



Park Notes

Friends of the Parks and Trails of St. Paul and Ramsey County
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What Are the Benefits to Ramsey County and Saint Paul from The Legacy Amendment?

In November 2008, 56% of Minnesota voters approved the Outdoor Heritage Clean Water, Parks and Trails, and Arts and Cultural Heritage Amendment to the Minnesota Constitution.

Commonly called the Legacy Amendment, it authorizes a 25-year statewide sales tax increase of $\frac{3}{8}$ of 1%, from 7/1/2009 to 6/20/2034. Four separately dedicated funds are set up to use the appropriated money, which may only be used for specified purposes.

The Parks and Trails fund receives 14.25 percent of the receipts. Funds may be spent only to support parks and trails of regional or statewide significance. As appropriations under this fund have evolved, three distinct pots of money have emerged: Funding for state parks and trails; funding for regional parks and trails in the metropolitan area; and funding for regional parks and trails outside of the Twin Cities area.



Afton Trail Run 2010

The major legacy projects in Ramsey County are: Lower Afton Trail (McKnight to Point Douglas Road); Tamarack Nature Center Nature Play Area and Children's Garden; Vadnais Lake Road, parking, shore fishing and trail; Sucker Lake trail; Otter Lake boat launch, parking and restrooms; Battle Creek prairie restoration; and the Rice Creek Regional Trail trailhead (parking, restrooms, creek access), all scheduled for 2013.

Major legacy projects in Saint Paul are: Como Park Joyce Kilmer Fireplace Renovation; historic Lilypond; Lilydale Regional Park environmental remediation and master plan implementation; Crosby Regional Park Trailhead and entrance improvements; Cherokee Regional Trail; Phalen Regional Park and historic water fall; Indian Mounds Regional Park; Harriet Island to South St. Paul Regional Trail master plan; and Gorge Regional Park, Meeker Island River Connection.

Tension in the Legacy Parks and Trail Fund has arisen about allocations between the DNR for State Parks, the Metro Regional Parks (large regional parks in the metro area), and the Greater Minnesota Regional Park Coalition (mainly local parks in Greater Minnesota).

Because of this tension, the Legislature directed the three park systems to work together to develop a consensus recommendation for the allocations. After months of facilitated discussions, a nine-member work group with representation from the three park systems produced a consensus agreement. Their recommendations are: 40% to the MN DNR for the State Park system; 40% to the Metropolitan Regional system, and 20% to regional parks and trails in Greater Minnesota. Oddly, since the release of the consensus recommendations, members of each group have publicly disagreed with the division of funds. It is unknown how this disagreement may affect implementation of their recommendation.

Great River Passage - Viewpoint

Most of us consider building in a floodway to be a) poor planning b) unnecessarily expensive in the long run and c) environmentally unsound. So, how does it happen that the Saint Paul City Council will consider a proposal in March to do just that? The structure at issue is an Environmental Learning Center (ELC) intended for year-round public use. How and why we arrived at this juncture is so hard to comprehend it is not worth probing. Most important is what can we do about it?

The proposal coming before the City Council is to construct an ELC at Watergate Marina in Hidden Falls Crosby Lake Regional Park which is located along the Mississippi just below Shepherd Road. Confronted with the likelihood of the site being flooded every few years, the proposal was altered to raise the structure out of the floodway. However, access to the building would still be underwater when the Mississippi periodically overflows its banks. The park was closed in both 2011 and 2012 in spite of the general drought, when heavy spring rains pushed water levels over flood stage. While high water might not overtake the building itself, it would not be useable because access and parking would be underwater.

The ELC is a substantial investment with a cost of over twenty million dollars, which includes an upgrade of the marina.



Hidden Falls Park 2011



Crosby Park Flood 2011

“Frankly, it seems very odd to me to build an ELC intended to teach about the river in a place that is environmentally unsound and which could be inaccessible for several months every couple of years,” said Peggy Lynch.

The proposal for the marina upgrade and the ELC is included in the plan for the Great River Passage. Other parts of the plan will bring exciting enhancements to the area and help restore some lost resources. There are recommendations to convert Shepherd and Warner Roads to parkways, to ‘day light’ streams that empty into the river which in years gone by were diverted into underground culverts, to protect the bluffs in the Highwood area, to restore Hidden Falls Creek, and to provide continuous public access to the river’s edge.

A public hearing will be held by the Saint Paul City Council in March. We suggest you contact your council member to share your ideas about the plan. Melvin Carter represents Ward 1; Dave Thune, Ward 2; Chris Tolbert, Ward 3; Russ Stark, Ward 4; Amy Brendmoen, Ward 5; Dan Bostrom, Ward 6; and Kathy Lantry, Council President, represents Ward 7. All council members can be reached by calling [651-266-8989](tel:651-266-8989). You can also contact them through the city’s website at www.stpaul.gov. If you don’t live in Saint Paul, your comments are still welcome! The river is a vital community resource; while constituent concerns carry the most weight, all voices are important on this most public of public spaces, our Mississippi River.

Twin Cities Army Ammunition Plant Retrospective

The Friends have dedicated more ink to TCAAP over the years than to any other single subject, and for very good reason. TCAAP represents the greatest single open space opportunity in all of Ramsey County. As decades of work move toward a final plan, revisiting the area's storied past seems like a good idea.

