

## **GMPT Legislative Update Forum AI Summary – March 27, 2026**

*This article was created by AI summarizing key points discussed. AI makes mistakes, so for full details and context, please refer to the video of the full meeting.*

### **Quick recap**

Elizabeth Wefel, lobbyist for the Greater Minnesota Parks and Trails association, provided a mid-session legislative update to members during a forum focused on the first and second committee deadline. She discussed the legislative calendar, explaining that bills not heard by committee deadlines are generally considered dead, though deadlines can be extended with majority votes. Elizabeth covered key priorities including a commission request for legacy funding extensions, bonding requests for local park and trails grants programs, and Environmental Natural Resource Trust Fund (ENRTF) funding. She also addressed legislation of concern, including a controversial off-highway vehicle trails bill that was defeated in the Senate, and a proposed grant monitoring requirement that was pulled from committee. The session concluded with guidance for members on how to engage with their legislators during the upcoming legislative break.

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### **Summary**

#### **Legislative News and Updates Meeting**

Elizabeth began the meeting by discussing recent legislative news, including the arrest of Elliott Engen, a candidate for state auditor, on DUI charges. She noted that this incident balances out since there is now one candidate with a DUI charge from each party.

#### **Legislative Session Update Meeting**

Elizabeth provided a legislative update during a meeting about the current status of the session. She explained the first and second committee deadlines, which occurred that day, and outlined the legislative calendar, including the upcoming break from April 7th to April 18th and the constitutional adjournment date of May 18th. Elizabeth confirmed that there would be no special session this year, as the legislature does not need to complete any mandatory tasks beyond the regular session.

## **Legislative Session and Omnibus Bills**

Elizabeth discussed the current legislative session, noting that bipartisanship was brief and few bills have passed before deadlines. She explained the trend toward omnibus bills packaging multiple related topics together, rather than stand-alone single-subject bills. Elizabeth also mentioned an interesting court ruling by Judge Julian Castro regarding a massive omnibus bill passed in 2024.

## **Legislative Developments and Goals**

Elizabeth discussed recent legislative developments, including a court ruling that invalidated a gun control law due to violating Minnesota's single subject rule. This ruling may impact how legislation is packaged during the current session, potentially making it less likely for the Senate to pass large omnibus bills. Elizabeth reviewed their commission's legislative goals, including updating statutory language for the commission and extending legacy funding for several members. She expressed confidence that the legacy extensions would pass, though they would need to be included in the upcoming Legacy Omnibus bill after the break.

## **Park Grants Legislative Update**

Elizabeth updated the group on recent legislative efforts regarding park and trails grants funding. She reported that Brad Harrington testified at a bonding request hearing, where they are seeking \$4 million instead of the governor's proposed \$1 million. Elizabeth encouraged attendees to ask their legislators to support bills [S.F. 4420](#) and [H.F. 4265](#), which still need additional sponsors. She also discussed the Environmental Natural Resource Trust Fund (ENRTF) funding, noting that while the Senate had approved \$18 million for community grants, House Republicans were creating delays due to concerns about the community grants program and an anti-mining video that included LCCMR funding symbols.

## **Trail Maintenance Grant Cap Updates**

Elizabeth discussed ongoing efforts to increase the \$750,000 cap on trail maintenance grants, noting that the House GOP has raised concerns about the adequacy of this amount for larger rehabilitation projects. She reported that a bill introduced by Representative Warwas regarding motorized trails was not advancing after productive discussions with

stakeholders, including GMPT board member Sarah Thompson. Elizabeth also mentioned a bill regarding land acquisitions funded through the Environmental Natural Resource Trust Fund, which the House passed but the Senate laid over, with uncertain prospects due to opposition from some senators in northern Minnesota.

### **Minnesota Off-Highway Trail Legislation**

Elizabeth discussed two pieces of legislation affecting off-highway trails in Minnesota. The first bill, which she described as controversial, would change how off-highway vehicle trails are designated and governed, including creating a process where residents could petition to decommission trails. While the Senate did not vote on the bill, Elizabeth noted that key supporters like Senator Hauschild were opposed, making passage unlikely. Elizabeth briefly mentioned the second bill at the end of her discussion.

### **State Grant Site Visit Bill**

Elizabeth discussed a proposed finance bill that would require unannounced site visits for organizations receiving state grants over \$50,000, with annual visits required for grants over \$250,000. She expressed concern that this approach creates unnecessary bureaucracy rather than effectively targeting fraud risks. The bill was pulled from committee consideration and may not advance further, though Elizabeth and others will continue to monitor it. She encouraged attendees to connect with their legislators during the upcoming legislative break and attend any available office hours or town halls to build relationships before needing specific assistance.

### **Local Funding Legislative Process Discussion**

Elizabeth discussed the legislative process for bonding and local sales tax bills, noting that while regular bills must pass by April 17th, bonding bills have a different timeline with passage expected closer to session end. She emphasized the importance of engaging with legislators, particularly during spring break, to discuss local park and trail grant funding needs and encourage them to support related bills. Elizabeth clarified that the commission's funding request will likely be packaged with the Outdoor Heritage Fund and must be completed by May 18th, though she expressed hope for earlier passage. Both Elizabeth and GMRPTC Executive Director Renee Mattson urged attendees to contact their

local legislators about the extensions, particularly those with extensions who are members of their organization.

### **Next Steps**

- All members: Reach out to your legislators to introduce yourself/your organization, discuss recent and upcoming projects, and invite them to visit parks or trails (especially during legislative break).
- All members: Ask legislators to sign on as co-authors to [S.F. 4420](#) and [H.F. 4265](#) (local park and trail grant funding bills).
- All members: Contact legislators to express support for local park and trail grant funding in the bonding bill.
- All members: Get on your legislators' email lists to stay informed about in-district events and opportunities for contact.
- All members: Attend town halls or office hours with legislators during the legislative break (April 7–17).
- Elizabeth and Renee: Closely monitor and advocate for the inclusion and advancement of the Commission's legacy extension bill in the upcoming Legacy Omnibus, ensuring it moves through committee and is passed by May 18th.
- All members with legacy funding extensions (and other affected members): Contact your local legislators to urge support and movement of the Commission's extension bill.
- All members: Watch for and respond to future action alerts from Greater Minnesota Parks and Trails Association.
- All members: Talk to city and county staff and elected officials to build relationships and seek help in advancing funding for parks and trails projects, especially if a bonding bill moves forward.