for gravel riding loops.
- I've not been there. But I like to walk on trails in the woods.
- I took my dog for a walk
- Never been here
- None
- Foraging watercress
- Playing/swimming in the streams/river
- Snowshoeing
- I would hike or mountain bike
- Biking
- Snow shoeing
- Mountain biking
- Biking
- Family gathering
- Run my dog
- Haven't been there wasn't an answer.
- Haven't been there. First I've heard about it.

- snowshoeing
- Geocaching
- Snowshoeing
- Camping
- I find lots of agates, banded chert, petrified wood, to name a few, in trout brook. Great place to rockhound!
- We love walking along the Ravine and finding new places to get into the water and play in the sand and searching for rocks. Our dog loves running around in the water and swimming in deeper areas.
- Snow showing. Helping with/learning about archeological digs. Helping with/learning about land/waterway restoration. Learning survival skills, what to do if get lost, cold, hurt, etc. How to help others in these situations. Supporting good resource management.
- N/A
- Camping.
- Geocaching!
- rock hunting
- Snow shoe/ cross country ski
- I have never visited the park, but plan to do so over an upcoming weekend.
- I'm not familiar with this park.....but I would like to know more about it!
- In July, 2022, I caught mooneye fish on a #18 dry fly immediately above the confluence of the Cannon and Trout Brook. Please consider any future footbridge placement with this in mind. I would prefer that any such bridge be placed downstream slightly from the confluence. I find it disruptive to have people watching me from a bridge, as fish (especially trout) spook when people cross or stand on the bridge.
- Swimming

Which natural qualities attract you to the park? (Select all that apply)





**If you answered "other" to the preceding question, please tell us about other natural features or qualities that attract you to this park.**

Lovely gravel road for cycling

The drive to the Ravine is really lovely, and I like the proximity to Cannon Falls so I can stop at Tilion Brewery after I visit the park.

Addition of bison, right?

Fall colors

It's so natural and uncrowded

fall colors, springtime flowers, mushrooms

Hiking Trail, Bird Species Present

Would visit more often if it had an 18-hole disc golf course

NEver been

woodland flowers

Mountain biking is required to attract me to this park.

Rustic

White pines, old growth trees, steep bluffs, morels

I like this park because there are so few maintained trails I like a wild park with very few trails

Seclusion, and the grassy walking paths are amazing

Usually a lot less people

Woods

Nice wide and flat trails that are easy to walk and hike with kids.

Native Minnesota flora and fauna. I'm from north east Ohio and have been in MN 17 months. My first find was Cannon Falls, and Byllesby! I fell in love...

It's mostly untouched - small parking lot, not many people, remote portions still exist, etc

Spring wildflowers

I like to fly fish, so availability of water access and trout.

I'm not familiar with this park.....but I would like to know more about it!

Lots of natural woods

**Are there natural features within the park that you feel need to be protected or restored? Please explain.**

Not applicable. Haven't visited this park.

Likely all of the current features need to be protected. Cannot comment on restoration.

water features

River access,

Keep it natural -- NO pavement, no buildings.

Trout brook and the prairies

Yes! Miesville Ravine Park Reserve has some of the highest quality natural areas in Dakota County. We must preserve and restore, as necessary, these natural areas for current and future residents and visitors to Dakota County.

I like it as is, rather rugged not for everyone so doesn't get crowded

Trout Brook! Please protect it! It is an absolute gem. I fish it frequently and it is just awesome!!!

The trout fishery needs to be improved

More prairie restoration is always nice. And i worry some parts of the bank are prone to additional erosion by being walked on.

I feel that the cannon river watershed needs to be restored and strictly protected so that the water is safe to tube and swim in and is safe for the fish and other creatures that live in it. I feel that the natureal feeling of the park needs to be protected in general and not developed. There are enough crowded developed places to go already. I really hope that camper cabins do not get placed in the reserve. Keep it primitive and natural. That is what makes this place special - the fact that it is not overly developed.

Protect the integrity of the Cannon River. Work with Clean River Partners to ensure that.

I'd like to see more natural-looking benches for people to sit on the trails sometimes. I'm a senior and I like to hike in places that provide a place for me to sit now and then.

all

Protect the water

Trout stream and springs

Remove buckthorn

In general, we need to protect all of our natural areas, especially rivers, wetlands, and prairies--for the physical and psychological health of people, animals, etc. I don't know what areas in the park need to be restored.

Waterways and the vegetation around them

Prairie grasses

Clean water

We love the trout brook

Everything

No

The Trout brook and cannon river should have minimal disturbance

Natural areas are "over improved" by county. Forever Wild is simply a motto not a practice by Dakota County. It should not mean add buildings and pavement.



N/A

The brook!

Creek trails

Quiet and natural surroundings

Garlic mustard removal

More buckthorn and invasive removal.

More buckthorn and invasive removal.

Nothing specific, conservation of natural resources in general should guide planning.

No

The creek is lovely. I know many people, myself included, enjoy scrambling down to be at the water's edge, and I worry that we are harming the waterway. Perhaps a more formal set of access points would prevent people going off-trail.

Please do not add any paved trails. The natural habitat makes the park so lovely.

The praires need to be protected as well as the disturbed woodland. Also all the fields should be restored to their pre-human contact composition i.e .if it was a praire restore it to a praire if it was a forest restore it to the forest it was before humans destroyed the land etc. Also Restore the Bison adn Praire Chicken to this park.

All

Flood prone, so protect the slopes of the hills so they don't wash away. Great wildflowers! Lots of prickly ash.

Buckthorn and Garlic Mustard removal

Garlic mustard needs to be controlled.

1. Water quality needs to be maintained/improved 2. Wildlife (especially nesting birds) need to receive top priority when any improvements are considered, as this park is a magnet for several breeding bird species of greatest conservation need. With loss of bird habitat globally, it's critical to make sure we don't overdevelop the park at the expense of nesting birds.

All natural areas should be protected

Prairies

It would be nice to see less garlic mustard

None

Not sure

No

Areas that birds and other wildlife need to live.

Trout brook has a lot of potential for fishing but the tubers often impede fishing opportunities. Also, trout brook tends to silt in after heavy rains.

The Cannon River is turning into Apple River with too many tubers partying.

It's really great - just the roads and the tubing bus.

I would generally like to see the park preserved and well cared for.

The small stream in the park seems like it could be managed better to make trout habitat

All need to be protected.

Steep slopes

Yes. The whole park needs to be protected.

white pines, a mix of trees and woods - not just oak savanna and prairie

The natural springs Do not mess up the park by putting trails everywhere  
NO Mountain bike or horse trails!!

Trout brook needs to be protected, its one of few streams in the area that are preserved and clean, protected from runoff. An old conservation dam washed out, concerns about erosion. Protect the prairies. Concerns that tubers may get loud and litter. Tubing buses drive too fast through the park.

I like the that the trails are rustic and not groomed in the winter time. I is difficult to enjoy nature when you have to compete with moms on their cell phone as the push double stroller on maintained paths.

Yes, I hope all the natural features will be protected or restored. Native wildflower plantings would be nice.

Natural river course

Springs and stream

Keep the goats going out there! Lots of thorny things for them to eat!

Stream and bank improvement

Native flora and fauna and natural landscapes that mitigate the heavy footsteps of man, such as pollution and consumerism. We need to steward our resources in a way that promote the greatest good for all people's. That will be a way that does not rape the land nor promote economic disparities between people's. Where there is a balance between justice and mercy, peace prevails.

I love the rustic nature of the park. When you are there you feel far away from the city.

The spring, the animals

Don't make the whole park easily accessible! Nature's beauty is more vibrant with less human intrusion.

Love the silence

I defer to the excellent Dakota County natural resources staff to make the right choices

The trout brook! The clear water is beautiful and fun to watch fish and the birds it attracts.

The trout stream. Better maintenance and stocking.

Creeks

Identified cultural resources, shoreline, prairie

Grasslands

Trout Brook access.

wildflowers, watercress

Everything. Keep the natural feel and groom the paths

Some years I worry about how shallow trout brook gets

I don't know enough about the park's ecology to answer, but I'm generally in favor of protecting and restoring natural features.

Seclusion- not "popular "

All natural features need protection from human destruction including but not limited to pollution, chemicals, pavement, cars...

Trout Brook has some wild parsnip and other invasive species in its floodplain. The lower half of Trout Brook has some eroding banks and is difficult to access—it could benefit from a habitat restoration project similar to the one done on the upper part of the stream.

Trout fishing



Trout. They are such an amazing fish but will have trouble with climate change. I only catch and release for that reason. I haven't looked into the regulations at the park but this would be the closest trout fishing opportunity to me.

The riparian corridor is badly invaded by multiple invasive including garlic mustard and buckthorn

Trout Brook, and the trout that inhabit it

Trout Brook - protected

I like that it is not over develop. The brook is a great place for beginner trout fishing and is relatively close to the southern edge of the twin cities. It need to be nurtured

Brook trout

Bank restoration and stream structures to help enhance the fish population and ovent flooding would be wonderful.

Water and stream quality.

Trout Brook for sure

Retaining the clean, healthy water in Trout Brook to promote trout populations. Control the nitrogen levels in Trout Brook to raise the water quality.

Trout Brook needs to be protected.

any Native American historical sites if found. Most of the park is untouched at least in the Ravine and should stay that way. Remove invasives though.

Stream and river

This is a great trout stream! I feel it is critical that we continue to keep this stream vibrant with strong insect and trout populations

Trout & Cannon River

Trout habitat should be protected at all costs.

Protect Trout Brook and extend the restoration

Trout Brook. It would be great to remove a lot of the soil that was likely deposited in the valley many decades ago as a way to return the stream to (or near) its historic floodplain.

I would like the river / creek protected to have healthy fishery. I love to fly fish. This would be an area close to home.

Trout Brook needs to be improved and maintained to support the natural fishery within along with adequate access for users. Keeping RVs out of the streambed and away from the streambanks is also important.

Since trout brook is a beautiful stream containing both brook and brown trout with almost full access, it has increased in fishing activity the last couple years. I worry about the health of the stream declining due to the proximity to the cities and overfishing.

Trout Brook as a trout stream

Stream quality.

I'm not familiar with this park.....but I would like to know more about it!

I'd like to see further stream improvements to improve trout habitat.

Trout habitat improvement, more defined trails

Yes. Please protect some of the undeveloped areas on the west side of park. For example, there is a trail on the west side of the park not too far from the Cannon River Lutheran Church. My family loves hiking that because it feels very remote and like you are in the wilderness.

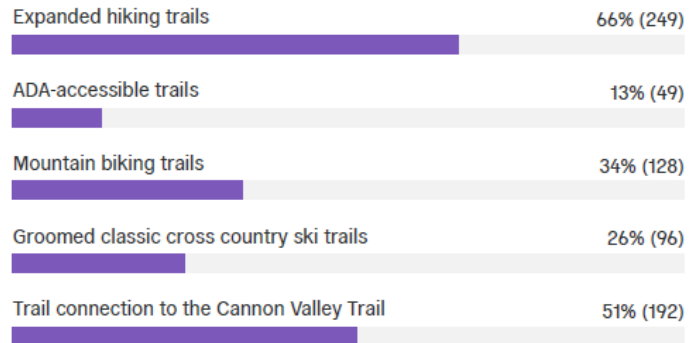
Soil Conservation is most important. I do not want to see erosion of the ravine from the upper bluff edges to the ravines and any where within the

watershed.

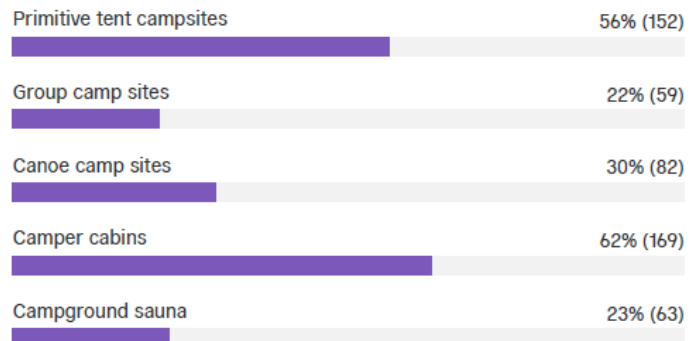
As a "Park Reserve", I would like to see the park retain its natural characteristics without an abundance of development. I would hate to see playgrounds, as a for instance. I think you ruined Spring Lake Park Reserve by adding this type of amenity. I would like a wild park.

