

A Legacy of Nature Campaign

WHAT: A campaign to ensure that healthy ecosystems are restored and preserved throughout our metropolitan regional parks system, providing year-around, affordable, nature-based opportunities to inspire the next generation of environmental stewards, and critical habitat for wildlife.

WHY: Because contrary to what voters intended when they supported the 2008 Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment, the majority of spending throughout our nature-based Metropolitan Regional Parks System has focused on the built environment, to the detriment of our valuable Nature-based Parks System.

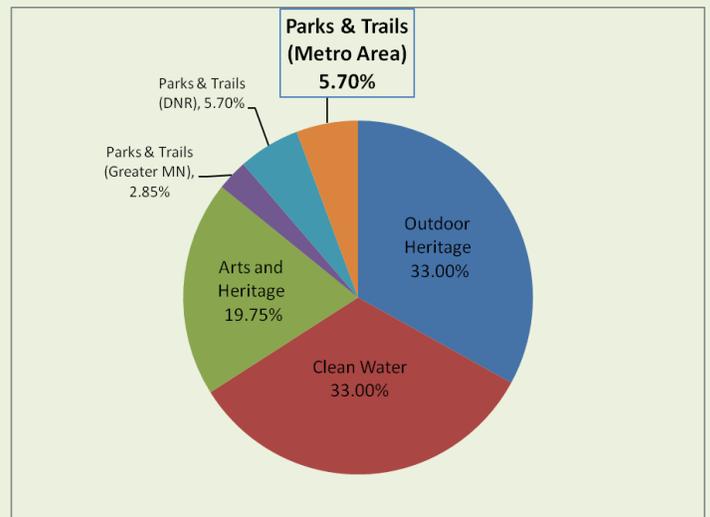
For our Nature-based parks, what will be our Legacy? Gateways to Nature, or... More Built Infrastructure?



(A Legacy of Nature, continued inside)

The **Legacy Amendment** is a conservation amendment.

- The **Metropolitan Regional Parks System** contain habitats for endangered species, fens, prairies, wetlands, woodlands and water resources.
- Revenue from the Legacy Amendment is divided into various funds as shown below.



- **5.7% Metro Share = \$40 million** for 2019 legislative approval and appropriated for fiscal years 2020-21.
- If approved without change, the majority of spending will go towards increasing the built environment throughout our nature-based parks.

Thanks to all who attended the 2nd annual "Our Wilderness, Our Future"

Will Steger's presentation and awe-inspiring images reminded us all of the impact we can make by working together to help mitigate the effects of climate change.

Our sincere thanks to: *Conservation Minnesota* for sponsoring Will Steger's presentation, *School of Environmental Studies* for use of their event space, *Dakota County Parks Natural Resources staff* for their presentation on restoration at Lebanon Hills, and special guests *State Senators Jim Carlson and Greg Clausen*.



Standing room only for Will Steger's presentation "Eyewitness to Global Warming"

You're invited!

Wilderness in the City's Annual Meeting and Social Event



Wed., Feb. 27, 6:30-8:30pm
Bald Man Brewing, Eagan

Keynote Speaker: Dr. Seth Stapleton, Field Conservation Supervisor for the Minnesota Zoo, will present "Conservation at the MN Zoo: Saving wildlife in our backyards and around the world."

Details at www.wildernessinthecity.org

Conflicts in Parks and Trails Legacy Spending

The Metropolitan Regional Parks System encompasses 55,000 acres, including 30,700 acres designated as *Regionally Significant Ecological Areas*. These valuable resources are stressed and degraded throughout the system, and built infrastructure is further threatening these open spaces.

Public Priorities Through the Years Natural Resource Preservation

2008: Minnesotans passed the Legacy Amendment—most people cited clean water and preserving Nature as their reason for voting YES.

2011: The 25-year Parks and Trails Legacy Plan, developed by the DNR with significant public engagement, defines an overarching vision as "protecting natural resources and creating the next generation of stewards."

2018: The DNR 10-year Legacy report finds the public's top priority for Park and Trails Legacy spending is "Take Care of Natural Resources." Ranked lowest is "Develop New Facilities."



Actual Spending Through the Years New Construction & Expansion of Built Environment

- Construction administration and other costs for buildings, retaining walls, plaza spaces, and asphalt trails
- Excavation, grading, paving and concrete work, lighting for parking lots, and associated entrance drives.
- Wave pool mechanical filtration system, golf course clubhouse septic system, maintenance shops, and administrative offices.

One of the most conflicted uses of Legacy dollars was to help fund a project at Spring Lake Park Reserve which resulted in extensive and irreversible damage to that park's natural landscape.

If this trend continues, Legacy amendment consequences will be diminished nature-based recreation and education opportunities, degraded wildlife habitats, and increased but unfunded ongoing-maintenance expenses throughout the metro region.



How Appropriations are Made

Parks and Trails Fund: No central advisory body reviews or evaluates all requests.

By comparison, all other Legacy fund proposals are reviewed and recommended by an oversight committee or a legislative committee.

Outdoor Heritage Fund: Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council, a 12-member group, reviews all requests and makes recommendations.

Clean Water Fund: Clean Water Council, a 28-member group reviews all requests and makes recommendations.

Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund: Proposals and requests to fund specific projects are brought forth to legislative committees for approval.

Regional Parks Policy Plan vs. 25-Year Parks & Trails Legacy Plan

Policy Plan: Created by the Metropolitan Council with ten regional park implementing agencies. It is updated every four years, most recently in 2018, and defines criteria for development, which is different than the *Legacy Plan*.

Legacy Plan: Created over a period of 18 months with extensive public engagement. Public input was used to develop strategies and desired outcomes to guide Legacy spending through 2034.

