

Chapter 7: Park Operations and Management

Introduction

The master plan amendment describes development and management activities for Lake Elmo Park Reserve that provides the Parks Division with a template for providing area residents with high quality recreation opportunities in the park for the next 15 to 20 years. County finances, staffing and equipment resources devoted to parks are divided between eight sites within the county park system including Big Marine Park Reserve, Cottage Grove Ravine Regional Park, Grey Cloud Island Regional Park, Lake Elmo Park Reserve, Pine Point Regional Park, Point Douglas Park, St. Croix Bluffs Regional Park and Square Lake Park. A burgeoning population creates a growing demand for recreation facilities along with numerous other public services offered by the county. In addition to a thoughtful plan for park development, it is imperative that the Parks Division follow a strategic plan for implementing improvements and managing and maintaining park lands and facilities. The purpose of this chapter is to:

- Review county ordinances that apply to park management
- Identify costs associated with proposed park improvements and with operating and maintaining the park
- Identify potential funding sources for park development and maintenance
- Provide an overview of manpower sources for park management and maintenance
- Provide an overview of sustainable management practices
- Define measures to be taken to make the public aware of recreation services available in the park

Ordinances

Washington County has adopted Ordinance No. 93, in its regulations, to govern parks that are under its jurisdiction. The stated purpose of the ordinance is as follows: “The Washington County Board of Commissioners deems it reasonable, necessary and desirable to provide an ordinance specifying rules and regulations in order to provide for the safe and peaceful use of Parklands; for the education and recreation of the public; for the protection and preservation of the property, facilities, and natural resources; and for the safety and general welfare of the public.”

The ordinance has functioned as an effective tool for establishing and enforcing rules and regulations for park use and management. The plan does not recommend any changes or modifications to the ordinance.

Energy Conservation

The cost of maintaining high quality park habitats and facilities can be minimized by using sustainable design concepts and management practices. The following is a list of recommendations that will assist in achieving energy conservation goals:

- Engage the use of the LEED Program and principles in the design of building and site facilities such as the proposed nature center, red barn activity center and restroom facilities.
- Select plant materials for park enhancement and habitat improvements that require low maintenance and are functional in their applications such as protecting erodible soils and slopes, providing shade for activity areas, resisting damage or degradation from user impacts, resisting invasive plant infestation, etc.
- Design trail alignments and details to be compatible with soil conditions, topography and drainage patterns. Select trail surfaces that are durable for the type and level of use that is anticipated.
- Utilize products for maintenance and services that are bio-degradable, non-toxic and are able to be recycled.
- Administer an efficient and effective program for recycling waste materials.

The Parks Division's 2005 Park Maintenance Manual contains a detailed park maintenance program that relates to the level of use and development throughout the park system. Use levels are defined as Class 'A', 'B' or 'C' with Class 'A' facilities and park areas having the highest level of development and Class 'C' areas having little development and the least use. This methodical approach helps to achieve timely and energy efficient management of manpower, equipment and other resources. An intricately detailed list of tasks further assists in accomplishing energy conservation objectives. The plan recommends continued use of this type of management approach.

Marketing

Marketing is a term that is commonly used for describing promotion of private businesses and is not often applied to public services, however, a successful marketing plan for both public and private entities must include public relations, pricing, advertising, and sales promotion. It is a process that disseminates information designed to make potential customers aware of the availability of a product or service and to describe benefits to the customers. Effective marketing is an important component of the service that park administrators provide to prospective users.

The marketing program for Lake Elmo Park Reserve should clearly identify the products and services that are being provided and the recreation programs and activities that are available. Prospective visitors should be informed about structured programs, such as the ‘Family Festival and ‘Campfire Programs’, unstructured activities, such as fishing and hiking, and educational opportunities. Park users frequently focus only on activities in which they typically participate. They can benefit from promotion of other activities by enjoying new experiences and the park system can benefit from a general increase in public support and increased revenues.