I think in general, the park should stay as natural as possible. The park is a gem and all of its diverse and unique habitat should be protected.

### What potential trail experiences would you enjoy at Miesville Ravine Park Reserve? (Select all that apply)

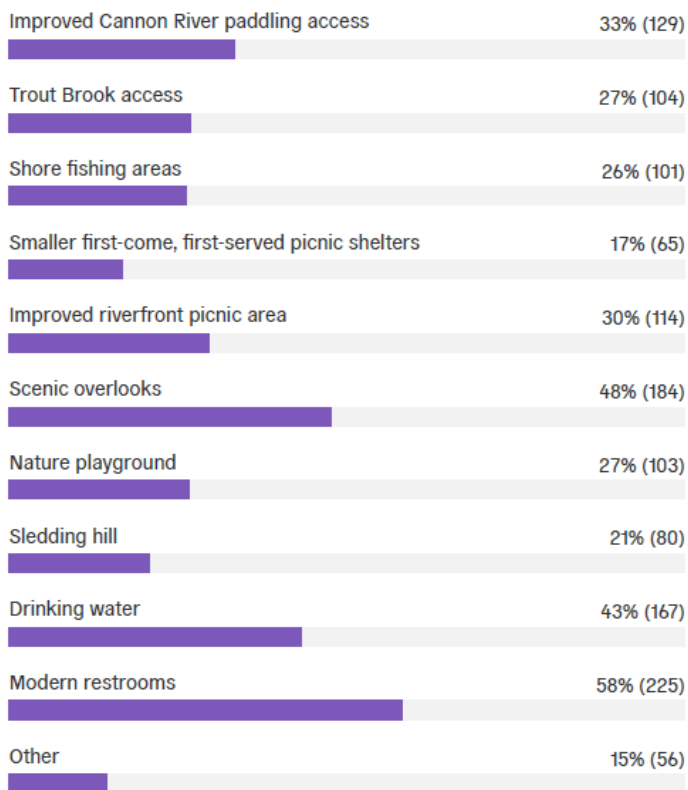


### What potential camping experiences would interest you at Miesville Ravine Park Reserve? (Select all that apply)





**What other potential recreation facilities and amenities would you enjoy at Miesville Ravine Park Reserve? (Select all that apply)**



**If you answered "other" to the preceding question, what kinds of features and amenities would appeal to you?**

Park events

RV camping sites would be great, too.

ATV trails

Snowshoeing trails

More bluff overviews!!!

Signs throughout the park that identify and explain the flora, fauna, and natural features that exist in the park

Better trail signs

Mountain Bike Trails would be very appealing, especially with the lack of nearby trail systems

Too many amenities are being added to county parks. Save our tax money for people not for destroying natural areas with buildings and pavement.

Full hook-up RV campsites

improved biking access & signage from the Cannon Valley Trail

If you added a bird feeder, maybe more bird watchers would come. You could ask for feed donations.

If you added a bird feeder, maybe more bird watchers would come. You could ask for feed donations.

I go there most often to snowshoe. If groomed ski trails were added I would want to make sure that there were dedicated snowshoe trails. Other parks turn all hiking trails into ski trails and then snowshoeing becomes limited.

18-hole disc golf course

Campground with electric hookups

Permanent purposely placed artifacts for children to locate and discover along trails would excite them and be learning tools.

Would be nice to have some benches especially in prairie area on the bluff group picnic area, love the camping ideas. like the primitive experience.

I read the old master plan stating that mountain bike trails cannot be built in a manner that is sustainable. This statement is just old thoughts and not based in actual experience. A mountain bike trail could be built here. If it were built professionally it would sustain better than most of the hiking trails that currently exist. Plus, mountain bike riders enjoy being in nature as much as a hiker does we just use a different means of getting around a park.

Winter fat bike trails

Mountain Biking amenities such as pump/tool station, bike racks, and changing area.

Mountain bike trails with year round biking

Mt Bike skills area

Mountain bike trails

Winter snowshoe and fatbike trails.

Deer archery hunting

I am a bicyclist, and I ride the Cannon Valley Trail about 3-4 times each year. I really love your proposed idea to build a bicycling bridge across the



Cannon River... that would help connect our new Miesville Ravine Reserve park.

Accessible areas.

Paved bike trail

None

Keep the park no overnight camping

Switchbacks up the bluffs

Concerned too much development cause issues to the Park and natural features due to geology and water resources...prefer to see little development and more care towards maintaining the ecological resources. There are plenty of parks in the area to do more aggressive recreation and people need to understand that and enjoy each place with as little impact as possible to those that are more vulnerable.

Hiking Trails that access prairie. Good enough to hike and snow shoe. No bikes. They just tear up trails.

Benches on trails- not just for resting, but also as a quiet place to commune with nature.

camping for trailer campers with electric hookups

Wildlife blinds for viewing endangered pocket beagles

RV PARKING up to 40-45'

We like it wild

Horseback riding trails

A information kiosk or shelter where one can learn more about any/all aspects of that area. Zipline? Rock climbing?

Mix of full hookup and tent sites mirroring that of Lake Byllesby Campground

more hiking trails and trails that connect to each other.

Campground... There are VERY few Campgrounds in this area. I think this is an important consideration.

Campground with electric sites and showers

Please - cross country ski trails!!!

I am handicapped

port o potty

Horse back riding trails

Peace and quiet

improved habitat work to increase brook trout density for angling opportunities

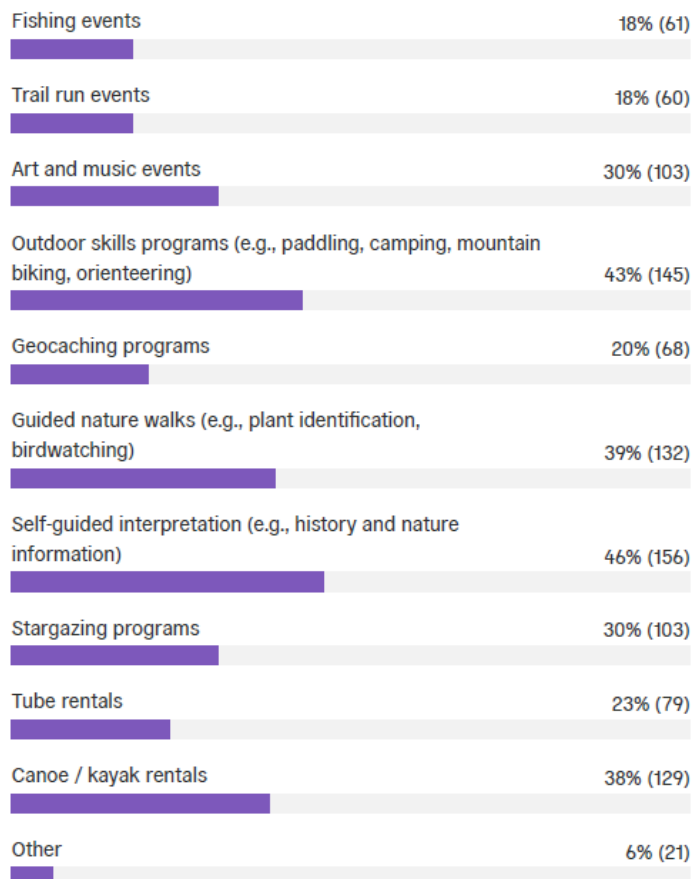
None, keep it the way it is.

Sites for motorhomes - we camp in a motorhome and are always looking for nature sites.

Please connect it to the bike trail. It's very dangerous biking on the gravel roads to access the park.

## What potential events, education programs, and rentals would interest you at Miesville Ravine Park Reserve?

(Select all that apply)





**If you answered "other" to the preceding question, what other types of events, programs, or rentals would interest you at this park?**

Foraging

Stand Up Paddleboard

If there are Native American cultural sites in the park reserve, self-guided interpretation should be considered, as long as supported by Native American representatives.

Native American land use history and natural interpretation; native craft demonstration

County is spending too many dollars on park improvements. Keep it natural!!!

Things for a disabled veteran in a wheelchair could do.

Would like to see signage along trails identifying important plants and trees.

Would like to see signage along trails identifying important plants and trees.

Disc Golf tournaments

i like the park as it is except there could be turkey hunting with a bow during the spring turkey season

A way to get involved in trout fishing. Rental equipment and classes. It's much more of a niche style of fishing than your standard pier fishing at any other park.

None

Mountain bike activities

Mt biking trails. Please.

Mountain biking events, races, classes

Mountain bike races

Canoe and kayak rentals administered by the park may eliminate some of the damage done by the private tubing companies in Welch and Cannon Falls.

Forever wild yes keep this park wild!!

Automatic refunds of any course fees paid for non-attendees when it rains (even a little rain can be prohibitive for some people, even when it isn't enough to cancel the event because some people might still be able to attend).

firewood sales, places to do campfires.

Bird watching

None

Canoe and tube rental is NOT a good idea because there is no transportation back upstream to your car. It would be great to have snowshoe rental/ trails because the Cannon Valley Bike Trail doesn't allow it.

**Do you have additional comments about the future of Miesville Ravine Park Reserve?**

I don't know this park but I may have to go explore it one day

I love the idea of adding more facilities here. Compared to the other Dakota County Parks, I think this one is quite a gem, but it's also very underutilized, possibly due to location, possibly due to facilities and amenities.

Please add mountain bike single track. More parks like Lebanon!

Stop paying - stop spending money on new buildings

Would really love cross country trails in the park!

Control/reduction of invasive species is critical.

I like that it is not over developed

Yes, keep the upper reaches of Trout Brook wild, I mean the section Trout Unlimited helped restore. Do not improve the trails or parking in that area. Leave it be. It gets plenty of use and I fear to much use would destroy the beauty and quality of the fishery!!

I never knew about this park. You definitely want to improve advertising of it.

I love that MN and Dakota County prioritize green space and outdoor activities. While I haven't visited Miesville Ravine Park Reserve, now that it is on my radar I will make the trip! Please keep improving and supporting our lovely county parks. Makes living here all the better.

Expanded hunting and fishing opportunities

I really want to stress that what makes Meisville special to me and my family is how undeveloped and peaceful it is. I don't like the idea of developing this reserve, especially paved trails or any kind of noisy music/art events or any other activities that will draw a lot of crowds. With the crowds and the "easy" access to everything, will come the increase in dogs and they will run all over natural areas and ruin everything and hikers will have to step in the dog feces that their owners didn't pick up. There are plenty of developed natural areas for Dakota County residents to go to with or without dogs that offer easy access to everything. There should be places that are for people that enjoy a quiet outdoor experience that isn't "easy", something that you don't just drive up to and enage in without any physical effort, but a peaceful and potentially physically challenging interaction with nature. More and more, spaces like Miesville are being destroyed by development and overuse without considering that there are many people that would like to recreate in under developed areas. Please keep this area wild, not just for me, but for nature itself. We have hurt her enough and I want something left in tact for the children of this world. Please make the main focus of this plan on cleaning up the cannon river watershed and restoring and protecting the area, not developing it. If you must develop, please keep the focus on keeping it ultra natural and consider offering recreation that is active people, not just onlookers. My above opinions do not apply to people with disabilities that require a wheelchair or walker. I think that off road wheelchairs and walkers should be available to rent or check out for people with disabilites, so they too can experience the benefits that a peaceful and quiet reserve such as the rare gem that Miesveille can offer.

Preserve the river!

I'm pretty strongly opposed to increasing mountain biking as well as motorized uses. I'd like to see the quiet, fishing-and-nature feeling of the reserve preserved.



I didn't know about this park, but I'm happy to check it out now! Will definitely keep an eye out for future camping, hiking, biking and snow-shoeing opportunities. Nature playground and anything kid-friendly makes it an even bigger bonus - thanks!

We love this park and are excited to see the work being done, especially on upper bluff. We would love to see more about the history of the park. Farmsteads and hatchery.

Thank you for keeping this park so natural and beautiful.

I like the low key quiet atmosphere of this park. I'd like to see it stay that way!

We love miesville it is a hidden gem

The trout are tiny. As with other sothern mn streams, why cant we have the same wonderful stocking and easments they have in Iowa? Its great fun amd attracts tourism to rural areas, would think it basically pays for itself when done as well as IA does it.