According to the Legacy Plan, to achieve desired outcomes:

- Funding should be based on project merit, not on a formula
- Legacy should be invested in a balanced approach toward the four strategic directions defined in the 25-year plan.

That is not what's happening. Currently, parks and trails Legacy funding is appropriated to park implementing agencies based on a formula. If Met Council staff determines projects are consistent with their *Regional Parks Policy Plan*, the implementing agencies are free to establish their own priorities on how to spend the Parks and Trails Fund money they receive.

If this trend continues, desired outcomes of the Legacy plan will not be met in the metro region.

A Crucial Time for our Nature-based Parks

The Regional Parks System represents a major, well-established conservation effort for land and water resources, and can increase the resilience of the region and reduce the impacts associated with climate change. It is our responsibility and duty to preserve these regionally significant ecological areas for future generations of people and wildlife.

Given the current trend, our Legacy will be more built infrastructure and diminished natural resources

NOW: Buckthorn is pervasive; manicured and treated turf is excessive; natural space is being fragmented and replaced with asphalt; more built amenities duplicating what we already have in other park systems.



However, with a rebalance of Legacy spending toward the desired outcomes of the 25-year Legacy Plan:

Going Forward: Healthy woodlands, prairies and water bodies; native landscapes and sustainable infrastructure; nature-based opportunities for education and recreation; ecosystems that support diverse wildlife.



Advocacy at the State Legislature

To help assure Parks and Trails Legacy conservation fund spending meets taxpayer's expectations, Wilderness in the City, in collaboration with other individuals and organizations, is requesting legislation to:

- 1. Rebalance spending for Metro Area Parks and Trails Legacy Fund to require a 50% minimum investment toward conservation goals, which will create high-quality nature-based opportunities for the next generation of stewards.**
- 2. Establish a technical oversight committee to review and recommend projects proposals.**
- 3. Expand capacity of the DNR Restoration Evaluation program to review and evaluate completed parks and trails Legacy projects.**

What you can do:

- **Contact the Legacy Committee Chairs** and request their support for legislation to amend the process for metro area Parks and Trails Legacy project approval:
 - Sen. Carrie Ruud, Chair, Senate Legacy Finance Committee sen.carrie.ruud@senate.mn 651-296-4913
 - Rep. Leon Lillie, Chair, House Legacy Finance Division, rep.leon.lillie@house.mn 651-296-1188
- **Contact your State Legislators** and request they support Nature, not new development, with Parks & Trails Legacy funds
- **Stay Informed and Tell Others:** Join our email list and "like" us on Facebook
- **Learn more at wildernessinthecity.org/legacy-of-nature**

"The value of nature as an essential aspect of our health, creativity, intelligence, and wellbeing is often overlooked.

Yet when nature is diminished, so are we."

~Richard Louv, author of *Last Child in the Woods*

Thank you for supporting A Legacy of Nature campaign

Keeping Lebanon Hills "Forever Wild"

Regional Parks vs. Regional Park Reserves

BOTH

- contain a diversity of nature-based resources
- accommodate a variety of outdoor recreation activities

REGIONAL PARKS

- typically 200-500 acres in size
- no established criteria for developed acres vs. natural acres

REGIONAL PARK RESERVES

- minimum size 1,000 acres
- development limited to 20% of park reserves
- remaining 80% must be managed as natural lands that protect the ecology functions of the native landscape



Lebanon Hills was initially established as a Regional Park. With more than 1,900 acres and a current development footprint under 20%, Lebanon Hills clearly meets the threshold of a Park Reserve.

To assure the development footprint remains low, and the majority of the park continues to be managed as natural lands, Wilderness in the City requests that the Dakota County Board of Commissioners amend the Master Plan and re-classify Lebanon Hills as a Regional Park Reserve. Going forward, this would help to prevent development creep, support ongoing management of a mostly natural landscape, and would support the County's motto "Forever Wild"—especially at Lebanon Hills.

Join us at Lebanon Hills for Natural Resources Volunteer Events!

A fun and informative way to help restore and preserve the park, and build a community of stewards for future generations.

2019 Schedule of Events

- Tues., Apr 30, 6-8pm Garlic Mustard Challenge with training/pull
- Thurs., May 2, 6-8pm & Sat., May 11, 8-11am Garlic Mustard Challenge with training/pull
- Thurs., June 6, 6-8pm Activity TBD
- Thurs., July 11, 6-8pm Japanese Hedge Parsley with training/pull
- Thurs., Aug. 8, 6-8pm Japanese Hedge Parsley with training/pull
- Thurs., Sept 12, 6-8pm Native Seed Collection

Schedule is subject to change and additional volunteer opportunities may be added. Be sure to check our website for updates, and for registration information.

THANK YOU VOLUNTEERS!



Wilderness in the City

Dedicated to preserving and enhancing urban natural areas for future generations of people and wildlife.

Far too often, natural space in urban areas is viewed as empty and needing to be filled, or is left unmanaged and degraded.

We have a different vision.

Our nature-based regional parks system is filled with opportunities for environmental education, low-impact recreation, and valuable wildlife habitat. They offer places for respite, close to home and accessible to all, from the built world around us.

Support our Efforts

We are a grassroots, 501(c)3 nonprofit organization fully supported by your donations. All donations are 100% tax-deductible. Thank you for your support!

Stay Informed

Visit www.wildernessinthecity.org
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Our Board

Holly Jenkins, President
Maryann Passe, Vice-President
Barry Shillingford, Treasurer
Barry Graham, Secretary
Mike Fedde
Paul Mandell
Jean Oberle
Wendy Paulsen

*Interested in joining our Board?
We'd love to hear from you!*

*Contact us at
wildernessinthecity@gmail.com*

**Wilderness in the City
is a proud member of**