Successful promotion of services and products relies on frequent and effective communication with the consumer. It is important to disseminate information and to do it in a way that is appealing. Potential users must know about the product or service, but just as importantly, they must be interested enough to devote valuable money and/or time necessary to participate. Tools and strategies that should be used to market the recreation opportunities at LEPR vary widely in their make-up and include the following:

- Flyers produced to describe an event or activity such as the Family Festival and Campfire Programs at LEPR.
- Site maps with descriptions of available facilities.
- Web site text and graphics that are updated on a consistent schedule to provide users with information about facilities and events.
- Identification and traffic signs located within the park to identify facilities and provide clear direction on road and trail routes.
- Identification and traffic signs outside the park that identify the park and provide clear direction for appropriate routes to the park from roads and trails in the surrounding area.
- Frequent publishing of information about park activities and events in publications such as newspapers, newsletters and magazines.
- Public participation processes for planning and design of park improvements and for preparing long range strategic implementation and master plans.
- Cooperative efforts to promote recreation with other public agencies such as the cities of Lake Elmo, Woodbury, Oakdale, major urban centers such as St. Paul and Minneapolis, Washington Conservation District, Ramsey/Washington Watershed District, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, etc.
- Cooperative efforts with the Metropolitan Council on activities like its region-wide awareness program.
- Educational and interpretive programs focusing on topics such natural history, cultural history, ecology and astronomy.

Chapter Seven – Park Operations and Management

- Lessons and instruction for recreation activities such as swimming, archery, cross country skiing, horseback riding, fishing, etc.
- Cooperative efforts with groups such as Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Campfire Girls, equestrian clubs, archery clubs, orienteering clubs, etc. to organize activities and promote use of the park facilities.
- Maintain the park and facilities to be esthetically pleasing and functional. Appearance of a facility often relates to whether it is clean and neat, but appearance also includes mood and ambience. The process or procedures by which one is informed and instructed also have an impact of the user's experience. Rental and reservation procedures should be geared toward providing accurate information about a facility or service. A lack of information, dissemination of misinformation or improper procedures can all influence the quality of the user experience. Public image has significant impact on the success of a park's service to its visitors.
- Project a positive image through the actions, attire and attitude of the park staff. Actions relate to promotional activities and include preparation of high quality maps, brochures, information pieces and news articles. Attire relates to physical appearance of park staff including uniforms and personal grooming. Attitude refers to the courtesy, helpfulness, and sincerity of park staff when they come into contact with park users. Visitor impressions are greatly influenced by their response to contact with those responsible for managing and operating park facilities, activities and programs.

Private businesses and public facilities become successful as a result of effective marketing which includes providing high quality products and services and then assertive promotion of the offerings. The Washington County Parks Division, historically, has done a good job at marketing Lake Elmo Park Reserve and will continue to employ the necessary tools and strategies to promote the park as its services and facilities expand to meet the growing demand for recreation opportunities.

Cost Estimates

Cost Estimate for Development

The following table includes estimated costs for construction of improvements proposed in the master plan amendment. The estimates are based on 2006 prices and should be adjusted annually for normal inflation.

ITEM		EST. COST
1.	Nature/Interpretive Center	
a.	Site Preparation	\$8,000.00
b.	Grading	\$10,000.00
c.	Parking Lot Improvements	\$20,000.00
d.	Building - 7000 square feet	\$1,295,000.00
e.	Indoor and Outdoor Interpretive Displays	\$50,000.00
f.	Amphitheater - 200 to 250 seats	\$50,000.00
g.	Trail Connections	\$5,000.00
h.	Site Lighting	\$16,000.00
i.	Water Service	\$10,000.00
j.	Electrical Service	\$10,000.00
k.	Turf Establishment	\$9,000.00
l.	Landscaping	\$15,000.00
	Total for Nature/Interpretive Center:	\$1,498,000.00
2.	Miscellaneous Items	
a.	Interpretive Signs for all Park Facilities & Trails	\$15,000.00
b.	Wildlife Blinds	\$6,000.00
c.	Bituminous Road to Equestrian Campground and Archery Range	\$140,000.00
	Total for Miscellaneous Items:	\$161,000.00