Save our natural areas and stop all developments that destroy the land.

Never been to the park, but would love to go. Just need transportation to and from home.

no

no

I like this park as is and think it's nice to go to a place that doesn't have all the proposed developed recreation items you've listed in other questions. Perhaps, since this park doesn't already have significant recreation development (and there are choices within your system already with these things), Miesville ravine is the park to focus on funding that benefits nature. Put the money you'd put into all the listed options into protecting habitat, removing invasives, etc.

Could identify scenic drive from ravine to Cannon Falls on both side of river.

Could identify scenic drive from ravine to Cannon Falls on both side of river.

I would really appreciate the opportunity to camp, even if it was only dispersed camping.

As a Professional Disc Golf Course Designer who has designed several of the popular disc golf courses in Dakota County cities and suburbs, our county has yet to install a course on county property to help support this fast growing individual recreational activity. A 20-30 acre mostly wooded area would be sufficient for a relatively low maintenance course suitable for all ages and skill levels, especially the demographic that plays pickleball. As IGH mayor in 1990, Joe Atkins helped us plant trees on Arbor Day in the new North Valley disc golf course that are still thriving today.

This park is a special place. Please consider development very carefully. This should be Dakota County's "wilderness" park. Other parks have been heavily developed. This is understandable, but there should be at least one park that remains rural and wild if possible. I can see great potential for an expanded well-designed natural surface trail system as well as backpacking sites. This is also one of the closest locations to the Twin Cities core with great gravel biking loops on surrounding roads. Please consider this amenity when evaluating further paving. Scenic gravel roads should be viewed as an asset in our fast-developing region.

have spring turkey hunting with a bow.

I did not know about it so getting the word out about what the park offers to Northfield residents would be a plus

Will do my best to get there this fall to check it out!

I havent checked it out yet, but definitely will be!

Thank you for asking!!

Let's keep it natural. Lakeville gets so many compliments on rustic Antler Park, but the city passed a levy to completely citify it with a concrete fountain, more paved parking, grass field for t-ball will be gone, and possibly add restaurants. Yuck.

Please keep this park wild. We don't need any more "Disney" parks.

Please bring the Bison and Praire Chickens to Miesville Ravine Park Reserve. Also pave the roads that go through the park.

If this could be updated to be a mini whitetail park, that would be great. A mix of paved and unpaved trails ends up getting the most use.

This park is beautiful just the way it is it's quiet people that enjoy the outdoors come to it it's not full of trash you don't have to worry about parking it's just a safe place it should stay that way

just love this park. and he roads that get you there are awesome.

Add more miles of trails with better views. Would be nice to better use the river. I like the camping ideas--add rustic cabins here!

I love this park and am excited that there may be additional trails there.

Please do not destroy the natural areas or install paved paths. This happened in whitetail woods and was devastating. The amount of trees and earth moved was difficult to see. Leave Meiseville as natural as possible. It's the main reason I always go there. Nice restrooms and park shelters are unnecessary. Not only is it expensive, it creates the need for more upkeep. Let people enjoy the space as natural as possible. Anything man made harms the environment and takes away from the natural vibe at the park.

I believe that the option of mountain bike riding in this park should be kept open as an option if not adopted in this master plan. The following reasons are reasons that this should be an inclusion into the master plan. The metro is growing into the direction of Miesville park, Dakota County population is growing and the demand for all activities is increasing and the explosive growth of the Minnesota High School League Mountain Bike Association has created a significant increase in the number of new riders amongst junior high and high school aged children. In 2021 the number of school children riding in this league was approaching 2,000 riders.

I've been to many mountain bike trails in the metro and have seen how well they are made and how many people come to enjoy them. I think Miesville would benefit greatly from a mountain bike trail.

Silent sports such as mountain biking would be an incredible improvement!

Build a super fun single track Mt biking trail. At least 20 miles. If it's fun people will come from all over to ride it. Thanks.

Baffled why one would create beautiful new classic ski trails and exclude skate skiing. The furniture is not classic. Skate skiing is completely overlooked in Dakota County save for Lebanon West Trailhead which needs work to correct off camber steep downhill turns - rather dangerous. Us skate folks have to leave our beloved Dakota parks and drive to Hennepin County to skate. The county is missing a big opportunity to create something, somewhere like Hyland. Also, please include mountain bike trails. No activity adds more users to a park, and users that take good care of the resource. Thanks for "listening" Gary

Mountain biking is a growing sport and it would be great to have at the park reserve.

Mountain biking is a fast-growing sport, and the growth of the Hastings Mountain Bike team is proof that this sport gets kids outside, on bikes, and enjoying nature while improving their bodies and minds. The economic



impact of added MTB friendly trails has been proven in nearby communities such as River Falls, Prescott (Kinnickinnic), Woodbury (Carver), Inver Grove Heights (Salem Hills), Red Wing (Memorial) and numerous other MN/WI communities. It has also been proven that trails can be easily and safely shared by both hikers and bikers, which is often a perceived barrier to this concept. Adding MTB use/trails to Miesville Ravine Park Reserve would add resources and options to an underserved local youth community, while adding a positive economic impact to the area. Please consider adding mountain bike trails to the Miesville Ravine Park Reserve!

Mountain biking, mountain biking, mountain biking! Lebanon Hills has a fantastic trail network and it would be great to recreate that on a smaller scale at Miesville Ravine as there are far fewer riding options in this area.

Mtn biking is huge in MN - look at Lebanon park in Eagan as an example. Having a professionally built trail would complement the terrain of the park.

It would be great to offer mountain biking in southeastern Dakota County with bluffs and ravines. It would bring riders and revenue to Dakota County as well as to Cannon Falls.

Mt Biking is the fastest growing outdoor activity, all members of family can participate all year round (Fat Bike winter), look at how much use Lebanon Hills gets, drives economic activity and use of resources.

We have a small local MTB composite team. We would love to see trails created for the crowning sport of mountain biking. Many of the clubs find ways to volunteer to groom trails and keep them usable.

I love that the park is on a gravel road. It is one of my favorite stops when I "gravel" ride my bike through the area. I would actually use the park less if the road to it was paved, as I mainly come by bike. If mountain bike trails were added or access to the Cannon trail was added I would use it much more often. If some form of camping would be created I would suggest sites that are bikepacking friendly. Bike packers don't need much. Primitive sites with access to water and a clean bathroom/shower is all. Maybe dedicated hammock posts for those that prefer hammocks over traditional tents and a simple bike repair station (like those found at mountain bike trailheads) This type of camping would also draw hikers and others looking a night to appreciate the natural beauty of the park. This park is ideally situated in a beautiful valley along fun gravel roads that are only a one day bike ride from the Twin Cities as well as several other larger southern towns making it a perfect stopping point for bikepacking. Finally, tapping into the biking community has the potential for a lot of volunteer help.

Would love horseback riding trails

Please keep the park as rustic as possible.

I think mountain bike trails would be a great addition to the park. The landscape would allow for this and very little interference with other activities. It has such a vast area for trails which would allow unique and beautiful ways to allow access to other areas of the park that are not currently accessible.

Major improvements must be made to the gravel roads to the park. The local townships overlook the exceptionally poor quality of the roads and its becoming a major safety concern. Obviously, the biggest contributor of road damage is the private tubing companies that are constantly running their buses back and forth. In addition to the road damage caused by the tubing companies, they present a traffic risk to park visitors and disturb the peace of the park.

This is an incredible park. The gravel roads are a major deterrent for increased usage and overall enjoyment. The roads must be paved.

Don't turn it into a party campground and drunken tubing River. Please!

Road conditions are pretty bad. Improved surfacing or more regular road maintenance would improve experience. Also the about of bus traffic from the tubing companies certainly takes away from the experience of visiting the park.

The narrow gravel roads are very dangerous with the tubing bus traffic.

Will have to visit it. I really enjoy Lebanon Hills trails.

I'd like to see critters such as American Bison with a fenced in area; could critters that once occupied this terrain such as rattle snakes be introduced?

Please keep this park natural. I have seen what Dakota County likes to do with their parks. They like to pave everything, plant non-native turf grass everywhere, and ruin the whole point. Nature. There are plenty of parks like that in the county.

less development, less access, this is a great natural park reserve, keep it reserved and undeveloped.....please note in presentation and reporting of survey results that this survey was a "push" survey that serves to direct answers from survey takers....for example, question 11 does not have an option for "rough fisherman trails" or "rough deer trails" or "existing rough minimum maintenance trails"....question 12 does not have an option for "no camping"....question 13 does not have an option "no new recreation necessary"....question 15 does not have an option for "I would prefer no structured programs or rentals at this park due to it's unique nature".... question 8 does not include "white pines" as a feature....a bridge connecting the uniquely wild areas on both sides of the Cannon detracts from both....

Keep this park wild!!

The park should just stay quiet with quiet people and functions (if any) we don't live out here to be in a ruckus of campers or parties. Nature nature nature, enjoy it and then leave it alone. We are on the Dakota county/Goodhue County line

PLEASE, make sure to consider how vulnerable this place is ecologically. It only takes a large rain event in the area to cause damage to the streams and bluffs of the park...do not make it worse by trying to provide more recreation.

Enough parks property is dedicated to the casual visitors. If you want to truly enjoy the outdoors and nature, having trails that are clear but not widened, paved and made for strollers is what I want for this park.

Mountain biking would be AMAZING there!! Please add trails.

We love Miesville Ravine because it tends to be a quieter park. I hope a way will be found to preserve the quieter/contemplative opportunities of a visit, even as you may open it to a wider group of visitors. (Ex. denser planting of trees/shrubs or something as noise barriers around the river landing, picnic area and other noisier areas- playground, restrooms, etc), keeping them separated from trails, or other quieter locations.

Keep the the remoteness / rustic feeling of the park.

I just love this place so much and look forward to visiting every spring.

This has turned into my favorite place to go and spend time that's close to home. I love spending time along the north shore searching for rocks and spending time with my feet in the water and Miesville Ravine Park is now my favorite place to do those exact things closer to home.

Byllesby and Lebanon Hills have some of the nicest RV camping in the metro, and would love another option in Dakota county. In 2022 we camped 5 weekends at Dakota county campgrounds. Will likely do even more in 2023

Leave a lot of it "wild"



## Horseback riding trails

I've been looking for a developing place like this. I grew up on a farm in the Cuyahoga National Park prior to it becoming a park. Now the paths that were set through the woods by my uncle's cattle and my pony are some of the formal horse trails. Prior to that it was part of the Connecticut Western Reserve and included active Native American hunting and burial grounds. There is even evidence of prehistoric hunting and tools. A lot to learn about, and from. It was my home. I miss it. My mom now lives in Dakota county, but I found an apartment in Anoka county.

A gem. Thank you

I hope that any updates and modernization don't take away from the rustic charm the park currently has.

More hunting opportunities!

Don't turn this park into Lebanon!

The biggest hurdle to people using this park are the gravel roads to get there. If you want the metro population to use that park, the paving of the road is mandatory. Also, the park is very kid non-friendly. No play equipment to speak of and the trails are rough with large bumps that pose a tripping hazard to young children. There are trails that are not even maintained (like literally overgrown by weeds). People are not expecting a Lebanon Hills experience way out in the sticks like this place is, but there should be a minimum amount of upkeep and features to get people excited to visit.

Keep it as natural as possible!

Keep it rural, keep it primitive meaning no motorized activities. Camper cabins, perhaps primitive camping, more trails, but it's value is its state of naturalness. A birding, fishing destination. Minimize the attraction for party-ers (both off the river and coming by on their 4 wheelers) to hang out or litter. The canoe rental place and tubing place use the parking lot entrances to turn around their busses. I get it, but it's a bit of a congestion issue with people just coming to the park to enjoy it. During the summer they are turning around in these entrances multiple times per hour.

Welch rentals ruin the area.

Please do not make it a camp ground we have enough of those. Also, please leave the park open to hunting during special seasons as well.

very nice

The park currently isn't too busy. Please don't turn this hidden jewel into a metro park.

Love this park, thanks for investing!

We love MRP for the nature. Don't make it too commercialized

I've loved this park whenever I've gone to it. I wish more people knew about it, but I also love that it feels like a hidden gem near my hometown.

As a resident of the area- nobody wants it to be "popular" but enjoyable.