In the 1880s, farmers settled the land northwest of Saint Paul and quietly raised crops and grazed animals in an area that remained sparsely populated with few structures. With the beginning of World War II in 1941, the federal government acquired 24,000 acres for the manufacture of small arms ammunition and established the Twin Cities Army Ammunition Plant or TCAAP. It was war time and there was little time for niceties. The property owners had 30 days to vacate their property. Two years later the plant was in full operation. At its peak, 26,000 people were employed there in munitions production.

During peacetime, the plant lay silent. During the Vietnam War, it again produced the tools of war. In 1976, the plant was closed down, never again to be used for armaments production.

The City of Arden Hills incorporated in 1951 and the site was included in the City's boundaries so they have had a strong interest in reuse of the site for nearly 40 years. Plans for the site have been hampered by the former use of the site. In 1981, solvents were discovered in wells in neighboring New Brighton. By 1983, TCAAP was placed on the Federal Superfund list. The Army began cleanup that year, completing their effort in 1991. They cleaned the site to "industrial standards," which are lower than either park or residential standards.

Beginning in 1989 the Friends began advocating that parts of the site be preserved for parks and trails. This included the idea that Rice Creek in the northwest corner should be acquired for usage by canoes and kayaks, and trails be built for pedestrians and bikes.



Test firing WWII munitions at the Twin Cities Army Ammunition Plant

In the first concrete step toward this dream in 2005, Ramsey County received 112 acres from the Army for the Rice Creek trail and parks. Since then, numerous proposals for the rest of the property have been forwarded. This includes suggestions and plans for residential, mixed use, open space, and even the new Vikings football stadium! One barrier to any further development remains the low level of clean-up done by the army.

In 2009, additional land was identified for future parks and open space. The following acres are now dedicated to these public uses: 112 acres - Rice Creek North Regional Trail; 49 acres - future wildlife corridor; 29 acres - future trail head; and 30 acres - future trail corridor.

In a complex transaction in 2012, Ramsey County purchased 427 acres from the federal government and secured a fixed-price demolition and remediation contract for \$22 million. The environmental cleanup will bring areas where housing is slated to a residential standard. Another significant step was accomplished at the end of 2012, when Arden Hills and Ramsey County approved a Joint Powers Agreement establishing a partnership to complete the remediation and restore 427 acres of the TCAAP site for productive reuse. The door is finally open to returning this farmland to peaceful uses!

TREE SALE 2013

After all of the icy and cold days this winter, it is hard to think about springtime planting, but it is time to start planning for new trees and shrubs. The Friends *Tree Sale 2013* is again offering hardy trees and shrubs to purchase for your own yard and for the parks. If you have not received your tree brochure, it is on its way. You can also check our web site, friendsoftheparks.org for an order form, or call 651-698-4543. Pass the word!

Please consider also donating a tree to a park – you can make a real difference! With the spread of the Emerald Ash Borer the parks are losing trees at a fast rate. Your donation will go far to help maintain the canopy we all value.

Again this year, the Friends are offering a “tree gator” to accompany each tree donated to parks. The “gators” are heavy plastic watering bags that zip around the trunk of young trees. The gators are filled regularly so the water gradually seeps into the soil, providing necessary moisture during the trees’ first years after transplant.

Here are the trees and shrubs available for 2013:

Large trees: Valley Forge American Elm; River Birch; Swamp White Oak.

Small/midsized trees: Magnolia Royal Star; Autumn Brilliance Serviceberry; Royal Raindrops Crabapple; Chestnut Crabapple.

Evergreen: Black Hills Spruce.

Shrubs: White Diamonds Hydrangea; Garden Glow Dogwood; Grove Dwarf Burning Bush; Josee Lilac; Music Box Rose.

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of Saint Paul & Ramsey County**
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**CHANGE SERVICE
REQUESTED**

Building Parks and Trails in Ramsey County

Rice Creek Regional Trailhead Development Plan – This proposed trailhead is located off Lexington Avenue just south of County Road J. The proposed development includes parking for 35 cars, a trail and access to Rice Creek for canoe and kayak launching. The proposed development provides direct trail access from the parking lot to the off-leash dog area, separating off-leash dog users from other trail users. The project is scheduled to be constructed this coming summer.

Keller Golf Course Redevelopment Project – To date, the old Clubhouse and Pro Shop as well as all trees impacted by the redevelopment have been removed. Rough grading of the golf course and of the overflow parking lot is underway. Site preparation has begun for the new Clubhouse and Pro Shop, and construction of those structures should be accomplished this fall. The new golf course is set to reopen in late spring 2014.

Vadnais and Sucker Lakes Projects – Paving of the roadway, parking lots and trail between Vadnais Boulevard and County Road F has been completed. Fishing areas were developed along the trail and adjacent to the south parking lot using large limestone blocks. Each of these areas will include benches, as well as trash and recycling receptacles. The trailhead areas, located at each parking lot, the wayfinding signs and turf work will be complete this spring. The contract for the trail north of County Road F was awarded and construction is underway. Final grading and seeding will also be completed this spring.

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