Chapter Seven – Park Operations and Management

3. Equestrian Campground and Trailhead		
a.	Site Preparation	\$6,000.00
b.	Grading	\$4,000.00
c.	Guest Parking	\$6,000.00
d.	Electrical Service	\$10,000.00
e.	Water Service	\$10,000.00
f.	Picnic Tables	\$12,000.00
g.	Fire Rings	\$6,000.00
h.	Signs	\$2,000.00
i.	Open Camping Area (utilities & surfaces)	\$10,000.00
j.	Rider Staging Area	\$2,000.00
k.	Horse Tie-up Areas	\$8,000.00
l.	Lighting	\$5,000.00
m.	Barn Improvements	
i.	General Repair	\$40,000.00
ii.	Interior Refinishing	\$65,000.00
iii.	Toilets	\$64,000.00
iv.	Water Service	\$4,000.00
v.	Electrical Service	\$4,000.00
p.	Equestrian Trail	\$15,000.00
q.	Turf Establishment	\$3,000.00
r.	Landscaping	\$15,000.00
s.	Stormwater management	\$10,000.00
	Total for Equestrian Campground and Trailhead:	\$301,000.00

4.	Family Campground	
a.	Site Preparation	\$6,000.00
b.	Grading	\$20,000.00
c.	Bituminous Roads	\$46,000.00
d.	Guest Parking Areas	\$6,000.00
e.	40 Camping Spurs (surfacing)	\$16,000.00
f.	Electrical and Water Hook-ups (all spurs)	\$80,000.00
g.	Fire Rings	\$12,000.00
h.	Picnic Tables	\$24,000.00
i.	Signs	\$3,100.00
j.	Toilet Building	\$90,000.00
k.	Play Area	\$60,000.00
l.	Water Service	\$10,000.00
m.	Electrical Service	\$10,000.00
n.	Turf Establishment	\$12,000.00
o.	Landscaping	\$25,000.00
p.	Stormwater management	\$10,000.00
	Total for Family Campground:	\$430,100.00
5.	Group Campground	
a.	Site Preparation	\$4,000.00
b.	Bituminous Parking	\$6,000.00
c.	Move Barn from North Farmstead	\$35,000.00
d.	Repair Current Barn Site	\$8,000.00
e.	Barn Improvements	
i.	Foundation	\$28,000.00
ii.	General Repair	\$40,000.00
iii.	Interior Refinishing	\$45,000.00

Chapter Seven – Park Operations and Management

iv.	Floor	\$15,000.00
v.	Toilets	\$64,000.00
vi.	Water Service	\$10,000.00
vii.	Electrical Service	\$10,000.00
f.	Two (2) Shelters	\$40,000.00
g.	Turf Establishment	\$2,000.00
h.	Landscaping	\$15,000.00
i.	Stormwater management	\$10,000.00
	Total for Group Campground:	\$332,000.00
6. Primitive Campground		
a.	Site Preparation	\$2,500.00
b.	Grading	\$2,000.00
d.	Bituminous Drive and Park Lot	\$8,000.00
e.	Picnic Tables	\$3,000.00
f.	Fire Rings	\$1,500.00
g.	Water Service at Parking Lot	\$10,000.00
h.	Turf Establishment	\$2,000.00
i.	Landscaping	\$3,000.00
	Total for Primitive Campground:	\$32,000.00
7. Picnic Area Near New Fishing Pier		
a.	Site Preparation	\$2,000.00
b.	Grading	\$2,000.00
c.	Two (2) Picnic Shelters	\$50,000.00
d.	Picnic Tables	\$12,000.00
e.	Bituminous Road and Parking Lot	\$8,500.00
f.	Bituminous Path	\$3,000.00
g.	Water Service	\$10,000.00