I hope it remains as pure and natural as possible

I'm concerned how increased traffic will damage township roads

Trout fishing is a rare opportunity in MN, much less the metro. The trout should be protected from all possible hazards, including excess fishing.

I am a member of TCTU and lead the streamkeeper team that is monitoring water quality on Trout Brook, so we have a special interest in what happens with the area.

Now that I know about it, being a Dakota Cty resident, I would be for preserving it as much as possible and making it a fine fly fishing, catch and release, destination.

Why can't it just be left alone. I enjoy the fact that the area along trout brook is pretty much untouched by man. Let nature run its course. You can't improve it by human involvement.

It has a first class stream that should be protected and ensured that brook trout have good habitat to increase numbers

Would like to see improved Trout Brook trout fishing opportunities

Keep it simple. The beauty of the park as it is is its relative simple unimproved state. It's mostly just nature as it should be.

I love the park, really hope it gets preserved as needed to keep the small natural valley along trout brook healthy.

Trout Brook is a trout fishing gem. The improvements in the north end in recent years have been an outstanding success. Thanks, Dakota Co.!

I would like to know more about this park (so advertising would be good). I enjoy Lake Byllesby's motorhome sites and a paved trail for bicycle riding. Are those features at Miesville Ravine Park Reserve?

I love the park's remoteness and deeply love the level to which it has remained undeveloped. Each time I visit, I need to re-figure out how to get there. I've only visited the area of Trout Brook at the confluence, as I have never known how to get to the north lot. I will be going there today. After reading the 2005 master plan completely, I want to visit more than ever. I'm an avid trout fisherman and a Trout Unlimited member. This park seems perfect for me. I prefer to be "in" nature as opposed to "near" or "around" nature. Please keep this park from becoming another Lebanon Hills or Schaar's Bluff. I love those parks, but for me they serve a different purpose. Miesville Ravine is a calming place for me, a place where I can find quite stillness no longer available in most Dakota County parks.

Try to keep it wild

I do not want the development of mountain biking trails at all. I am sure the sandy soils would not hold up to this activity. Cross Biking events could be promoted on gravel and tar roads that would draw just as many visitors and avoid the potential of soil erosion. Protect the soils and water quality!

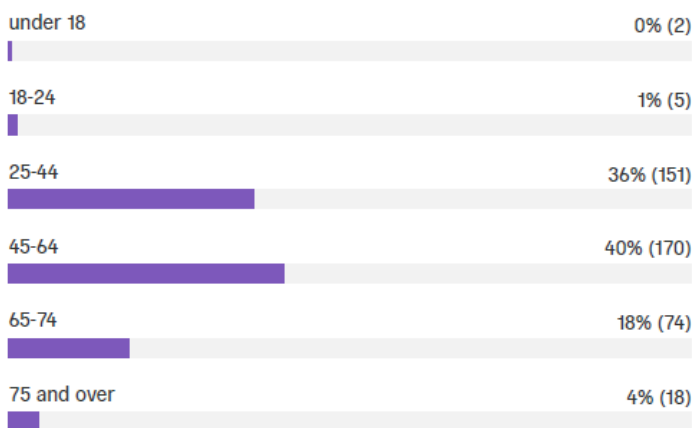
Please strive to keep this park as natural as possible. People who want to pull campers and run generators already have plenty of places to go. Those of us in the metro who want a place where they can truly escape and be in nature have very few choices so close to home.

I like keeping it quiet and less disturbed

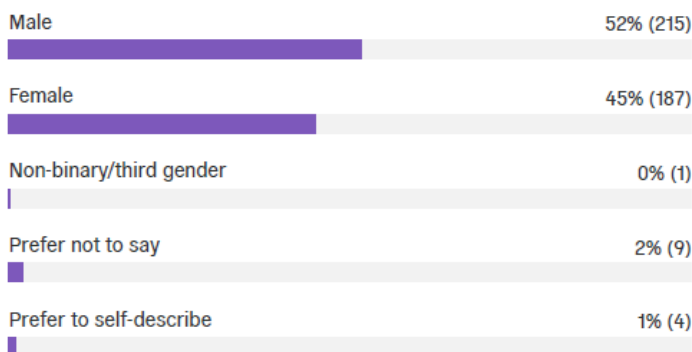
The gravel roads to the park can be dangerous and congested with the tubing busses!! Especially at the tubing launch area. Please add a canoe/tube launch with easy access to the parking lot, separate from bus launch area. Please keep it rustic, not commercialized, and preserve nature:)



### My age is:



### I identify as:

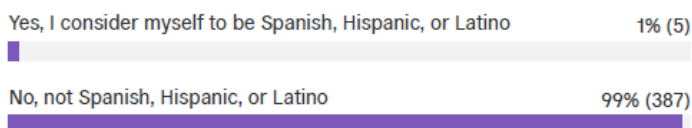


### If you responded that you prefer to self-describe, please do so here

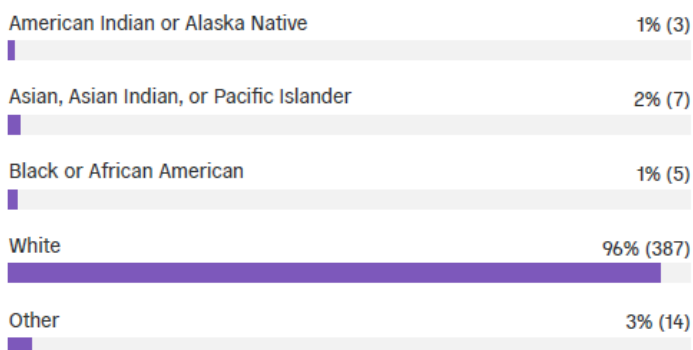
Why the \*\*\*\* are you asking for my gender? What difference does it make if someone is a homosexual, heterosexual, or mentally ill on a park design?

Two spirit  
gender non-conforming queer female  
sigh  
Demigirl  
Please get back to just male or female. and sh\*tcan the 'identify' baloney.  
My god. This is so pathetic... And how did you get away with not using 'LatinX' below!? ;)

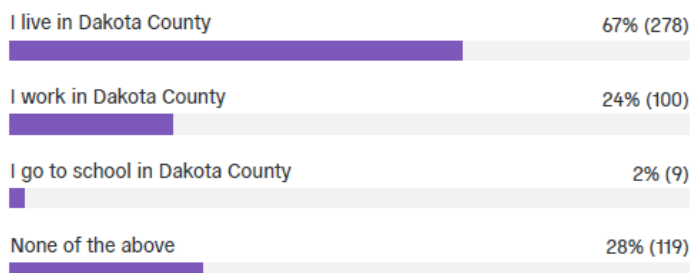
### Are you Spanish, Hispanic, or Latino?



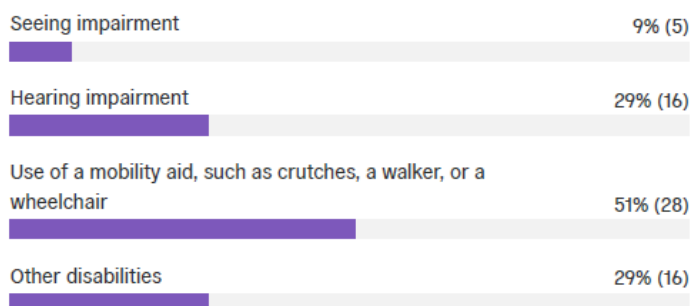
### What is your race? (Select all that apply)



### Which describes you? (Select all that apply)



### Do you or someone in your household have disabilities that we should consider as we plan for Miesville Ravine Park Reserve? (Select all that apply)





## What types of things should we consider in the Miesville Ravine Park plan that would help people with disabilities enjoy visiting the park?

Just because something is ADA compliant/accessible doesn't mean it necessarily is truly enjoyable or accessible for people with disabilities -- it's a low bar. While I don't have a disability myself, I've learned that ADA is a low bar from people who do. I would make sure to gain specific input from people who do have disabilities and are familiar with this specific park. That being said, I really like that this question is listed on this survey!

trails and hikes with sound assistance headphones

Life is not fair. Don't pave the wilderness to appease less than 0.0001%

ADA Trails; ADA playground area; Benches for fishing, scenic overview; Pictorial identification for plants/wildlife

I support ADA accessible trails as long as no pavement is introduced into the park reserve. By necessity, this would be limited to relatively flat areas. Potentially consider wheelchairs capable of taking disabled visitors on steeper natural surface trails. These could be provided by the county for special events at the park reserve.

People with Sensory Issues need areas to relax and enjoy

Access to restrooms, outhouses, or porta potties at locations on the trail far from other restrooms.

Accessible playground equipment and trails seem lovely. Sensory experiences for those who thrive with them, too.

Consider making off road wheel chairs and/or walkers available for rent or to check out for people with disabilities so they can experience nature off trail.

benches, railings, especially on steep sections of trail. Consider hard surfaces for trails (with appropriate runoff control) which can also help with erosion minimization.

I would like to see more places to sit at times while hiking the trails. I have trouble walking more than a half mile w/o sitting as a senior.

Accessible asphalt trails and scenic overlook spots.

Wide trails

A playground with rubber turf and other inclusive equipment. Paths that are accessible.

Accessible walkways and bathrooms

Special hunting access

Barrier free trails

Make sure there are ramps in addition to the stairs.

Access to nature, where ppl can get away from the main park area and feel like they are really in nature.

Wheelchair or other accessibility, signs printed large enough for vision impaired people

Groomed trails

benches to sit on along the trails

A nature play area should be accessible to kids of all abilities - we love Thompson Park and Kaposia Landing and wish there were more facilities like them.

modern Restrooms paved trails or at least smooth. Playgrounds that I can take my grandson to and walk with him and not be worried about my crutches dropping in big holes.

Trail cams that can be accessed online.

Transportation to and from park being it is 36 miles one way to travel from my home. I am a disabled veteran who can't power scooter 36 miles one way. I would love to visit the park one day before I meet my maker as I am a senior.

I like the idea of expanded trails (for hiking and to connect to the bike trail), and also options for spending the night. Thanks for having so many great parks in Dakota County, we have two elementary-aged kids and our family loves the parks...we appreciate a free, fun, and healthy way to get out and explore!

Electric scooter and paved trails

Captions available for hard of hearing participants at guided events

It's wonderful that it isn't crowded. I hope whatever you do doesn't lead to still more drunken tubers on the river in the summer, or to pollution of Trout Brook.

ADA approved access to disc golf course

Videos of features in use by members of that community.

NA

Some paved trails for wheelchair accessibility.

Some paved trail.

Trails without loose ricks and humpy roots!! I'm getting to the point that my balance is not as good as it once was!!

Send them to King's Park instead.

I appreciate benches periodically placed along trails to rest. Ones placed with a view are even better.

There are plenty of park set up for disabled folks this one should stay natural

Treat the river access carefully. Better access makes it easier for my ADD/ADHD child and other autism spectrum disabilities to fall in.

Some paved trails - maybe the mile of trails on the Cannon River side. We saw a father assisting his young adult son in a motorized wheelchair on those trails, and it was extremely difficult for both of them. ADA-compliant toilet facilities would also be useful for people with disabilities. Access to running water seems particularly important.

Adaptive mountain bike trails. Not many adaptive options exist in the metro so it would be great to have more options for disabled riders.

Have a webpage on information where they could rent special handicap equipment to easily access trails etc.

Handicapped accessible bathrooms and facilities, including parking

Adaptive multi use trails would be great.

Groomed trails

Groomed trails

Boardwalks for wheelchair use in picnic areas. Use of solid, hard rubber material around park areas instead of pea rock or mulch.

I would like to see paved trails wide enough for electric scooters/wheelchairs to use

Accessible paths to scenic areas.

Modernize and improve the shelter and picnic area but do not expand it



Handicap accessible bathroom(s) wheelchair accessible picnic table(s), a wider paved trail, perhaps with large-print labels of trees and plants. Class in bird identification by their calls.

Consider direct river and stream access, e.g. fishing and water contact.

Paved trail

Paved trails, accessible ramps for fishing, boating access.

Ensure the bridge is wheelchair accessible.

My son has crebral palsy...places to sit down along the trails would be great. Handrails too.

