



2017 Legislative Session = Success for Greater Minnesota Parks & Trails

The 2017 legislative session had extremely positive outcomes for Greater Minnesota Parks & Trails. Our organization went into the session with four main goals, and we are pleased to report that we achieved them all!

Goal 1: Obtain much-needed funding for local parks and trails grant programs.

Result: The Legislature appropriated \$1 million (\$500,000 each) for the Outdoor Recreation Grant Program and Local Trail Connections Program. This marks the first direct general fund appropriation for these programs in several years!

Goal 2: Ensure that Greater Minnesota continues to receive a fair share of Legacy funds.

Result: The Legislature agreed to continue to allocate 20% (the amount sought by the GMPT) of the parks & trails Legacy funds to Greater Minnesota, with no carve-outs or earmarks.

Goal 3: Obtain funding for the Greater Minnesota Regional Parks & Trails Commission.

Result: The Commission received \$823,000 in funding over two years to continue its mission to build out Greater Minnesota's Regional Parks System and provide park planning resources to all communities.

Goal 4: Prevent the passage of undue restrictions on parks and trails development, including restrictions on how grant money can be spent.

Result: Bills that aimed to restrict development failed to gain traction at the Legislature and did not pass this session.

Hard work yields positive results!

Here are some actions that GMPT members and our government relations staff took during the legislative session to achieve success:

- We lined up strong leaders in Sen. Carrie Ruud (R-Breezy Point) and Rep. John Poston (R-Lake Shore) to be the chief authors of our grant program funding legislation, and worked closely with them and other key legislators throughout the session to ensure that funding was included in the environment and natural resources finance bill signed by Governor Dayton.
- GMPT members testified at several legislative hearings in support of funding for local parks and trails.
- We held a Legislative Action Day in February, during which members met with numerous legislators to promote our priorities.
- Members responded to multiple GMPT "Action Alerts" by reaching out to their legislators and urging them to support our goals.



Greater Minnesota Parks & Trails: Additional 2016-17 Activities

Legislative Action Day

GMPT members gathered in St. Paul for our third-annual Legislative Action Day, where they received advice on how to successfully lobby and met with their legislators to advocate for parks and trails issues at the Capitol. We also heard from two speakers, Sen. Andrew Lang (R-Olivia), who is a former GMPT member himself, and House Legacy Committee Chair Rep. Bob Gunther (R-Fairmont).

Social Media Launch

- The GMPT launched Facebook and Twitter (@GreaterMNPT) accounts to share real-time updates on legislative activity, funding opportunities, information about our members' parks and trails, and more.
- The GMPT also created a Communications Committee that aims to discover new ways to promote the organization, engage our current members and help recruit new ones.

Membership Growth

- GMPT membership has reached an all-time high with 104 members!
- We welcomed our first corporate member, WSB & Associates.
- We launched a new Membership Committee focused on recruitment efforts.

Advocacy Success with DNR

- In the past, the Legislative Citizens Commission on Minnesota Resources (LCCMR) provided funding for local parks and trails grants programs. However, it has not done so in the last decade. The GMPT has made bringing back this funding a priority, but cannot apply for the funding.
- GMPT Chair Marcia Larson and lobbyist Elizabeth Wefel met with DNR Assistant Commissioner Sarah Strommen and Parks & Trails Director Erika Rivers in September to advocate that the DNR make an application for LCCMR funds for the local parks and trails grants programs.
- The GMPT began a concerted effort to urge the DNR to make this application. Our members' efforts included sending emails, writing letters and making phone calls to DNR Tom Commissioner Landwehr and other key officials.
- In April, DNR Parks & Trails Director Erika Rivers informed us that Commissioner Landwehr had directed that the DNR Parks & Trails Division make an LCCMR application for this funding.