

Melissa and Mark Hortman Memorial State Park Work Group

State Parks Overview

November 9, 2026

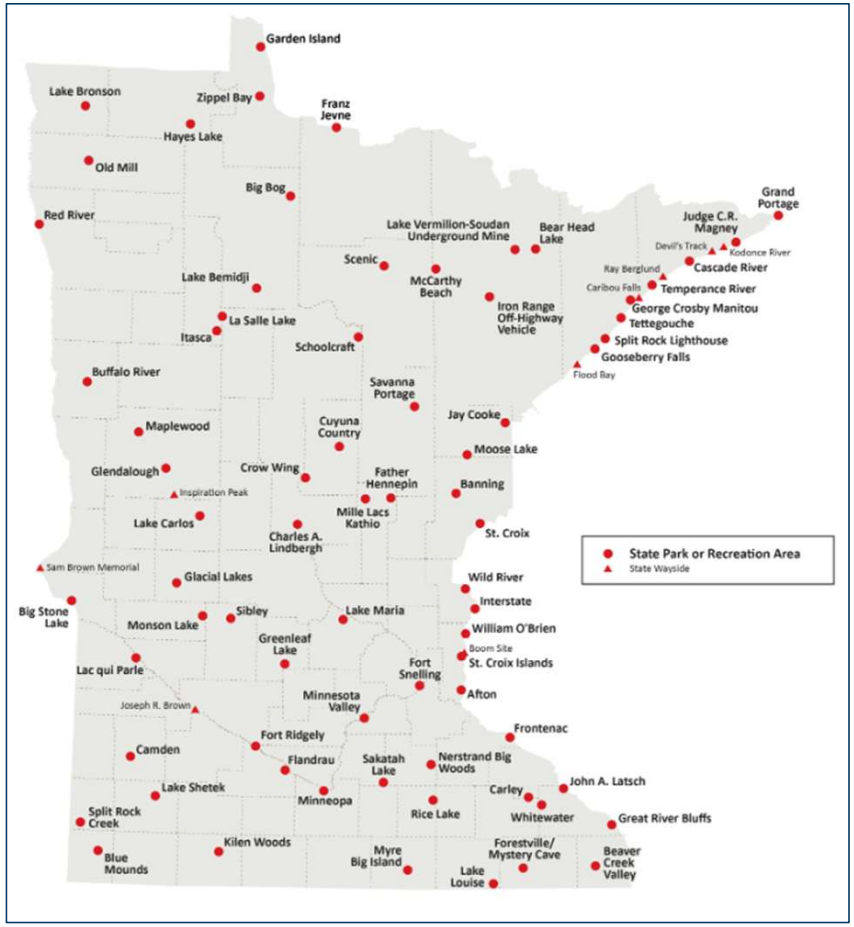
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Overview

- Background information:
  - What is included in Minnesota's state park system?
  - What is the purpose of state parks?
  - How are they established?
  - How are they funded?
- Examples of coordination with other state partners - MN Historical Society
- Considerations and Q&A



Minnesota DNR State Park System



What's included in Minnesota DNR's state park system?

- Minnesota has 64 state parks and 9 state recreation areas around the state, covering about 240,000 acres.
- They serve over 12 million visitors, both for day-use and overnight camping, as well as interpretive and skill building programs.

Purpose of State Parks

State Parks are part of **Minnesota's Outdoor Recreation Act (ORA)** (Minnesota Statutes 86A.05), which creates a unified system of public lands and waters for the public to enjoy, while also conserving the natural and cultural resources within them.

The broad purpose of state parks is to:

- **Protect and perpetuate** Minnesota's representative and unique natural and cultural resources
- **Provide for people's use and enjoyment** of these places in a way that does not impair them for the future
- **Help people understand these special resources** through interpretation and education

Other units in the ORA are state recreation areas (which have more flexibility for outdoor recreational use), state trails, scientific and natural areas, state wilderness areas, state forests, wildlife management areas, aquatic management areas, water-access sites, wild and scenic rivers, and state historic sites.

Creating and Establishing a State Park



- Respond to **public momentum** for creating a state park
- Establish **authorizing language in M.S. 85.012.**
  - Each park is **named in statute.**
  - The commissioner of natural resources is authorized to acquire by gift or purchase the lands to be included in the **state park boundaries**, which are clearly defined in statute.
  - **Land may be acquired or deleted** from the boundaries over time through legislation.