Wheel chair trail access non paved

People who are disabled can feel more vulnerable than others in a new environment. I try to imagine what it would be like to get out of my car there with my eyes covered, my hearing blocked, and be handed a walker to use and be told, "Come enjoy this nature!" Paths that a wheelchair or walker can usually safely go on would be very calming. The whole reserve wouldn't have to be that way. Also handicap parking close to shelter or picnic benches. Picnic area/shelters accessible by wheelchairs and walkers. If there are to be speakers/events, then some hearing aids are equipped to be turned on to the microphone system (sorry, can't remember what it's called). Paths should be very well and sturdily marked, and also in Braille, as to which path one is on (so that one may find it on the map), as well as know how to get back to car/shelter. Have emergency phone number/access system at least centrally posted. Wheelchair accessible bathrooms. Bathrooms and shelters that are sturdy enough built as to provide shelter if storm/hail/lightening/wind rolls in. Having sturdy buildings will help people feel safer in ravine country with no cell service knowing that MN weather is sometimes unpredictable! I am mobility impaired, and my mom is mobility, sight, and hearing impaired.

hiking trails

Connection to Cannon Valley Trail. Accessible areas and bathrooms

Benches for resting for people with long-covid

Leveled trails, perhaps more boardwalk. Modern restrooms with accessible stall. An accessible deck to overlook river and perhaps sit. Fishing platform on north side of road.

Fishing Deck.

IDK

Some paved trails. Benches along the trails. Drinking king water

Clear, large print signage, especially for way finding.

Parking close to the trailheads.

Protect the trout and spring water.

Access to water.

Please consider these comments in light of the that I am 75 and I show signs of it.... Not every park needs lots of disability access. Leave some of them wilder and more challenging. Sometimes disability access backfires. for example, the blacktop trail at Scharr's Bluff is great for disabled people, but that feature also allows fat-assed fools on electric powered incumbent bikes (which should be banned as motorized vehicles in the first place) to roar along, scare people, and take up much of the trail width. Have you ever hiked Eagle Mountain trail? Would you want it "Improved" with disability access?? Thanks for considering this.

Handicap access would enhance the area

More frequent benches on walking trails.

Having a location with handicap accessible trout fishing would be amazing.

Flat paved section. Everyone should be able to enjoy some part of nature.

Accessible ramp, bathrooms, designated parking spot

Informational plaques or signs at points of interest.

A handicapped fishing area around the southern parking area would be a cool idea. Also if bank slanting was improved from the road downstream that may be kind of neat.

Not sure.

Locations for a motorhome or hard-sided trailer for camping, accessible bathroom/showers, and some paved trails for walking.

1. On paths, periodically provide enough space to allow caregivers and those with disabilities to be side-by-side. 2. Consider a small-scale, discreet, electrically-powered (solar?) transportation apparatus safely transporting those with disabilities between the high meadow trail and lower trail. This may be pie in the sky, but helpful.

Better access for persons with disabilities to go fishing would be a good thing.

Keep things close, so you don't have to walk very far.



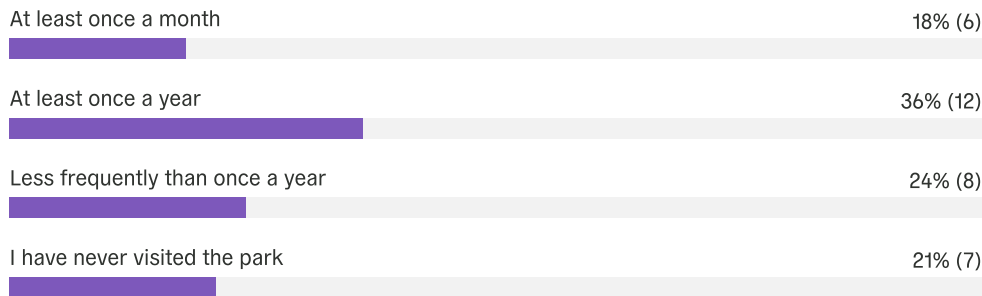
# PHASE 2: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT APPENDIX

- 1. POLCO Survey Results
- 2. Stakeholder Meeting Summaries
- 3. Konveio Comments

## POLCO SURVEY RESULTS

Draft Miesville Ravine Park Reserve Long-Range Plan and Natural Resources Management Plan  
December 2023

### How often do you visit Miesville Ravine Park Reserve?



### What do you like about the Draft Long-range plan?

- I like the addition of new trailheads and am intrigued by rustic campsites
- More trails
- The emphasis on natural resource restoration and providing better access to the north and west parts of the park.
- I like the bridge that goes over the Cannon Valley River
- Your goal of stewardship and natural areas.
- It's a beautiful area I'd love to see mountain biking trails expanded in the area
- Development for more personal and family activities. Excited to see what kind of overlooks are available to overlook the valley.
- Lots of access points, tie in with the cannon valley trail
- Like the notes about potential mountain biking path
- it improves access without adversely impacting the park
- It looks to preserve and improve an absolute gem of a property that highlights a very special geology and habitat that's accessible to many due to the proximity to urban areas.
- seems to be a nice plan over all but my family of 5 love to mountain bike and would love trails there to ride!
- The connection to the Cannon Valley trails system.
- N/A
- the desire for improvement of the eco system as well as enhancement of the park experience
- The expansion of natural surface trails
- It seems to make a lot of improvements without negatively affecting the stream.



Use of dark-sky lighting principles; The cultural review of the area seemed thorough (as a White person); I strongly encourage Dakota County to make good on its statements saying it's developing working relationships with local tribes -- they have a right to co-manage this land and I hope we continue offering that opportunity in an open, honest, and respectful manner; Tenting-only camping (if mountain biking is too high-impact, RV camping is definitely too-high impact); Thoughtfully expanded hiking trails with viewpoints and benches to encourage use and make them accessible to people who need more frequent breaks.

I didn't read it.

As a neighborhood resident, the only thing I appreciate about this plan is removal of buckthorn and maintaining prairie grass areas.

Preserves the ecosystem and water resources also happy with the accessibility part, since I don't walk so well anymore

I like the increased access points, more trails that are easier to find with better way finding. I also really like the long range plan to hook up with the Cannon Valley Trail as we use that frequently.

Land stewardship and Indigenous people's involvement, engagement and follow their advise

Nothing, making it to accessible

Increased accessibility to various parts of the park.

### **Are there any changes to Draft Long-range Plan that you would like to see made?**

The addition of Mountain Bike trails

No

I would like to see the plan updated to have paved roads through the park.

Would love to see some mountain bike trails added to the park. It's a growing sport, and the topography of the park would be amazing for some trails.

Add mountain bike trails

I would like to see this area include mountain bike trails. This is a huge sport for many towns and we need something for our Hastings youth.

I'd love to see mountain biking trails expanded in the area

Would like to see single track trail take advantage of the elevation offered in the area, whether for hiking or for mountain biking.

Please add biking to the mix. At least winter biking on the winter trails!

more emphasis on the mountain biking portion.

I would like to see mountain bike trails incorporated in the park

Strengthen the use of trails (hike AND bike) as an asset in planning. Trails are sometimes seen as a "net negative" in management, but are quite the opposite due to their multi faceted ability to meet diverse objectives. Not only do trails create a draw to a space, they improve the user experience by creating a safe and predictable user experience while protecting sensitive habitats by concentrating human use in defined corridors. Trails allow visitors to be guided through a space to meet their own recreational, educational, and experiential goals. Trails also create breaks for fire, temporary herd fencing, and other management efforts.

add mountain biking trails for everyone from beginner to expert as well as accessible trails

More mountain biking

I did not see anywhere for allowing of mountain biking in the park. This activity is the #2 activity at Lebanon Hills Park. Why are you not listing this as an approved activity?

Would love to see some mountain biking trails added to the plan!

The ability to make the natural surface trails multi use (ability to ride bikes on them)

Want to make sure the trout stream is not negatively impacted.



I'd like to see more detail about intended winter use. The way the trail system is currently described, it sounds like it will be fairly narrow, so if you do NOT want people fatbiking on the trails, or across the snowy landscape (as I've seen happen at Murphy-Hanrehan, Crosby Farm park, and other parks with easy parking access but limited winter 'rules'), the signage should be worded to reflect that. My biggest sticking point when debating visiting this park (and I've heard this from friends, as well) was not knowing if the trailhead was accessible, open, and (in the winter) cleared of snow. To increase general accessibility and enjoyment of the park, Dakota County will need to be clear about the accessibility of the trailheads during all seasons, but also will need to be aware that once they're there, people with LNT and \*without\* LNT backgrounds will come, so prepare signage in advance to minimize negative impacts to vegetation. For example, once there's a certain amount of snow, state parks allow snowshoeing anywhere throughout the park, not just on trails -- this is to encourage less foot traffic on groomed ski trails. If you do NOT want snow-shoers walking off-trail on these sensitive landscapes, that would need to be on signage. We have winter conditions for 6 months of the year sometimes, so please prepare for winter uses more thoroughly. An example I saw recently of signage that was very thoughtful of multiple trail uses was at Sunfish Lake.

Long range keep it like it is.

We (several areas residents) do not want to see more trail construction and development. There is a great array of wildlife here and you are proposing to destroy it in order to fulfill someone's agenda who is not invested in this community. We do not want more traffic on this land. We do not want to see a bridge connecting the Cannon River trail the ravine. This is a pristine area, not all parks need to be ADA accessible. There are plenty of park opportunities in Dakota County available without touching this one.

no

No.

Stop mowing vast acres of prairie! WTH are you doing!?! This is not land stewardship and I highly doubt grant finders such as the nature conservancy gave Dakota county parks \$ to burn in the spring only to mow down the fresh replenished prairie grass right as it's hitting its peak beauty in the fall. You ruined it. Absolutely ruined the beauty and protection of y'all prairie grass for the fall. Decades every autumn I hiked and painted trout brook and prairie areas, several times a week. I stopped two —3 months ago because it's so disgusting and disheartening. And now watch the snowmobiles plow thru all over those areas this winter.

Quit hurting our deer population, do not make it easier for people to negatively effect our wildlife

### **What do you like about the Draft Natural Resources Management Plan?**

It's thorough

I liked the native habitat restoration

Growing native plants

...

I like the increased amenities for hiking and the watercraft launch. I would love to canoe here! I also like the rustic campsites.

The intention to spend some dollars making this park more accessible

Ok

Didn't have time to read it

The parts that don't change.

Again, only the maintaining the prairie grasses and controlling their invasive species.

How carefully it manages the resources

It seems well thought out and stresses maintaining the natural resources instead of eliminating large areas for buildings or car parks.



Inclusion of Indigenous engagement -if you actually respect and honor their advise. I am pretty sure there are Indian burial mounds in that forest and have witness people walk all over them and dismiss when I ask them not to. What I don't think Dakota County Parks admin understands is the level of entitlement among white people in this rural area to disregard ecological impacts to the land and wildlife and for indigenous history. Four wheelers in trails, killing wild animals, destroying fragile plants. So I applaud what Dakota says it wants to steward the land, protect and preserve it but you must focus on more education and PRESENCE and rule and law enforcement.

You cant try to reduce our deer population to less than 10 per square mile? That runins all of the neighbors hunting management plans? Thats 90% of our deer population in the area

Removal of non-native plant species.

### **Are there any changes to the Draft Natural Resources Management Plan that you would like to see made?**

Include

No changes.

I would like to see the Bison and Prairie Chicken restored.

Add mountain bike trails

Add some visuals to help illustrate changes

No

I sure would love to see additional campsites, including RV accessible with electricity. It doesn't have to be a huge campground but this place looks beautiful (I've lived here for over 20 years, why didn't I know about it?) and people around here are always looking for campsites. This would bring awareness and people to the park.

More mountain biking

Please allow mountain bike trails to be included

Ok

Would like the park to stay like it is.

No trail expansion. Only maintenance of the north and south loops. No bridges. No additional parking. No additional portable toilets or buildings.

No

No.

