



**Metropolitan Regional Parks System
Regional Parks Policy Plan Update**

**“Gateways to Nature, or A Missed
Opportunity?”**

Presented by

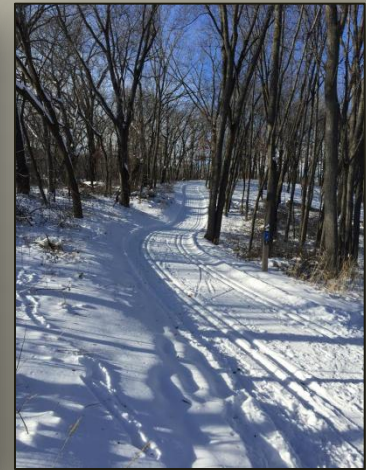
Holly Jenkins, Wilderness in the City

Catherine Zimmer, Women Observing Wildlife-MN

Regional Parks System

Our Nature-based Parks System

1. What You Should Know
2. Valuable Gateways to Nature
3. Regional Parks Policy Plan - Update
4. Suggestions to Strengthen NR Focus
5. What You Can Do



Regional Parks System

What You Should Know

- Established by MN Legislature in 1974
- Key Decision Makers
 - Metropolitan Council
 - Ten Implementing Agencies
- Regional Parks Policy Plan
 - Guides development of the system
 - Establishes criteria for State and MC funding
- Contain significant regional natural resources
- Provide year-around, nature based opportunities



Regional Parks System

What You Should Know

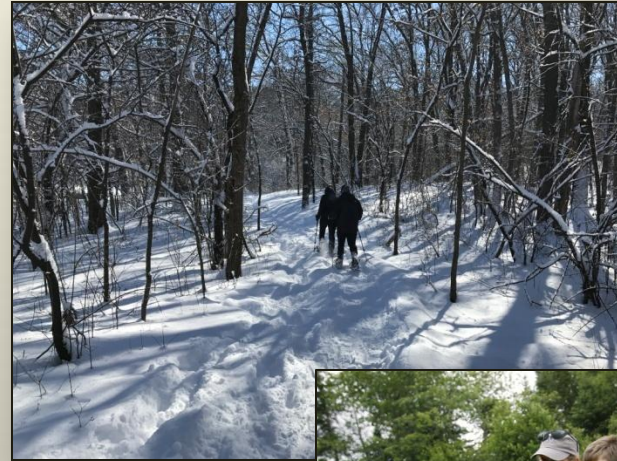
- Represents a major, well-established conservation effort for land and water resources.
- Preserving natural areas with an eye toward the future is critical to our region's livability, sustainability, stewardship, and prosperity.



Regional Parks System

What You Should Know

- Provides nature-based recreation and education opportunities
- Complements amenities and services found in local, state, and federal parks and open space, private sector facilities
- “Cannot..and was never intended to provide all the metropolitan area’s recreational opportunities.” ~
p. 15, RPPP draft update



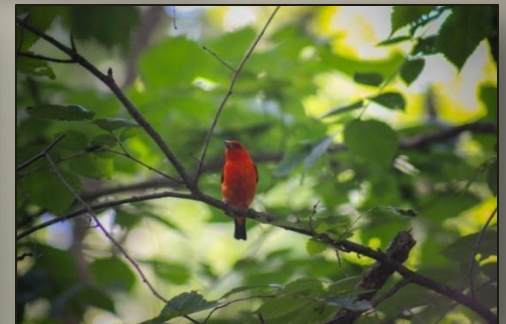
Regional Parks System Gateways to Nature

- Inspire the next generation of stewards



Regional Parks System Gateways to Nature

- Inspire the next generation of stewards
- Increase healthy ecosystems for pollinators and other wildlife



Regional Parks System Gateways to Nature

- Inspire the next generation of stewards
- Increase healthy ecosystems for pollinators and other wildlife
- Improve health and wellness by providing access to nature, close to home



