



Greater Minnesota Parks & Trails *Connections*

Monthly Newsletter

March 2015

Important Dates

Friday, April 10
Board of Directors Meeting
9:30 a.m.
Stearns County Parks Dept. Office
1802 County Rd 137, Waite Park

Wednesday, August 19
Membership Meeting
9:30 a.m.-noon
ITV Locations (by county):
Becker Redwood
Beltrami Roseau
Brown St. Louis
Douglas Wright
Isanti
Olmsted
Polk

2014-2015 Board of Directors

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Legislative Update

The Legislature is currently in the middle of a 10-day Easter/Passover break, and when they return April 7, the hard work of crafting omnibus bills will begin.

March 27 was the second deadline for policy bills, which means is that policy bills (unlike finance bills) must have made it through all relevant committees in both the House and Senate by that date. If a bill was not heard by then, it likely means that it is “mostly dead” for this session. We say “mostly” because if a top legislator likes a bill or provision well enough, sometimes they maneuver around the deadline. This is rare, however.

Thus, a number of bills that we were concerned about will not likely reappear this year, such as SF 674 and 675, which would have required permission of all local governments and 80% of adjacent landowners and residents for parks and trails purchased with Legacy money. HF 1071, which would prohibit the use of eminent domain for parks purposes, was not heard, either. A second bill, HF 698, that would prohibit the use of Legacy funds to purchase property acquired through eminent domain

March GMPT Member Meeting Wrap-Up

The GMPT held its regular quarterly member meeting on March 18 via ITV. The approximately 30 members in attendance had the chance to discuss in-depth the various bills impacting Greater Minnesota’s parks and trails introduced during this year’s legislative session (many of which are described in the “Legislative Update” above).

In particular, there was much discussion surrounding a bill that would establish a trail user fee. While the goal of the bill appeared to be to develop a mechanism for funding much-needed trail maintenance, members expressed concern over administrative issues, enforcement, and the barrier such a fee could create to the goal of increasing trail usage. The consensus of the membership was to continue talking with legislators regarding their opposition to this bill, but to note that

was heard in House Legacy Committee last week and a portion of that bill could reappear in the Legacy Omnibus bill. Finally, HF 1656, which would create licenses for bicyclists and rollerbladers, did not receive a hearing, but the concept could be appear in a finance bill.

In April, the House and Senate will put together the Legacy Funding bill which will allocate how the parks and trails fund is spent. We’re in a much better position than in past years to protect the 20% of funding for Greater Minnesota, but we’ll need to be vigilant. The funding request for the Greater Minnesota Parks & Trails Commission will probably result in more discussion, and we’ll call on GMPT members to support the Commission’s request for funding to support its important work.

If you haven’t reached out to your legislators, as suggested in last week’s action alert, please do so before the end of the Easter Break. Also, be sure to keep an eye out for additional GMPT legislative updates and action alerts as activity increases at the Capitol in April and May.

members would work with the GMPT Board to develop alternative ideas to address the maintenance issue over the next year.

Members also heard from Greater Minnesota Regional Parks & Trails Commission (GMRPTC) Chair Al Lieffort regarding the upcoming parks and trails of regional significance application process. GMPT members will remember that parks and trails Legacy funding is beginning its shift from grant administration through the Department of Natural Resources to funding recommendations made by the GMRPTC.

Article continues on next page...

See next page for more!

Grant News

Every Day Capacity Building Grants

The National Environmental Education Foundation (NEEF), with support from Toyota Motor Sales USA, Inc., invites applications from nonprofits for capacity-building grants to protect, improve, and support responsible use of public land and water sites in the United States. The deadline to apply is April 30. More information is able at <http://tinyurl.com/qnhvx4>.

Greater MN Parks & Trails is now 90 members strong!

Visit Greater Minnesota Parks & Trails online at gmrptc.webs.com

March GMPT Member Meeting Wrap-Up

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The funding recommendations will be based on the parks and trails selected from the application process as regionally significant. Liefkort explained that District Planning Committees would be meeting throughout March to further refine "regional significance" for the purposes of the upcoming application round. Liefkort also noted that the GMRPTC has been working very hard to make the application process easier to understand.

What Do You Want From a GMPT Website?

The GMPT Board of Directors has discussed the creation of a new GMPT website in 2015. The organization's [current website](#), although functional, is a free site that is reaching its capacity for document storage and content.

Over the next three to five months, the board will be researching new web platforms. Keeping in mind the group needs to remain

GMRPTC developing new application system

The Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission (GMRPTC) is developing a web-based application process for inclusion in the Statewide System Plan.

The new process will be demonstrated at workshops to be held in each of the six planning districts during the month of May. It

Applications for designation as a park or trail of regional significance are expected to be posted and available for distribution through each of the six districts in early May. Members can follow the GMRPTC's work at <http://legacy.leg.mn/gmrptc>.

The next regular full GMPT membership meeting will be held on Wednesday, August 19, again via ITV.

budget-conscious, the board is interested in hearing more from members about what they'd like to see on the website. More links? More member features? More grant resources and examples?

Please email your thoughts on GMPT website development to greaterminparkstrails@gmail.com.

replaces the paper and e-mail process used last fall as a test run.

Applicants who submitted applications last fall and did not receive a response are asked to notify the Commission Secretary at gmrptcommission@gmail.com.

Featured Park or Trail of the Month: Garvin Park

Garvin Park is located in and along the Cottonwood River Valley, approximately 15 miles from the city of Marshall. The 748-acre park stands out among the prairies of southwestern Minnesota. The large stand of bur oak along the river is a majestic sight in an area of farmland, and the deep ravine and Cottonwood River bottoms provide visitors with an escape from the relentless flat land of the area.

Being that the area is useable for many things and centrally located in the county, Garvin Park draws from a large radius across southwestern Minnesota. It features four campgrounds with 47 sites with electricity. There are five picnic shelters located throughout the park. The park includes of four miles of hiking trails, nine miles of horse riding trails, 1.5 miles of cross-country skiing, and 1.5 miles of snowmobile trails. Garvin Park is open to deer hunting for bow hunters only, and during the spring turkey hunting season.

Garvin Park has been the site of weddings, graduation photos, the Rad Run Adventure Race, the Easter EGG-stravaganza Event, Amateur Radio field day, open air big screen movies, snowshoeing, horseback trail rides,

stargazing clinics, family reunions, graduation celebrations, and a Family Fun Day Event.

Thanks to Brooke Wyffels of Lyon County for submitting information on Garvin Park.



Garvin Park is a great place to enjoy the autumn colors. Photo Credit: Chris Winter, Lyon County GIS