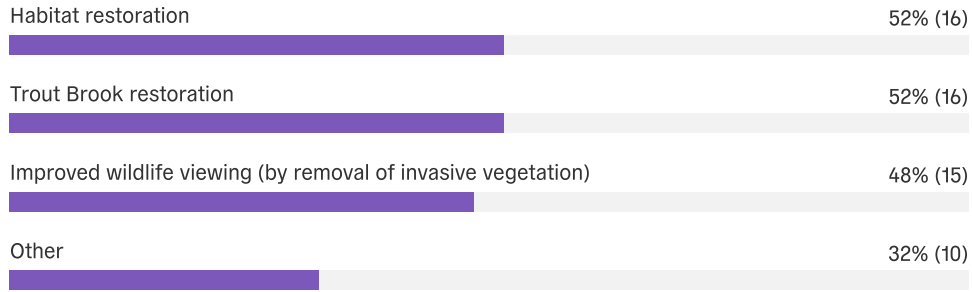
Stop mowing what are supposed to be walking paths into 9-12 foot wide roads. That past few years they mow wider and wider and wider and killing off edge wildflowers. We need these for pollinators ! And the park has lost its idyllic forest feel because roads mowed up to tree trunks. Totally unnecessary-this park dies not have groups of 8 people walking abreast. You've disrupted the ecosystem

Quit killing our deer, do not make it easier for people to access more of the park, they can go closer to the city's to find corrupted parks. Leave the miesville reveue alone

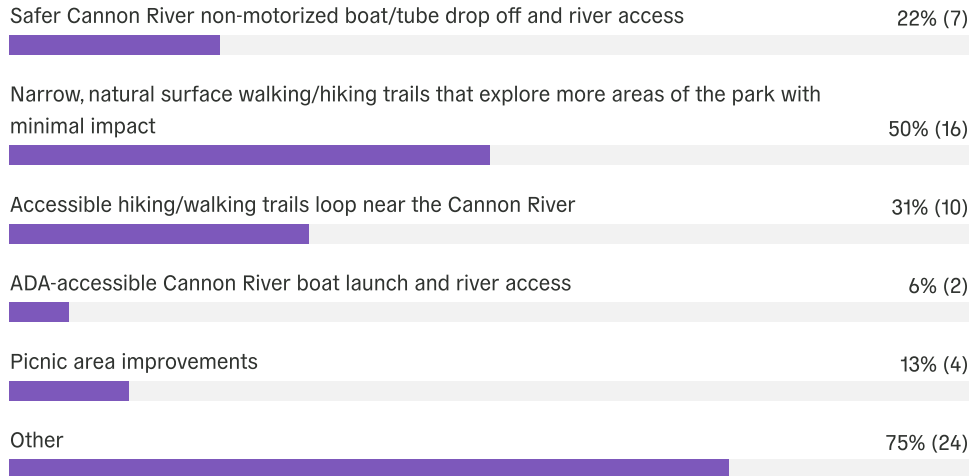
Allow more than 10 deer per square mile. Do NOT consider adding bison to the park since it would require fencing.



**What are your top natural resources improvement priorities that would increase your use and enjoyment of Miesville Ravine Park Reserve?**



**What are your top recreation improvement priorities that would increase your use and enjoyment of Miesville Ravine Park Reserve?**



**If you selected "other" in either of the previous two questions, please tell us more about your improvement priorities for the park.**

camping

This park would be a great place for mountain bike trails, which could easily co-exist with the other plans for the park.

The 5 miles of gravel roads needed to access the park are terrible. These roads see more traffic than most people realize and need to be paved.

Paved roads would definitely get me to visit the park more often. Just traveling slow on the gravel roads doesn't make me interested to keep coming.

Mountain bike trails!

Add mountain bike trails

Mountain. lke trails

Mountain hiking trails

The inclusion of mountain bike trails to the park, or challenging hiking trails.

Please add Orr allow single track riding to this park

Mountain biking trails! :)

Mountain bike Trails

Mountain biking

mountain bike trails



You must include biking as a use in this space. There is plenty of space to ensure a high quality user experience and create safe interactions between various user groups. Biking is a draw in itself and can widen the appeal to potential visitors. This is the purpose of public access to public land and bikes fit that purpose well.

Campsites

mountain bike trails

Mountain biking please

Please allow mountain bike trails to be built.

Mountain biking trails would draw me to the area more regularly.

My main interest is with trout fishing in Trout Brook. My primary concern with any improvements to the park is that they do not adversely impact the water quality and fish habitat of the stream. Obviously, any access improvements will be a benefit for me, unless they result in harmful runoff, either from nature or people.

The option/ability in the plan to include mountain bikes in the park whether it be multi use natural surface paths or dedicated singletrack trails

Nothing except maintenance of prairie grass.

Dakota county parks needs to address guns in the park. There is a short stout paramilitary man who literally dons a hitler mustache. He's creepy as all get out. He lets his dogs run thru the park constantly. They root out wild animals. He let them go by active beaver family and dam. I asked him to leash his dogs so they don't kill beavers. He refused. He lets his dogs jump all over me for distances as he watches w smug sicko look on his face. The day I asked him leash his dogs he bent over lifting his vest/ jacket to reveal handgun. It was intentional he intends to intimidate. I reported him to Dakota county sheriff's office and when deputy came I said pls just walk trails you will come across him w dogs off leash and he has gun. I've found multiple dead baby wildlife and no i haven't witnessed his dogs specifically doing the killing but it's very likely. Deputy said he can't do anything about this guy carrying gun in park because state of MN overrides county park rules. This needs to be addressed and training to sheriffs office that yes they should be enforcing park ordinance no guns allowed. This man is dangerous to women. When he is there I leave as do the Latin and Hmong fishing people and their families. We know what this toxic guy is about. It's not safe. I've tried everything to avoid him but sometimes he shows up unexpectedly and smugly smiles watching his dogs jump all over me and others. I no longer go to this park, it's not safe and it's not supervised. Too rare of any kind of park or sherrifs presence and they don't get out if their cars and walk the trails. Also, Dakota county admin needs to go there themselves repeatedly to see the ruin of whoever you're contracting with to mow hiking paths as they've been turned into wide roads for no reason.

Reduce deer hunting in the park.

### **Is there anything else you would like to tell us about Miesville Ravine Park Reserve?**

It is a great park with great terrain that could fill a void in the area with new mountain bike trails, that have a more remote wilderness feel than other MTB trails in the county.

No

Beautiful park, hidden gem - would love to increase people's use of it.

Love the area

love this park and want to see it thrive!

I will come visit if there is mountain biking

Thank you for doing this survey and community engagement!!!

This proposal should be up for public debate and voting. Feel free to contact me. Teri Ahart 651-398-8407

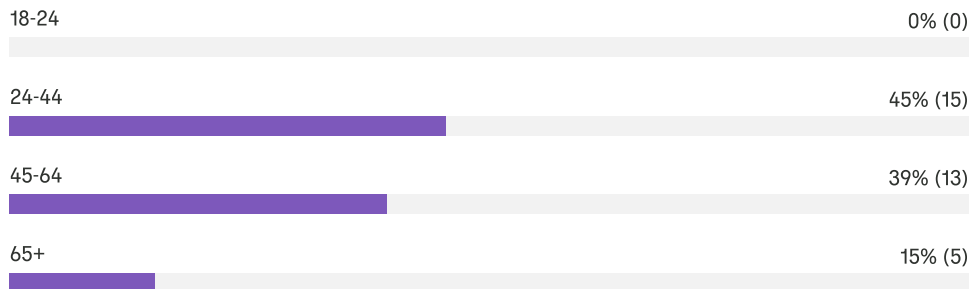
Please continue to allow dogs on leash.



We are in climate crisis. Period. Environmental protection should be the priority over catering to hunters. There is more than enough rural hunting grounds that local rural land owners gladly share with hunters. What IS LACKING is safe space for pollinators and wildlife to thrive and safe natural spaces for Black and brown people and for women to enjoy nature safely. Also lacks info signage for Somali, Arabic, Hmong, Spanish language for finding their way in trails. Fir 20 years I've personally shown people how to make their way, wanting to increase access for people of color. I'm not going there anymore, certainly not without a few other people unless and until there's park staff presence who will enforce no guns and leash your dogs. Needs more restrooms even if porta potty.

Quit killing all of our deer. We moved to this area to have a chance to harvest large deer, the miesville reveene park hunt is ruining that. Less than 10 deer per square mile is a joke, your few square miles of woods population affects a very large area of surrounding square miles, you killing all the deer in the park is crippling to all of the surrounding areas. Shame on you

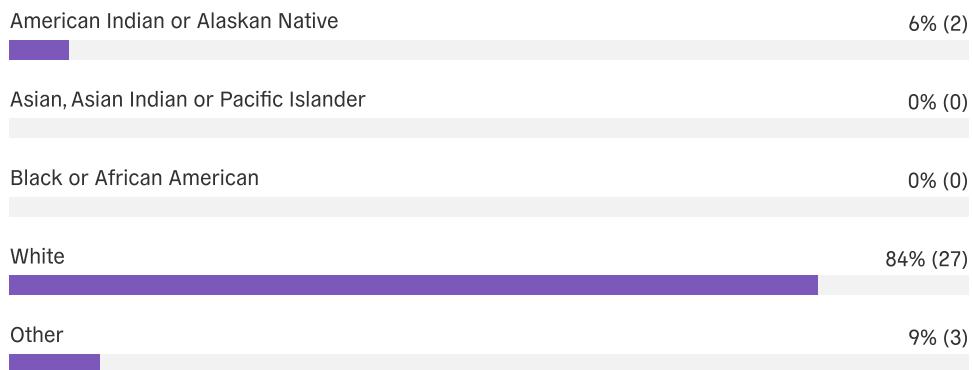
### Which category contains your age?



### Do you consider yourself to be Spanish, Hispanic, or Latino?



### What is your race? (Mark one or more races you consider yourself to be)





# STAKEHOLDER MEETING SUMMARIES

## Pop-up Input HACER Resource Fair - 10/8/2023

11 a.m.-3 p.m., Thompson County Park, West St. Paul

### Notes

Participants were asked to place blue dots on their priorities to be included in the draft plan. Materials were in English and Spanish. High priority activities were wildlife viewing, river recreation, and trail recreation. Though participants were not asked to prioritize natural resource management, many placed dots on various habitats.

### Activities

- Wildlife viewing (11)
- Canoe/Kayaking on the Cannon River (10)
- Cannon River tubing (10)
- Hiking trails (9)
- Wetland boardwalks (6)
- Winter hiking and snowshoeing (5)
- ADA-accessible trails (4)
- Trail seating and overlooks (3)
- Stargazing (4)
- Rustic fire ring and gathering areas (5)
- Fishing (3)
- Cannon River fishing (2)
- Trout Brook fishing (1)
- Wi-Fi (1)
- Interpretation (0)

### Natural Resource Management

- Rare species and wildlife (4)
- Restored prairie (3)
- Restored savanna (2)
- Oak woodland (1)
- White pine in mesic hardwood forest (1)
- Trout Brook riparian corridor (1)
- Southern mesic hardwood forest (1)
- Cliffs and rock outcrops (1)
- Seepage meadow (1)
- Ravines (1)
- Pine-oak woodland (0)
- Remnant prairie (0)

## Public Art Advisory Committee

10/10/2023 5:30 p.m., Burnhaven Library

Lil Leatham of Dakota County Parks presented the changes being made at the Miesville Ravine Park Preserve, which includes the potential for art interaction. Presentation talked about Art and Interpretation projects: Rest stops/Benches/ Art/Interpretive. May want to collaborate in 2025/2026. Asks that we keep the project in mind for the future. Helen invited Lil to keep the group involved in the project in the future.

## Douglas Township Board of Supervisors - 11/6/2023 7 p.m.

Lil Leatham presented an overview of the Draft Long-range Plan (LP) and Draft Natural Resource Management Plan (NRMP). Generally, the Supervisors were supportive of the amount and type of recreational development and the natural resource restoration and management strategy outlined in the two plans.

## Zoom Open House - 11/08/2023

5:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m., Zoom

Approximate number of participants: 3

### Notes

Lil Leatham and Joe Walton provided an overview of the Draft Long-range Plan (LP) and Draft Natural Resource Management Plan (NRMP) and opened the meeting for questions and discussion.

One individual commented on his hopes to have multi-use trails in the plan that would accommodate mountain biking. (Niki Geisler followed up with this individual after the meeting via email.)

Joe responded to the person who asked about mountain bike trails at Miesville by saying that it's his opinion that MRPR is not a good place for mountain bike trails primarily because of the abundance of steep slopes that are composed of very fine sand and silt that is very prone to both wind and water erosion.