Regional Parks System Gateways to Nature

- Inspire the next generation of stewards
- Increase healthy ecosystems for pollinators and other wildlife
- Improve health and wellness with access to nature, close to home
- Increase broad public support for our natural environment



Regional Parks System Gateways to Nature

- Inspire the next generation of stewards
- Increase healthy ecosystems for pollinators and other wildlife
- Improve health and wellness with access to nature, close to home
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Regional Parks System Gateways to Nature

- Less: asphalt, manicured/treated turf, degraded woodlands, built infrastructure



- More: porous surfaces, pollinator gardens and native grasses, restored woodlands, access to natural environments



Regional Parks System Policy Plan Update

- Trending towards more built infrastructure
- Compared to previous plans, it chips away at NR language
- Contradictions and is increasingly subject to interpretation
- Lacks accountability for NR restoration and management
- Overlaps Met Council's transportation planning with park planning



The Legacy Amendment

- 2008 Session laws, Ch. 151-H.F. 2285:

“Shall the Minnesota Constitution be amended to dedicate funding to **protect our drinking water** sources; to **protect, enhance, and restore our wetlands, prairies, forests, and fish, game and wildlife habitat**; to preserve our arts and cultural heritage; to **support our parks and trails**; and to **protect, enhance and restore our lakes, rivers, streams, and groundwater** by increasing the sales and use tax rate beginning July 1, 2009, by three-eighths of one percent on taxable sales until the year 2034?”
- Most voters: “Clean water and protecting **Nature**”



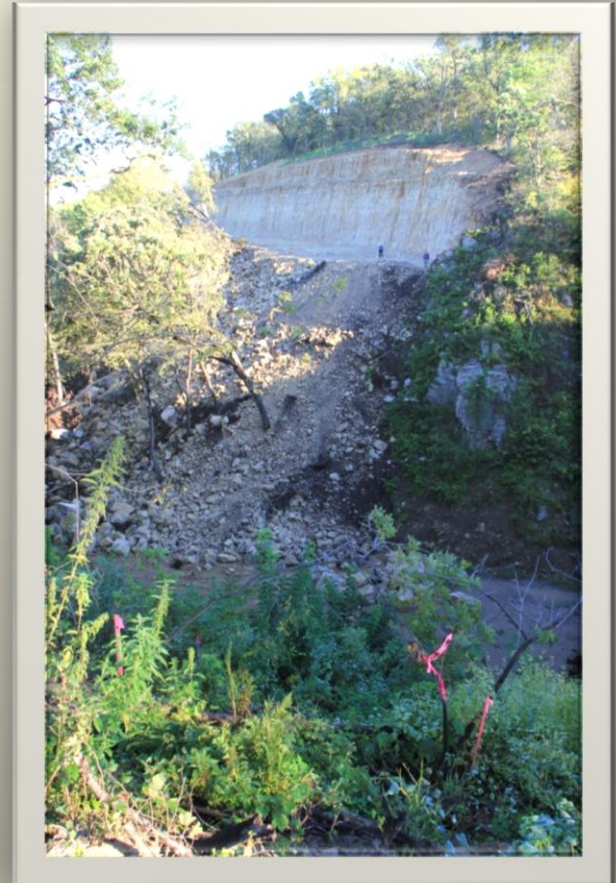
Regional Parks & The Legacy Amendment

- Four funds
 - Clean Water: 33%
 - Outdoor Heritage: 33%
 - Arts & Culture: ~20%
 - Parks and Trails: ~ 14%
 - 40% to Met Council > “Park Implementing Agencies” (PIA)
- Guidance for spending
 - Parks and Trails Legacy plan
 - Citizen input: Protect Nature, create next generation of stewards
 - RPPP
- 2010-2016 spending
 - Eighty percent on construction
 - Less than 3% on natural resource conservation, protection and restoration