- Create a **master plan** for the vision of the state park

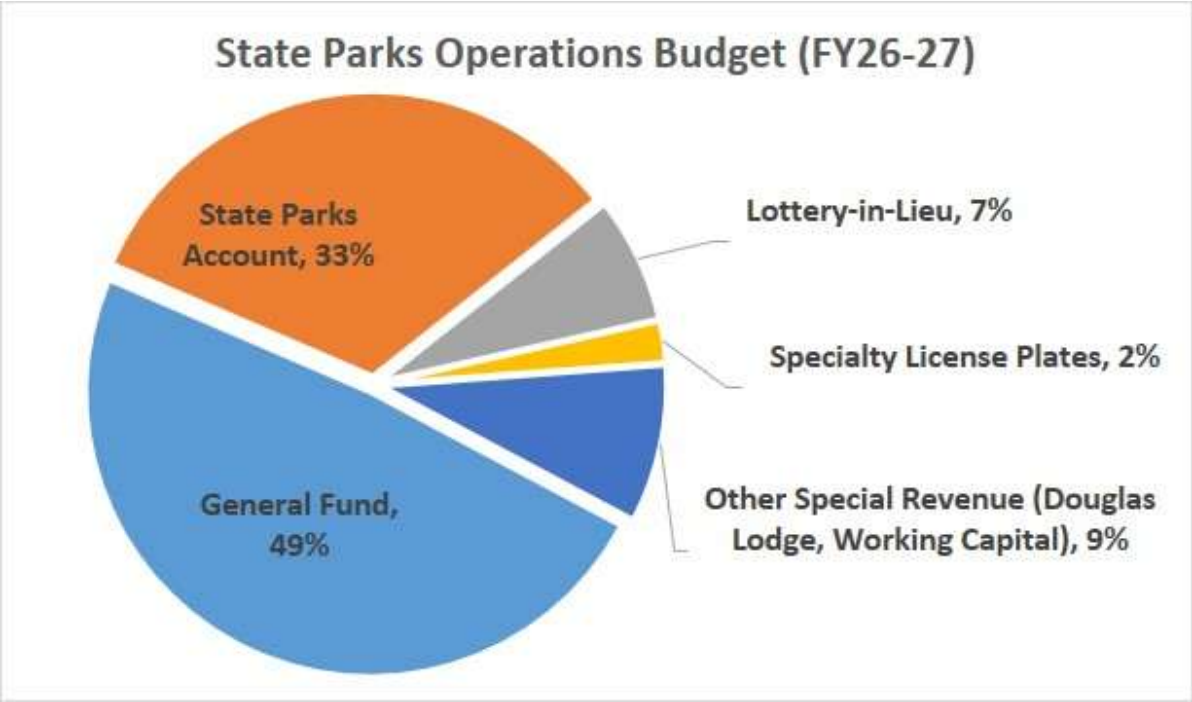


- **Fund the state park**, e.g., for any necessary acquisition, development, operations and maintenance, signage, programming and staffing

Funding Sources

State park operations and maintenance is funded by:

- **General Fund**
- **NR Fund - State Parks Account** (from state park permit fees)
- **Lottery-in-Lieu**
- **Other Special Revenue** (e.g., Douglas Lodge, Working Capital)
- **Specialty License Plate** (State Parks and Trails Plate)