There were a couple people that wanted to know what was going on at Trout Brook, and Joe explained that during September and October the County approved Trout Unlimited, a non-profit, to hire a contractor to implement the second phase of the restoration of the stream channel. The essence of the project was to reconnect the stream channel to its floodplain, by shaving down the high banks, and bringing the floodplain closer to the channel so that it can flood like normal. In the previous situation, it was deeply incised and most of the flood waters were trapped inside a canyon-like corridor that caused a great deal of erosion to side slopes and banks, which negatively impacted the water quality and quantity and habitat value of the stream for trout and other species.



## Community Open House - 11/15/2023

11/15/2023 5:00 p.m-6:30 p.m.

Cannon River Lutheran Church; 10960 280th Street;  
Cannon Falls, MN 55009

Approximate number of participants: 20

Dakota County Attendees: Mike Slavik, Dakota County Commissioner; Lil Leatham, Principal Planner Dakota County; Joe Walton, Dakota County Senior Ecologist; Niki Geisler, Dakota County Parks Director

### Meeting Summary:

Meeting format was display boards summarizing key plan elements and informal discussions with staff.

### Comments:

- Dakota County should maintain Orlando Trail since most of the traffic is outfitters and park visitors.
- Dakota County should pave CR 91/Miesville Trail.
- The two existing parking lots regularly fill up, so additional parking is a need.
- The park used to be a camp owned by the Lutheran Church. Many meeting attendees recall camping on the land by the river before the park was established.
- Land owners who farm adjacent property by the Cannon River have concerns about the long-term concept for the boat launch (currently outside of the park boundary). The concern is primarily about conflicts between spraying fertilizer/chemicals and nearby public use.
- General support for improving the boat launch.
- The proposed entry drive and turnaround will need no parking signs. People will take advantage of the turnaround and park there/block traffic.
- Appreciation for ADA improvements. The Cannon River Lutheran Church has considered renting the picnic shelter for events but has not out of concerns about access for people with low mobility.
- Side by side ATVs are a problem.
- Concerns were voiced about safety of the road when people are parked along Orlando. Comments were made about people standing in the middle of the road, applying sunscreen, and almost being hit by cars coming by.
- Suggestion to put up no parking signs on Miesville Trail and Orlando Trail through the park.
- One local resident hopes we will build a bridge over the river someday and connect to the Canon Valley Trail.
- A couple residents expressed their displeasure with the way the County marks inholdings on public-facing maps. They said this practice encourages trespassing by random people, and they would like the inholdings to not be shown on maps at all.
- Residents with properties within the park boundary had a number of questions and concerns about park visitors thinking their property is park owned. They mentioned having hunters on their property during hunting season, thinking they were allowed to be there because of their permit with the park.
- Request for additional signage at the park boundary.
- Concerns were mentioned about prescribed burns in the park done during a time when residents were in a fire ban.
- Overall, residents expressed approval about the general direction of management of the park's natural resources. Many people commented on how they liked the prairie and bluff restorations and some approved of the trout stream restoration.
- There was a great turnout for this meeting. Lots of people showed up, and many of them were very interested in natural resources and issues.
- One resident wanted to know more about buckthorn removal and whether we could help him on his property. Joe said that he could offer recommendations and resources to use online, but said that the County cannot actually do work or apply for grants on property that is not permanently protected by a conservation easement. He did say that he would drop in the next time he was in the area, to take a look at the site.
- One person expressed misgivings about whether buckthorn control really works. Joe assured him that it can and it does indeed work, if carried out properly, and offered to give verbal assistance and advice on methods, materials, etc. He also encouraged the person to join in future volunteer invasive species control events that will occur.
- A few neighbors to the park reserve expressed consternation over the way that we are managing adjacent lands to their property. They did not like it when we conduct late fall burns, because they claimed that it was bad for pheasants, since it reduced available cover going into winter. Joe said that he would be willing to adjust the burn schedule to avoid late fall burns in certain areas, but that we can't eliminate them entirely, since they are part of best management practices for managing prairie and savanna.



- A few neighbors to the park reserve shared that they are concerned about beavers and want the County to be conscious of beaver conservation efforts in the park reserve. They said they would be glad to take part in volunteer efforts to help conserve or promote beavers at the site.
- Joe passed out his business cards to many people, encouraging folks to contact him regarding natural resources in the park reserve.
- One resident had specific recommendations for a variety of wildlife species and taxa. He discussed it with Joe, who listened and also encouraged him to reach out and talk more about it later, when they could be discussed at length.
- Several residents shared personal stories about their history with the park reserve and their family's connection and interaction with the land before it became a park. For instance, one man said that his great grandfather planted all of the white pines in the park reserve, and that none of them occurring today in the park are remnant.
- Regarding garlic mustard control, they suggested using fall herbicide of rosettes; also watch for DNR invasive species staff developing a bio-control weevil that will eat GM plants.
- They suggested that the white pine in the park reserve is probably native, at least some of them, since they occur naturally only about 40 miles away at the Chippewa River in Wisconsin.
- Fisheries.
  - Regarding Trout Brook, a barrier to inhibit brown trout from reaching to the norther reaches of the park should be considered in addition to brown trout removal.
  - Consider reintroduction of slimy sculpins—Brian Beyerl said that he could send a copy of the draft management plan for re-introduction of slimy sculpin.
- Foraging. Dakota County has updated its park ordinance to allow for some foraging. Natural resource management staff is currently working to define what, where, and how much. MnDNR staff suggested only allowing amounts for personal use (as opposed to commercial use).

#### MnDNR Staff - 12/08/2023

10:30-11:30 a.m., Microsoft Teams

Attendees: Lil Leatham, Principal Planner Dakota County; Joe Walton, Dakota County Senior Ecologist; Niki Geisler, Dakota County Parks Director; Taylor Huinker, MnDNR South Metro Hydrologist; Joseph Brown, MnDNR Forestry Area Supervisor; Brian Beyerl, MnDNR Fisheries

#### Notes

Lil Leatham and Joe Walton provided an overview of the Draft Long-range Plan (LP) and Draft Natural Resource Management Plan (NRMP) and opened the meeting for questions and discussion.

- The pertinent Wild and Scenic Rules related to the potential bridge crossing include Minnesota Rule 6105.0190 and 6105.0200.
- The group talked about phasing and goals of the Trout Brook Restoration.
- The park is within the Richard J. Dorer Memorial Hardwood State Forest. The MnDNR is in the process of developing section management plans. The overall goals of the management plans are to encourage diverse land cover types, which is consistent with the Miesville Ravine Park Reserve NRMP.
- Invasive plant species.
  - One consideration is emerging invasive species to southeast Minnesota, such as oriental bittersweet, Japanese barberry, Japanese knotweed, and Poison hemlock in trout stream.

MnDNR staff will forward next week's meeting and/or plan links to others who may be interested. Additional comments are welcome through December 20, email Lil Leatham or Joe Walton with written comments.

#### Tribal Historic Preservation Officers - 12/13/2023 3-4 p.m. Teams

Attendees: Lil Leatham, Principal Planner Dakota County; Joe Walton, Dakota County Senior Ecologist; Autumn Hubbell, Dakota County Parks Outdoor Education Supervisor; Anna Ferris, Dakota County Park Outreach Coordinator; Jeff Isachsen, Dakota County Parks Indigenous Liaison; Leonard Wabasha, Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community Director of Cultural Resources

#### Notes

- Lil Leatham and Joe Walton provided an overview of the Draft Long-range Plan (LP), with focus on the cultural landscape stewardship recommendations and Draft Natural Resource Management Plan (NRMP) and opened the meeting for questions and discussion.
- Leonard asked if Prairie Island staff had been involved and suggested contacting Noah White and William Kurtz, particularly for natural resource information.
- Leonard also said that Prairie Island has a list of significant plants that we should obtain, and post in the NRMP and LRP. He also recommended that we continue working with both the Upper and the Lower Sioux communities.



- Staff can also consult the native plant guide that the Lower Sioux has published.
- Leonard asked if cemetery delineations had been completed. They have not, further investigation is one of the long-range plan's stewardship recommendations.
- Overall, the plans seem to be on the right track.
- Dakota County will schedule a park tour for the THPOs in the spring.

A follow-up email was sent to THPOs not in attendance reminding them to provide comment by 12/20.

### Welch Mill Outfitters - 12/14/2023

#### 1-2 p.m. Miesville Ravine Park Reserve

Attendees: Lil Leatham, Principal Planner Dakota County; Niki Geisler, Dakota County Parks Director; Ross Nelson, Owner Welch Mill Outfitters; Jane Nelson, Owner Welch Mill Outfitters

#### Notes

- If the boat launch and turnaround was developed in the park, Welch Mill Outfitters would use it – particularly on busy summer days.
- On busy weekend days, the drop off on Orlando Trail is not safe due to traffic, cars parked in the widened area at the side of the road, and customers lingering in the road. During the week it isn't as bad.
- The current location on the side of the road is good for visibility. Outfitters can watch the river for customers and the bus is visible from the river, so people know where to get out. Visibility needs to be a consideration for any improvement.
- More parking is needed. The two park lots fill up regularly.
- Right now, there isn't a great place to turn the bus/trailers around. Even a small turnaround near off of Orlando Trail near the current maintenance access/proposed new access would be helpful.
- Customers would like better access to restrooms and picnicking.
- Most people can navigate the bank alright and the beach area is a great launch spot. Any new improvements should include as wide a beach as possible for people to stage from. ADA accessibility is a problem. If someone needs help, they usually call ahead and additional staff are on hand to lift people up and down the bank.
- If a turnaround is built it needs to be wide enough to allow for passing. It takes people a long time to load/unload their boats.
- More parking along the proposed entrance than shown on the concept would be better.

- Proposed parking along the side of the entrance are low spots, soils may be hydric and flooding could be a problem.

### MnDNR - 12/14/2023 3-4 p.m. Teams

Attendees: Lil Leatham, Principal Planner Dakota County; Joe Walton, Dakota County Senior Ecologist; Niki Geisler, Dakota County Parks Director; Grant Fleetwood, Dakota County Parks Operations Coordinator; Neil Rude, MnDNR Fisheries; Brian Beyerl, MnDNR Fisheries; Daniel Spence, MnDNR Fisheries; Louise Thompson, MnDNR Parks and Trails Area Supervisor

#### Notes

Lil Leatham and Joe Walton provided an overview of the Draft Long-range Plan (LP) and Draft Natural Resource Management Plan (NRMP) and opened the meeting for questions and discussion.

- Discussion about the MnDNR Water Trail and canoeing, rafting, and tubing uses.
- Existing boat launch is not an official MnDNR launch but is on the water trail map.
- MnDNR staff has concerns about the safety of the current outfitter drop off location on Orlando Trail. The road is very narrow.
- Potential to partner with the MnDNR in the future on water trail improvements (boat landing, camping). More discussions will need to occur.
- Garlic mustard is a concern in the park. MnDNR staff suggested connecting with a MnDNR Invasive Species Specialist to talk about management techniques.

### Cannon River Canoe and Bike Rental - 1/9/2024

#### 1-2 p.m. Cannon Belles Ice Cream and Coffee

Attendees: Lil Leatham, Principal Planner Dakota County; Niki Geisler, Dakota County Parks Director; Beth Landahl, Visitor Services Manager; William Lacefield, Cannon River Canoe and Bike Rental

#### Notes

#### Miesville Ravine Park Reserve

- Cannon River Canoe and Bike Rental would use the new boat launch and turnaround if improved.
- Location for 1-2 buses to wait and with a view of the river is desirable.
- A landmark or sign on the riverbank near the pull-out spot and then a clearly marked boat landing would be helpful.
- Beach area for staging/put in/pull out makes sense. Area before the confluence is fine, shorter walk from the drop off.



- As much parking as possible along the entry drive is desirable, people will park there first prior to going to the existing lot.
- Welch Mill can rent tubes, because they were in business prior to the Wild and Scenic River regulations, Cannon River Canoe and Bike cannot rent tubes but does have canoes, kayaks, and rafts. Kayaks and rafts are the most popular.
- It is 7-9 river miles between Cannon Falls and Miesville. Cannon River Canoe and Bike only picks up at Miesville – no unloading.
- Turnaround needs to be big enough for a bus and trailer to turnaround. The drive needs to be wide enough for loading and unloading without blocking traffic.
- Uses 66 person buses, these larger buses do not tow a trailer.
- Season is May-September. June-August weekends trips leave hourly.



## KONVEIO COMMENTS

On-line comments within the Long-range Plan draft documents

(Eight comments from four individuals and Trout Unlimited).