h.	Turf Establishment	\$800.00
i.	Landscaping	\$4,000.00
j.	Stormwater management	\$8,000.00
	Total for Picnic Area Near New Fishing Pier:	\$100,300.00
8. Picnic Area Near Existing Large Play Area		
a.	Site Preparation	\$2,000.00
b.	Grading	\$2,000.00
c.	Two (2) Picnic Shelters	\$50,000.00
d.	Picnic Tables	\$12,000.00
e.	Bituminous Path	\$3,000.00
f.	Water Service	\$10,000.00
g.	Turf Establishment	\$800.00
h.	Landscaping	\$4,000.00
	Total for Picnic Area Near Existing Large Play Area:	\$83,800.00
9. Picnic Shelters at Existing Sites		
a.	Site Preparation	\$800.00
b.	Grading	\$1,000.00
c.	Two (2) Picnic Shelters	\$50,000.00
d.	Picnic Tables	\$6,000.00
e.	Bituminous Path	\$2,000.00
f.	Water Service	\$10,000.00
g.	Turf Establishment	\$800.00
h.	Landscaping	\$4,000.00
	Total for Picnic Shelters at Existing Sites:	\$74,600.00

Chapter Seven – Park Operations and Management

10.	Fishing Pier	
a.	Site Preparation	\$800.00
b.	Grading	\$800.00
c.	Pier	\$25,000.00
d.	Bituminous Path	\$1,500.00
	Total for Fishing Pier:	\$28,100.00
11.	Existing Boat Landing Improvements	
a.	Site Preparation including Demolition	\$8,000.00
b.	Grading	\$4,000.00
c.	Bituminous Surfacing	\$24,000.00
d.	Turf Establishment	\$1,200.00
e.	Landscaping	\$4,000.00
f.	Stormwater management	\$8,000.00
	Total for Boat Landing Improvements:	\$49,200.00
12.	Trail Work	
a.	Ski Trail Lighting	\$82,000.00
b.	Snow Making Equipment	\$75,000.00
c.	Mountain Bike Trails	\$65,000.00
d.	Bituminous Trails (5.6 miles)	\$523,353.00
e.	Highway 5 and Railroad Underpasses	\$120,000.00
f.	Nature Trails	\$8,000.00
	Total for Trail Work:	\$631,600.00
13	Field Archery Range	
a.	Site Preparation	\$5,000.00
b.	Grading	\$6,000.00

Chapter Seven – Park Operations and Management

c.	Fourteen Shooting Stations (paths, markers, bales, etc.)	\$28,000.00
d.	Three Elevated Shooting Platforms	\$15,000.00
e.	Signs	\$3,000.00
f.	Bituminous Parking Lot	\$17,000.00
g.	Turf Establishment	\$4,000.00
h.	Landscaping	\$8,000.00
i.	Stormwater management	\$10,000.00
	Total for Field Archery Range:	\$96,000.00
14. Target Archery Range		
a.	Site Preparation	\$3,000.00
b.	Grading	\$2,000.00
c.	Ten (10) Shooting Stations	\$15,000.00
d.	Two (2) Elevated Shooting Platforms	\$10,000.00
e.	Signs	\$2,600.00
f.	Turf Establishment	\$1,500.00
g.	Landscaping	\$6,000.00
	Total for Target Archery Range:	\$40,100.00
15. Red Barn Activity Center		
a.	Site Preparation	\$10,000.00
b.	Grading	\$8,000.00
c.	Barn Improvements	
i.	General Repair	\$125,000.00
ii.	Interior Refinishing	\$125,000.00
iii.	Window/Façade Improvements	\$50,000.00
iv.	Kitchenette	\$50,000.00
v.	Toilets	\$64,000.00
vi.	Deck	\$20,000.00