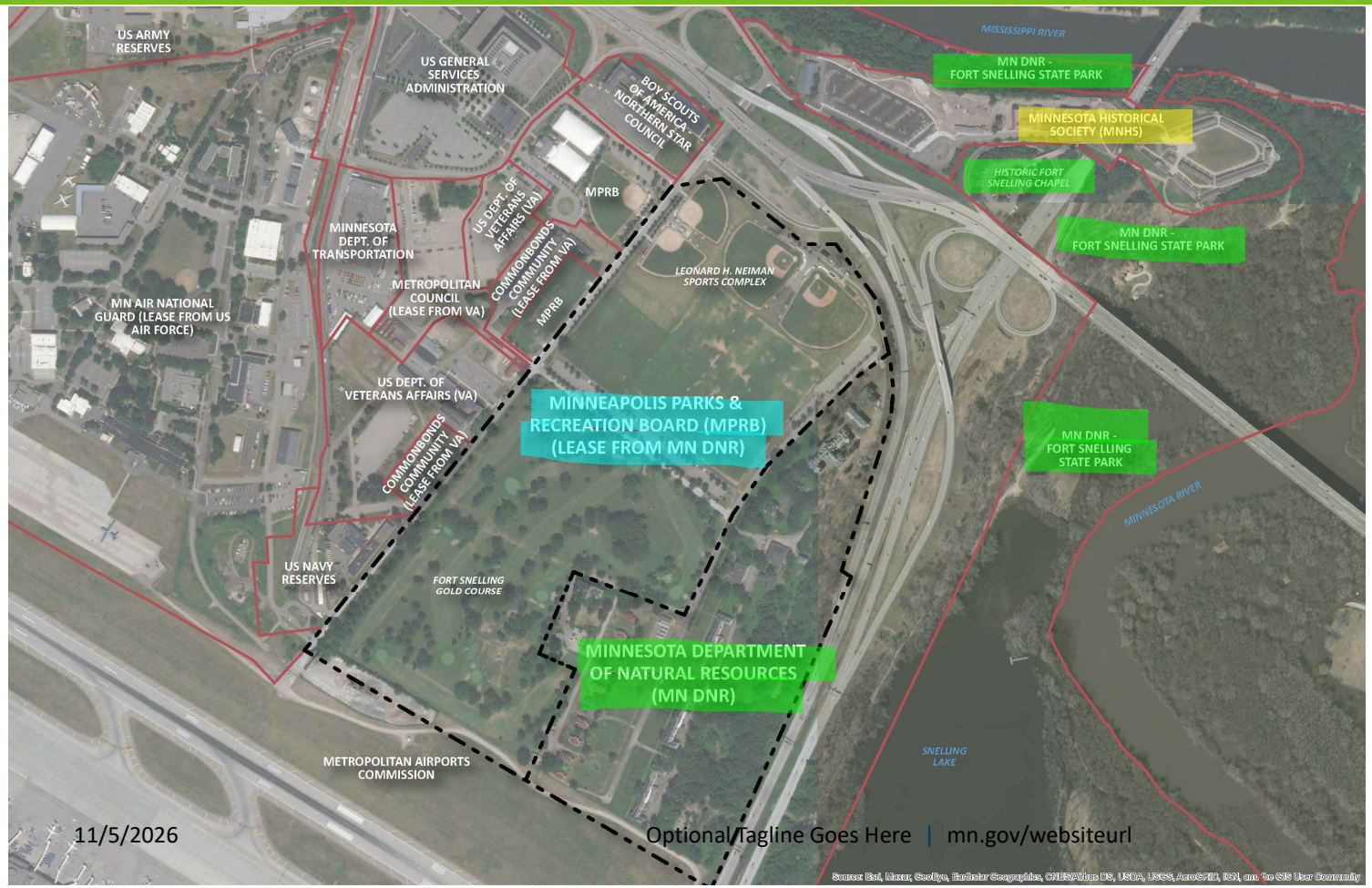
MN DNR Regularly Coordinates with the MN Historical Society

Examples:

- Fort Snelling State Park
- Forestville-Mystery Cave State Park
- Split Rock Lighthouse State Park



Examples of Coordination: Fort Snelling Complex



Includes the state park, historic site, sports complex, etc.

- MN DNR Parks and Trails
- MN Historical Society
- Minneapolis Parks and Rec Board

The broader location includes the Veterans Affairs, Mn DOT, Scouts, etc.

Considerations for Uniquely Creating a Memorial State Park

- Minnesota statutory authorization and geographic boundaries
- Rules and regulations – permit entrance fees and what is legally allowed
- Public expectations for available services and activities, including interpretation, programming, events and outdoor recreation
- Natural resources conservation
- Facility development, maintenance and rehabilitation over time

Considerations:
Statutes, Rules and Regulations

- State Parks require the purchase of an annual or daily vehicle permit and there are also many park rules, e.g., related to pets, allowable activities, groups, special events, etc.
- A memorial state park at the capitol would not have the same rules and regulations as a typical state park. Some may apply while others may not.





Considerations: Signage, Interpretive Programming, Special Events, and More

The MN Historical Society has existing successful interpretive programs, tours and events

See your capitol restored to awe-inspiring glory! Discover its incredible history, art, and architecture. Connect with its amazing stories.



Free guided tours



Self-guided tours



Suggested itinerary



Legislative



Field trips



Events calendar

DNR will need to complement MNHS' work. E.g., coordinate around signage, existing programs, etc.







Thank You!

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