- I first would like to mention that I am happy to see that this land and habitat has been preserved and restored and is continuing to be. But when I hear that the park reserve “A nature reserve (also known as a wildlife refuge, wildlife sanctuary, biosphere reserve or bioreserve, natural or nature preserve, or nature conservation area)” is going to make it easier for people to penetrate, access this area, it is no longer a safe haven for wildlife which was the intention of this park. Whatever the reasons are to put in all these trails, well intended as they may be, it will surely take away the whole intention of the park’s purpose. There are very few places to go anymore where man has not touched and taking away another is truly unfortunate. Parks that are hard to access difficult to navigate should be kept just as that. Making things easier is not always better especially when it comes to preserving an area intended for wildlife not for people. I realize that this is going to fall on deaf ears because this will happen no matter what I feel. I just really hope the people that are pushing for this realize the impact this will definitely have on the wildlife that calls this area home. Keep our wild places WILD! Please work to protect the precious cold water resources of Trout Brook as you develop your plan.
- I’m a member of the Twin Cities Chapter of Trout Unlimited. This is an important resource for the region and I am grateful for the steps being taken to preserve Trout Brook for future generations.
- I think it would be a great addition if the natural surface trails were multi use and allow bicycles. A great example of this is the river bend nature center in Faribault, Mn.
- Twin Cities Trout Unlimited suggests Page E5. “Restore natural hydrology and habitat to the Trout Brook channel and floodplain and tributaries, via landscape-level management practices and partnerships” be adjusted as follows, “Restore natural hydrology and habitat to the Trout Brook channel and floodplain and tributaries, via stream restoration projects, landscape-level management practices and partnerships.” We feel stream restoration should be specifically called out here.
- Twin Cities Trout Unlimited agrees the park reserve would benefit from invasive species removal (primarily buckthorn), and we have many chapter volunteers who would be interested in helping with this work through habitat improvement events.
- Twin Cities Trout Unlimited is interested in being a partner on water quality solutions, perhaps through public outreach/communications, by providing letters of support for funding proposals, or other efforts that might be helpful. We encourage Dakota County Parks Natural Resources to continue working with Dakota County SWCD, the North Cannon River Watershed Management Organization and other partners to work on nitrate reduction projects in the watershed. This includes implementing land-use best practices (cover crops, perennial crops and vegetated buffers) as well as considering innovative solutions like woodchip bioreactors.
- Twin Cities Trout Unlimited agrees with the assertion that, “Trout Brook’s water quality is affected by land uses throughout the watershed,” and much of this land currently lies outside of park boundaries. Therefore, we strongly support permanent acquisition of agricultural lands upstream of Trout Brook and along its tributaries with the goal of returning these sensitive areas to perennial vegetation. We believe staff time and funding that is put toward targeted land protection efforts is well spent because clean water is critical to the long-term health of the Trout Brook ecosystem.



**BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS  
DAKOTA COUNTY, MINNESOTA**

February 27, 2024

Resolution No. 24-091

Motion by Commissioner Slavik

Second by Commissioner Halverson

**Adoption Of Miesville Ravine Park Reserve Long-Range Plan And Natural Resource Management Plan**

WHEREAS, Dakota County Parks Department has been updating the Miesville Ravine Park Reserve (MRPR) Long-Range Plan (LP) and the MRPR Natural Resource Management Plan (NRMP); and

WHEREAS, by Resolution No. 23-430 (September 26, 2023), the Dakota County Board of Commissioners (County Board) authorized that the MRPR LP and the MRPR NRMP be released for public review; and

WHEREAS, the plans were posted on the Dakota County website with the ability for the public to submit comments September 27–December 25, 2023; and

WHEREAS, notification of opportunities for review was done through a mailing to 300 area residents, postings on Dakota County's social media accounts, and emails to stakeholders and partners; and

WHEREAS, the plans were presented to Douglas Township Board of Supervisors on November 6, 2023, a virtual open house was held November 8, 2023, an in-person open house was held November 15, 2023, and meetings were also held with agency and stakeholder organizations; and

WHEREAS, the MRPR LP and NRMP have been revised to address staff, stakeholder, and public comments; and

WHEREAS, on January 25, 2024, the Dakota County Planning Commission recommended adoption of the LP and the NRMP and that the LP be submitted to the Metropolitan Council for consideration and approval; and

WHEREAS, estimated Dakota County costs for recreation and natural resource five-year priorities are \$1,609,000; and

WHEREAS, the County Board will determine implementation priorities and funding levels during the annual Parks Capital Improvement Program budget process; and

WHEREAS, the Dakota County Planning Commission recommends adoption of the MRPR LP and the MRPR NRMP and submittal of the MRPR LP to the Metropolitan Council for consideration and approval.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, That the Dakota County Board of Commissioners hereby adopts the Miesville Ravine Park Reserve Long-Range Plan and the Miesville Ravine Park Reserve Natural Resource Management Plan and authorizes staff to submit the Long-Range Plan to the Metropolitan Council as presented to the Physical Development Committee of the Whole on February 20, 2024.

**STATE OF MINNESOTA**

County of Dakota

|               | YES      |               | NO    |
|---------------|----------|---------------|-------|
| Slavik        | <u>X</u> | Slavik        | _____ |
| Atkins        | <u>X</u> | Atkins        | _____ |
| Halverson     | <u>X</u> | Halverson     | _____ |
| Droste        | <u>X</u> | Droste        | _____ |
| Workman       | <u>X</u> | Workman       | _____ |
| Holberg       | <u>X</u> | Holberg       | _____ |
| Hamann-Roland | <u>X</u> | Hamann-Roland | _____ |

I, Jeni Reynolds, Clerk to the Board of the County of Dakota, State of Minnesota, do hereby certify that I have compared the foregoing copy of a resolution with the original minutes of the proceedings of the Board of County Commissioners, Dakota County, Minnesota, at their session held on the 27<sup>th</sup> day of February 2024, now on file in the Office of the County Manager Department, and have found the same to be a true and correct copy thereof.

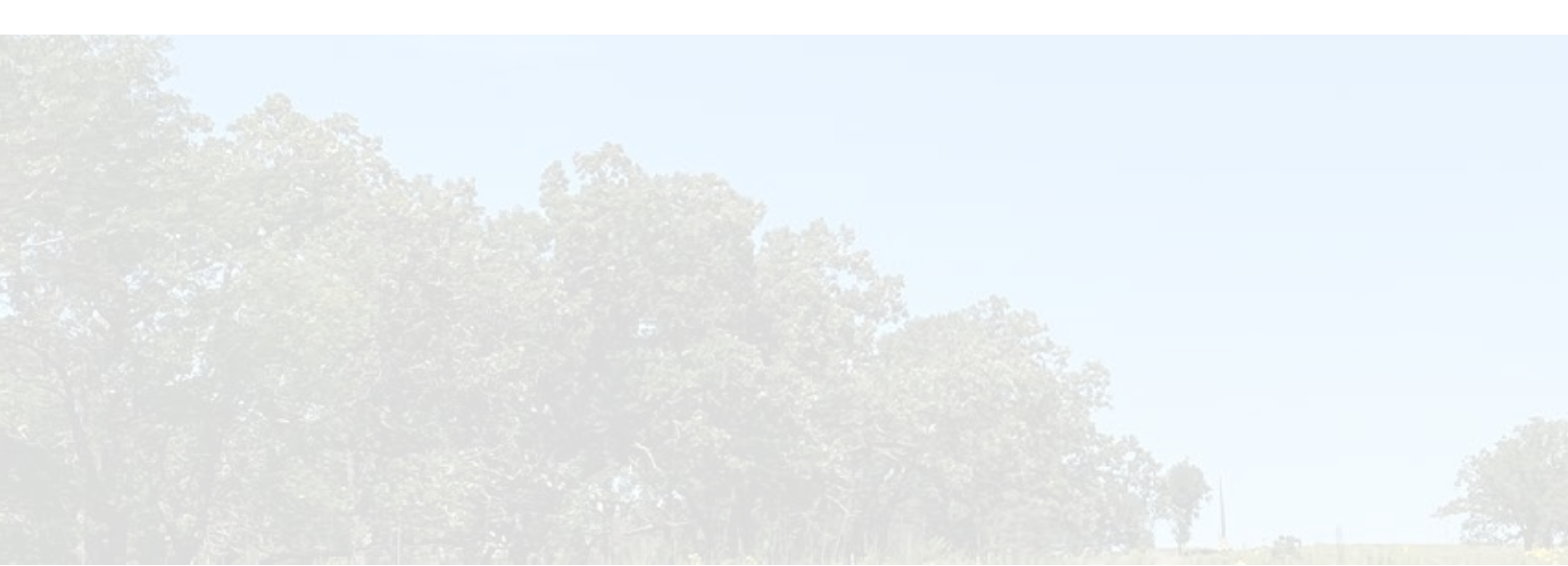
Witness my hand and official seal of Dakota County this 27<sup>th</sup> day of February 2024.



**FEBRUARY 27, 2024**

APPENDIX A AA35







# APPENDIX B

## DEVELOPED AREA METHODOLOGY

This document outlines the steps taken to calculate the “80/20” land use designations in Dakota County Parks.

The percent of land developed in a Park Reserve is calculated as follows:

***Percent Developed = (Total Developed Area / Total Upland Area) × 100***

- “Total Upland Area” is all of the parcels comprising a Park Reserve, excluding property not owned by DC, public road rights-of-way, National Wetland Inventory (NWI) wetlands types 3-7 that are greater than 2.5 acres, and property within a 10-foot buffer of streams indicated by the “Streams centerline” data provided by the MN DNR.
- “Total Developed Area” is the sum of all developed areas of the Park Reserve, excluding development occurring on parcels not owned by DC, public road rights-of-way, National Wetland Inventory (NWI) wetlands types 3-7 greater than 2.5 acres, and within a 10-foot buffer of streams indicated by the “Streams centerline” data provided by the MN DNR

The extent of developed areas depends on the type of land use and is defined below:

- Facilities (Areas such as buildings, picnic grounds, and recreation and maintenance areas)
  - The entire maintained area
- Park Roads
  - Buffered 25 ft from centerline

- Park Trails
  - Buffered 10 ft from centerline
- Utilities (Note, this information is not always available)
  - Dakota County-owned utilities or privately-owned utilities that only serve Dakota County
- Buffered 5 ft from centerline
  - Privately-owned utilities and other non-Dakota County owned easements
- The area described in the easement

A variety of geospatial data are used in this process.

### TOTAL UPLAND AREA

1. Determining property base
  - Park Boundary ‘DCGIS’
  - Remove all privately held inholdings
2. Public roadway rights-of-way are removed from “property base”
  - Rights-of-way geospatial data are stored in the parcel datasets in DC GIS
3. Wetlands, lakes, and buffered streams are geoprocesed and combined separately
  - Wetlands Geospatial data representing wetlands and streams are stored and maintained by the U.S. Fish and wildlife Service and the Minnesota DNR.
  - Select NWI Wetlands that are Type 3 through 7 and Type 90 and greater than 2.5 acres



- Select DNR Stream Centerlines within the park. Buffer streams 10 foot
  - Merge NWI Wetlands and Stream Centerlines Data
4. Remove Streams and Wetlands from 'property base – ROW'
  5. Resulting shapefile is 'Total Upland Area'

## TOTAL DEVELOPED AREA

Some of the Developed Area information is available in DCGIS. When not available staff digitize new polygons.

1. Facilities
  - Digitize the entire maintained areas
2. Park Roads
  - Park Road Centerlines are available from DCGIS. Buffer 25'
3. Park Trails
  - Park Trails geospatial data available from DCGIS. Merge all trails within the park and buffer 10' from centerline
4. Utilities
  - Buffer 5' from centerline all Dakota County owned utilities and privately-owned utilities that only serve DC Parks (to the extent available in DCGIS).
  - Private utilities residing in easements on DC Parks property
  - Merge buffered Dakota County utilities with the private utilities
5. Merge park facilities, park roads, park trails, and utilities to one file for all developed 'Total Developed Area'

***Percent Developed = (Total Developed Area / Total Upland Area) × 100***

Calculate the land area associated with the "Total\_Upland\_Area" and "Total\_Developed\_Area" and enter the values in the following formula to determine the Percent Developed.









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PARK