Chapter Seven – Park Operations and Management

vii.	Interpretive Displays	\$10,000.00
d.	Bituminous Access Road	\$50,000.00
e.	Access Road Bridge	\$40,000.00
f.	Bituminous Parking Lot	\$60,000.00
g.	Site Lighting	\$16,000.00
h.	Bituminous Path	\$2,400.00
i.	Trail Connections	\$1,500.00
j.	Water Service	\$10,000.00
k.	Electrical Service	\$10,000.00
l.	Turf Establishment	\$3,500.00
m.	Landscaping	\$15,000.00
n.	Stormwater management	\$12,000.00
	Total for Red Barn Activity Center:	\$682,400.00
	Total for All Proposed Improvements:	\$4,540,200.00

Cost Estimate for Maintenance and Operations

The following table includes estimated maintenance and operations costs related to new facilities proposed in the Master Plan and existing facilities that are proposed to be retained. The estimates are based on 2004 and 2005 expenses related to existing facilities. The table further includes unit estimates for maintenance of park landscapes. The values should be adjusted annually for normal inflation.

Chapter Seven – Park Operations and Management

ITEM		EST. COST
1	New Facilities	
a.	Nature/Interpretive Center	\$75,000.00
c.	Equestrian Campground and Trailhead	\$7,000.00
d.	Family Campground	\$14,000.00
e.	Group Campground	\$200.00
f.	Primitive Campground	\$100.00
g.	Picnic Area Near New Fishing Pier	\$2,000.00
h.	Picnic Area Near Existing Large Play Area	\$2,000.00
I.	Picnic Shelters at Existing Sites	\$2,000.00
j	Fishing Pier	\$500.00
k	Existing Boat Landing Improvements	\$1,600.00
m.	Field Archery Range	\$1,000.00
n.	Target Archery Range	\$500.00
o.	Red Barn Activity Center	\$20,000.00
	Total O & M Costs for New Facilities:	\$125,900.00
2.	Existing Facilities	
a.	Contact station	\$40,000.00
b.	Ski Shelter	\$425.00
c.	Swimming pond and building	\$11,563.00
d.	Existing Modern Campground	\$26,300.00
e.	Existing group campground	\$300.00
f.	Existing primitive campground	\$100.00
g.	Equestrian campground building	\$200.00
h.	Maintenance shop	\$36,304.00
I.	Play areas	\$2,200.00
j	Picnic shelters	\$12,500.00

Chapter Seven – Park Operations and Management

k.	Beach	\$44,000.00
l.	Boat launch	\$1,600.00
m.	Fishing pier	\$500.00
n.	Entrance gate	\$450.00
o.	Mechanical equipment maintenance	\$34,500.00
p.	Pasture and cropland	\$55.00
	Total O & M Costs for Existing Facilities	\$299,626.00
3. Invasive Plant Control		
a.	Removal of buckthorn in forests	\$3,000/Ac
b.	Removal of herbaceous exotics (garlic mustard, spotted knapweed, Canada thistle, etc.) from forests	\$900/Ac
c.	Removal of herbaceous exotics (garlic mustard, spotted knapweed, Canada thistle, etc.) from grassland	\$550/Ac
d.	Removal of herbaceous exotics (reed canary grass, purple loosestrife, barn grass, etc.) from wetlands	\$600/Ac
4. Landscape Restoration		
a.	Restore prairie on old field areas and current cropland	\$3,500/Ac
b.	Restore savanna using small trees and acorns	\$6,000/Ac
c.	Restore savanna using 2" balled and burlapped trees	\$12,000/Ac
d.	Restore forest using small trees and acorns	\$7,000/Ac
e.	Restore forest using 2" balled and burlapped trees	\$12,000/Ac
f.	Restore wetlands	\$3,500/Ac
5. Long Term Landscape Management and Invasive Plant Control		
a.	Prairie	\$550/Ac
b.	Savanna	\$750/Ac
c.	Forests	\$1,200/Ac

d.	Wetlands	\$600/Ac
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Maintenance and Operations Expenses

The 2004 Washington County Parks Division Annual Report indicates that the total expenditures throughout the park system, for operations and maintenance in 2004, was \$1,884,848. Funds to cover operations and maintenance expenses originated from the following sources. The dollar amounts do not apply directly to Lake Elmo Park Reserve but relate to the county park system as a whole.

