



REGIONAL PARKS POLICY PLAN



2040

Regional Parks Policy Plan Summary

A World-Class Regional Parks System



SUMMARY

The Twin Cities region's renowned Regional Parks System showcases the unique landscapes of the region and provides year-round recreation. Residents have consistently singled out parks, trails and the natural environment as the most attractive feature of the region. Parks are critical to our region's current and future livability, sustainability, stewardship, and prosperity.

The Regional Parks System, supported by the Metropolitan Council in partnership with cities, counties and special park districts, was established in 1974. Since then, the Council has invested more than \$658 million in state and regional funds to help agency partners develop and expand our world-class system of interconnected parks and trails. The Council has also allocated an additional \$163 million of state funds to partially finance the operations and maintenance of the system.

Collaborating to build a regional legacy

The agency partners that own and operate the Regional Parks System are called regional park implementing agencies. A map of the regional park implementing agency areas is shown on the opposite page.

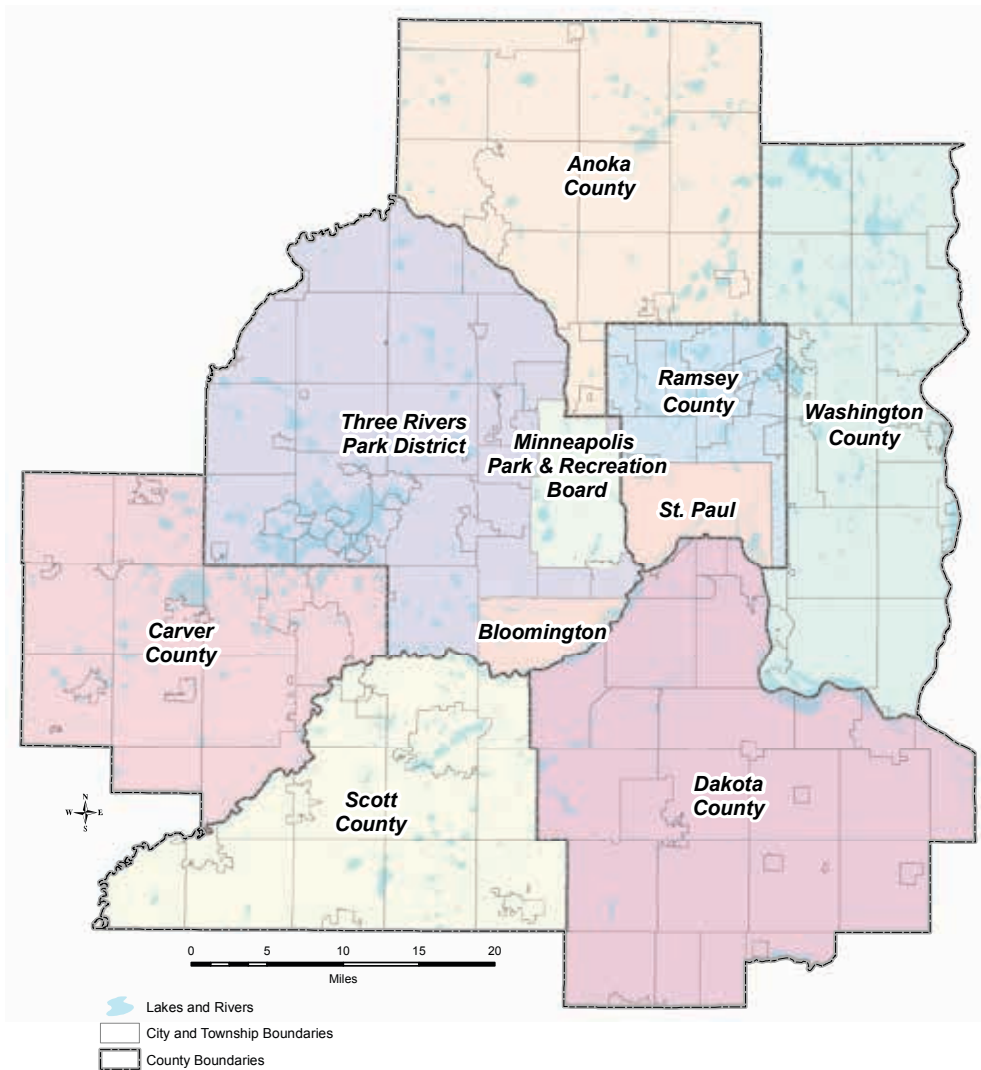


As of 2015, the Regional Parks System includes:

- 54,286 acres open for public use
- 54 regional parks and park reserves
- Eight special recreation features, such as the Como Park Zoo and Marjorie McNeely Conservatory
- 40 regional trails, with 340 miles currently open the public
- Over 47 million visits each year

Vibrant communities, healthy people

The Regional Parks System is an amenity that can help retain and attract businesses and residents. Parks and open green space boost human health and well-being. Benefits to physical well-being include increased physical activity and reduced risk of various chronic illnesses and obesity. The social benefits



include increased social capital, family bonding, and social integration. Parks and open space also contribute many environmental benefits including biodiversity conservation, air and water purification, erosion control, and climate regulation.

Expanding access, equitable park usage

It is key that we provide a regional system of nature-based recreation opportunities for all

residents. The *2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan* incorporates the policy direction provided by *Thrive MSP 2040* to:

- Promote expanded multimodal access to regional parks, regional trails, and the transit network, where appropriate.
- Strengthen equitable usage of regional parks and trails by all our region's residents, such as across age, race, ethnicity, income, national origin, and ability.

The *2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan* sets the goals for the development of the Regional Parks System and the strategies designed to meet these goals. The population of the seven-county area is expected to grow by 800,000 more people by 2040. The planned regional parks and trails will enable residents to enjoy a variety of new park experiences throughout the region.

The vision for the Regional Parks System includes expanding it to nearly 70,000 acres and tripling the trail system from 340 miles in 2015 to more than 1,100 miles by 2040. New regional trails and greenway corridors will link regional parks and park reserves. Also proposed are two additional regional parks in Carver County and a regional park in the northwest corner of Anoka County.

Financial support for parks

Just less than 1% of the total state and local taxes paid by a household in the seven-county region go to support the Regional Parks System. For the owner of a \$250,000 home in the seven-county metropolitan area, the average annual cost of the Regional Park System is \$67, including \$26 in state income and sales taxes and \$41 in regional and local property taxes. These investments over time have created one of the most iconic park systems in the nation.



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