



Advocacy for Local Parks and Trails Grants Benefits Even More Members

Over the last three years, Greater Minnesota Parks & Trails (GMPT) has made funding the Department of Natural Resources' local parks and trails grant programs a top priority. This year, we sought both general fund money and funding from the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund (ENRTF) for these programs. We are pleased to report that we secured \$1 million from the general fund and \$3 million through the ENRTF.

Due to our successful efforts to secure this funding over the last several years, even more cities and counties received grants from these programs, including multiple GMPT members. The cities of Austin, Aitkin, Duluth, Luverne, North Mankato, Oronoco, Princeton and Red Wing, as well as Sherburne County, received grants this year to develop trails, walkways and pedestrian bridges; install fishing piers; improve ADA access, create overlooks, and undertake other important improvements.

Protected Greater Minnesota's Share of Legacy Funding and Supported Greater Minnesota Regional Parks & Trails Commission

The GMPT advocated on three funding issues this year related to the Legacy funding bill. We sought to ensure that:

- Greater Minnesota's 20% share of the parks and trails portion of the Legacy fund was protected.
- Legislators did not earmark any Legacy funds for a specific project.
- The Greater Minnesota Regional Parks & Trails Commission (GMRPTC) received funding for the next two years.

We were pleased that the final Legacy bill signed into law protected the 20% share for Greater Minnesota without any specific project earmarks. Although we were disappointed that general fund dollars were not made available for the GMRPTC, we did secure Legacy funding for the commission to continue its important work.

Prevented Restrictions on Parks & Trails Development

Playing defense against detrimental legislation is an important part of our work. This year, the House's version of the Legacy bill included a provision that would have made it almost impossible for a park or trail to receive a Legacy grant if it had received funding from any other sources. We worked with other organizations to remove this provision from the final bill.

2019
Legislative Session

Building on Success for Greater Minnesota Parks & Trails



Members Take Action and Help Grow Future Leaders

In February, GMPT members convened in St. Paul for the annual “Legislative Action Day” to push for expanded funding for parks and trails. This year, a group of students from Minnesota State University, Mankato’s Parks and Recreation Department joined us to help advocate and learn about the political challenges that parks departments face. In addition to lobbying at the Capitol, GMPT members and the university students met with DNR Commissioner Sarah Strommen, Senate Legacy Chair Carrie Ruud and Mankato-area Senator Nick Frentz.

Encouraged Kids to Enjoy the Outdoors

Engaging youth in outdoor activities is a high priority for many park and trail organizations. The GMPT advocated in support of a new “No Child Left Inside Grant Program” that will provide grants to expose underserved students to outdoor activities. The Legislature included the program and funding for its first two years in the environmental finance bill.

Preparing For The Future of Legacy Funding

Eight years ago, leaders of our organization (then known as the Greater Minnesota Regional Parks & Trails Coalition), along with leaders from the metropolitan parks and state parks, participated in a task force to determine how Legacy funding for parks and trails should be split. They reached an agreement that metropolitan regional parks and state parks would each receive 40% of the funding and regional parks in Greater Minnesota would receive 20%. The agreement was for three biennial legislative sessions, ending in 2019.

This year, GMPT worked with the DNR, Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission (GMRPTC), and Metropolitan Council to include a provision in the Legacy bill that recreated that task force to consider and make recommendations about the funding formula in the future. The DNR, Metropolitan Council and Greater Minnesota will each have three representatives on the task force, which will meet and make recommendations to the Legislature for future funding. The GMRPTC will select the Greater Minnesota representatives, but it has requested that GMPT nominate one of the three to represent our organization during the discussion.

Get updates from the GMPT!

If your city, county, or organization is a member of the GMPT, we’d love to get you on our mailing list for our electronic newsletter and other updates.

Email us at greaterminparkstrails@gmail.com to sign up!