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|---|--|-----------|
| • | County tax levy | \$735,677 |
| • | Metropolitan Council Grants | \$243,365 |
| • | Minnesota DNR Grants | \$102,000 |
| • | Washington Conservation District Grant | \$8,457 |
| • | Natural Resource Conservation Service Grants | \$1,796 |
| • | Cash donations from private sources | \$1,100 |
| • | Revenues from user fees and charges | \$731,087 |

The Parks Division also worked cooperatively during 2004 with several organized groups and individuals in maintaining the parks and providing service to park users as indicated on the following list. The services and worker-hours indicated do not apply directly to Lake Elmo Park Reserve but relate to the county park system as a whole.

- Sentence to Service - Provided 12,831 worker-hours performing tasks such as cleaning buildings, buckthorn removal, splitting wood, painting, general maintenance assistance and recycling.
- Youth Service Bureau - Provided 100 worker-hours performing general maintenance tasks for park buildings and grounds.
- Washington County Sheriff's Reserves and Mounted Patrol - Spent 1,606 worker-hours on the patrol in the parks.
- Tree Trust Projects - Provided 2,559 worker-hours performing minor construction and clean-up tasks.
- Adult, youth and scout volunteers - Provided 1,917 worker-hours hosting park programs, performing clean-up tasks and minor construction projects and conducting surveys.
- Campground hosts - Provided 163 service in providing park security, camper assistance and building and grounds maintenance in exchange for free camping.

Chapter Seven – Park Operations and Management

The work performed by organized groups and individuals, in consort with full-time county staff, is extremely beneficial in performing specific, short-term projects. It is generally most efficient to assign routine maintenance tasks, with some exceptions, to full or part-time staff. The accomplishments of volunteers and outside organizations allow the Parks Division to focus more of its time on day to day tasks with fewer interruptions from the need to perform special projects. The Washington County Parks Division “2005 Park Maintenance Manual” lists the following assignments for routine maintenance at Lake Elmo Park Reserve:

- Mow and brush trails
- Inspect trail signs
- Mulch and water trees
- Wrap and trim trees
- Trim shrubs
- Inspect erosion control dams
- Maintain prairies
- Spray herbicides for noxious and broadleaf weed control
- Fertilize trails
- Locate tables and litter receptacles
- Install and remove snow fences
- Paint and repair buildings as needed
- Remove hazard trees
- Inspect boundary and interior fences
- Inspect rental property for painting and repairs
- Sweep parking lots and bike trails
- Clean buildings
- Fill pool
- Maintain landscape irrigation system
- Shutdown and start water systems
- Install swim facility P.A. system
- Install concession equipment
- Start refuse service as needed

Revenue Sources

The cost information included in this chapter will be used by the Parks Division to prepare budgets as required to accomplish construction of park improvements and implementation of routine maintenance and special tasks such as invasive plant control and revegetation of the park.

Potential funding sources for capital improvements, acquisition and on-going special projects such as invasive plant control and landscape restoration are as follows:

- County tax levy
- Metropolitan Council Grants
- Minnesota DNR Grants
- Washington Conservation District Grant
- Natural Resource Conservation Service Grants
- Cash donations from private sources
- Minnesota DOT
- Cities
- Foundations
- Corporations

Potential funding sources for expenses related to maintenance and operations are as follows:

- County tax levy
- Metropolitan Council Grants
- Minnesota DNR Grants
- Washington Conservation District Grant
- Natural Resource Conservation Service Grants
- Cash donations from private sources
- Revenues from user fees and charges
- Cities (assistance from cities such as Lake Elmo, Oakdale and Woodbury could be in the form of financial contributions and/or shared manpower and equipment)
- Foundations
- Corporations