Legacy Parks & Trails money in regional parks

- New and expanded parking lots
- Buy diesel generators
- Build pole barn
- New maintenance facility
- Rehabilitate new trails
- Remodel headquarters building



Regional Parks System Suggestions for Policy Plan

GOALS:

- Strengthen accountability towards management of natural resources within the Regional Parks System
- Maintain the integrity and achieve full potential of a nature-based parks system for education and recreation opportunities
- Leave “A Legacy of Nature”

Now and future generations of people and will benefit of high quality natural settings, close to home

“Don’t it always seem to go
that you don’t know what you’ve got
till it’s gone.” —Joni Mitchell



Regional Parks System Suggestions for Policy Plan

Strengthen accountability of natural resource management

- Following approval of Master Plan's, implementation reports at least every three years. (*Chapter 5*)
- Projects submitted for funding should include (a) an review by ecology consultant to meet criteria of minimal impacts and (2) summary of how the project will benefit the integrity of the parks system. (*Chapter 5*)
- For regional parks, revise criteria to “Accommodates a variety of **low-impact** outdoor recreation activities” (*Chapter 4, Table 4.1*)

Regional Parks System

Suggestions for Policy Plan

Strengthen integrity of recreation and education opportunities in a nature-based parks system

- Revise criteria for Regional Parks to “Accommodates a variety of **low-impact** outdoor recreation activities” (*Chapter 4, Table 4.1*)
- Secondary or support activities are currently undefined. Adding amenities to a natural setting does not make an activity “nature-based”. As such, this language needs to be removed from, or must be clearly defined in, the Policy Plan prior to its adoption to prevent potential duplication of amenities and to minimize conflicts with natural resource opportunities. (*Chapter 7, page 92*)
- Regional trails serving a transportation function should be provided around the outside of regional park/park reserve boundaries; trails within park boundaries should only provide a recreation function (*Chapter 7, Strategy 4*)

