

# Metropolitan Regional Parks: A Legacy of Nature Campaign

## Why an Amendment to the Process is Needed

There are conflicts between the 25-year Parks and Trails Legacy plan and how the Parks and Trails Legacy funds are being used in the metro area. If current practice continues, the desired outcomes as defined by the Legacy Plan may not be realized for the regional parks system, and that is why a change is needed.

HF2703 will bring the Regional Parks into greater compliance with the 25-year Legacy Plan and better meet citizens expectations for the Legacy Amendment. It will also greatly improve transparency and accountability for how these park and trails funds are being invested.

## Brief Background

2008 Legacy Amendment passed -- most who supported it cited preserving nature and clean water as their reason for voting "yes". Language in the amendment states: "to support parks and trails..."

Upon passage, people had different thoughts on what "*support*" meant, so the legislature wisely mandated the DNR to create a *25-year Parks and Trails Legacy Plan* to guide how the funds should be spent.

- Creating that plan took 18-months, involved more than 1,000 citizens from around the state, and was completed in Feb. 2011.
- It's overarching vision was protecting natural resources and creating a next generation of stewards.
- It outlined four strategic directions, desired outcomes, and guidelines, including funding guidelines, to achieve those outcomes.

Prior to completion of the 25-year plan, park implementing agencies and the met council determined that the best way to allocate their portion of funds was through a formula distribution system similar to how they allocated bonding dollars. This distribution formula was formalized in statute and continues to guide how funds are distributed.

- Parks and trails Legacy funding for the metro regional parks was viewed as an additional source of funding for capital development.
- This distribution formula was not revised following completing of the 25-year plan -- despite the fact that the Legacy Plan states that funding should NOT be allocated by a distribution formula, which directly conflicts with how the current funding is being allocated.
- Grants are awarded in a non-competitive process which lacks transparency or opportunity for meaningful public involvement.

## Flaws in the current project approval process

- those requesting/approving the projects are same people spending the money
- approves funding for undefined projects
- lacks transparency and accountability
- no meaningful oversight of the individual project request or the comprehensive list
- funding is distributed based on a formula, rather than by merit, which disregards the 25-year Plan guidelines

*Met Council has repeatedly stated their hands are tied because the process is based on statute and can only be revised with legislative action. Therefore, we are seeking an amendment to the current statute.*