Regional Parks System Suggestions for Policy Plan

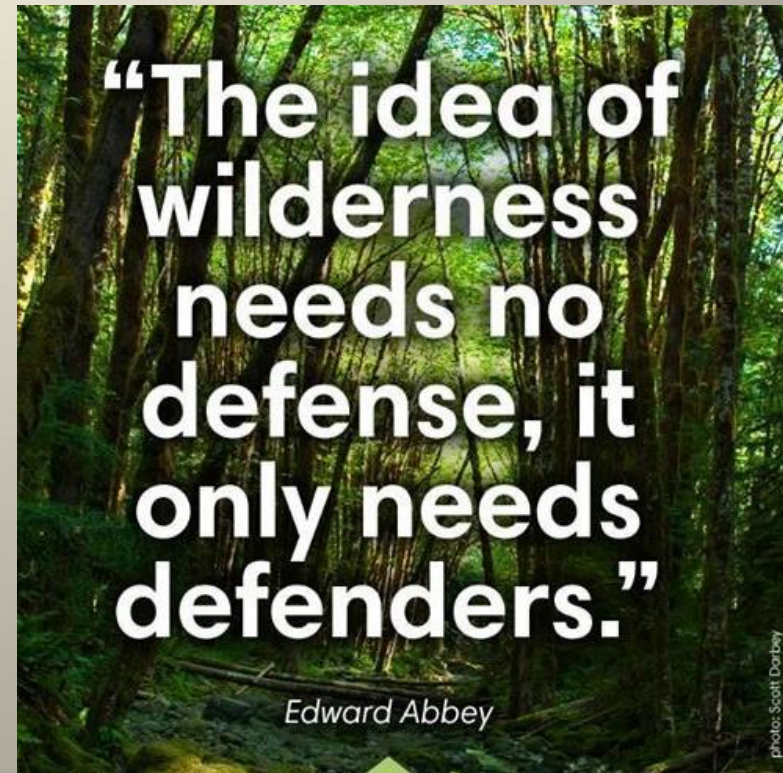
Leave A Legacy of Nature

- Support use of bonding dollars for natural resource restoration (Ch. 8, p. 103, lines 16-19)
- Oppose use of Legacy monies for any new construction projects; funding for renovation or expansion projects must meet highest level of sustainable practice as defined by LEED certification or other comparable system. (Ch. 8, Strategy 3)
- Assure goals of Parks and Trails Legacy Plan are met for taking care of what we have, including natural resource stewardship, and engaging the next generation of stewards.
- Increase equitable use of the Regional Parks System by investing in outreach and building awareness of the role Regional Parks have in the overall system.

Regional Parks System

What You Can Do

1. Attend the public hearing and comment on the plan on Mon., 9/17, 4pm at Met Council
2. Submit written comments *and copy your MC member* by 5pm on Thurs., 9/27: public.info@metc.state.mn.us
3. Tell Others
4. Learn more at:
 - www.metrocouncil.org/parks.aspx
 - www.wildernessinthecity.org



Questions/Comments?

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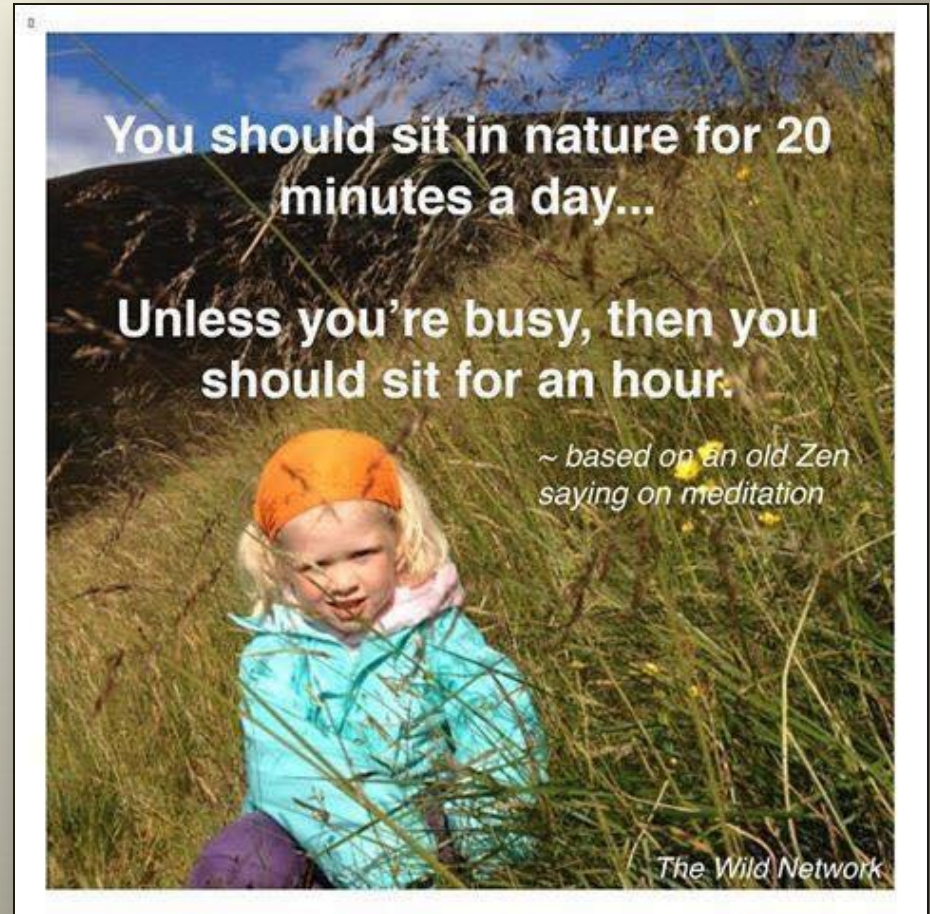
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Thank you!