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# **Le Sueur County, MN**

**Tuesday, June 26, 2018**

**Board Meeting**

## **Item 4**

**9:35 a.m. Tyler Luethje, Parks Director (25 min)**

***RE: I&S Update on the Lake Washington Park & Campground***

**Staff Contact:**



# 2018 LAKE WASHINGTON REGIONAL PARK + CAMPGROUND MASTER PLAN

LE SUEUR COUNTY, MINNESOTA // JUNE 27, 2018

ISG



# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thanks to the following agencies and individuals for their support and involvement in the Lake Washington Regional Park and Campground Master Planning Project:

## LE SUEUR COUNTY

Tyler Luethje, Parks Director

## LE SUEUR COUNTY COMMISSION MEMBERS

District 1: David Gliszinski

District 2: Joe Connolly

District 3: John King

District 4: Lance Wetzel

District 5: Steven J. Rohlfig

## TASK FORCE MEMBERS

John King, County Commissioner & Le Sueur County Parks Board Member

Steve Rohlfig, County Commissioner & Le Sueur County Parks Board Member

Charles Richter, Le Sueur County Parks Board Member

Larry Maruska, Le Sueur County Parks Board Member

Mike Schultz, Le Sueur County Parks Board Member

Brigid Tuck, Le Sueur County Parks Board Member

Mark Volkenant, Le Sueur County Parks Board Member

Sue Holicky, Campground Caretaker

Tom Holicky, Campground Caretaker

Jim Folden, Lake Washington Improvement Association President

## LE SUEUR COUNTY PARKS BOARD MEMBERS

Larry Maruska, Chairman

Mike Schultz, Vice-Chairman

Brigid Tuck, Secretary

John King

Charles Richter

Steve Rohlfig

Mark Volkenant

## PROPOSER AND IMPLEMENTING AGENCIES

### MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES:

To work with citizens to conserve and manage the state's natural resources, to provide outdoor recreation opportunities, and to provide for commercial uses of natural resources in a way that creates a sustainable quality of life.

### LAKE WASHINGTON IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION:

To create and/or maintain a Lake Washington environment to the advantage of Association members, lake residents and users.

### NEY ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION FOUNDATION GROUP:

To manage and protect the Ney Wildlife Preserve through education and interaction with the natural world.

## PLANNING TEAM

ISG

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## CONTACT

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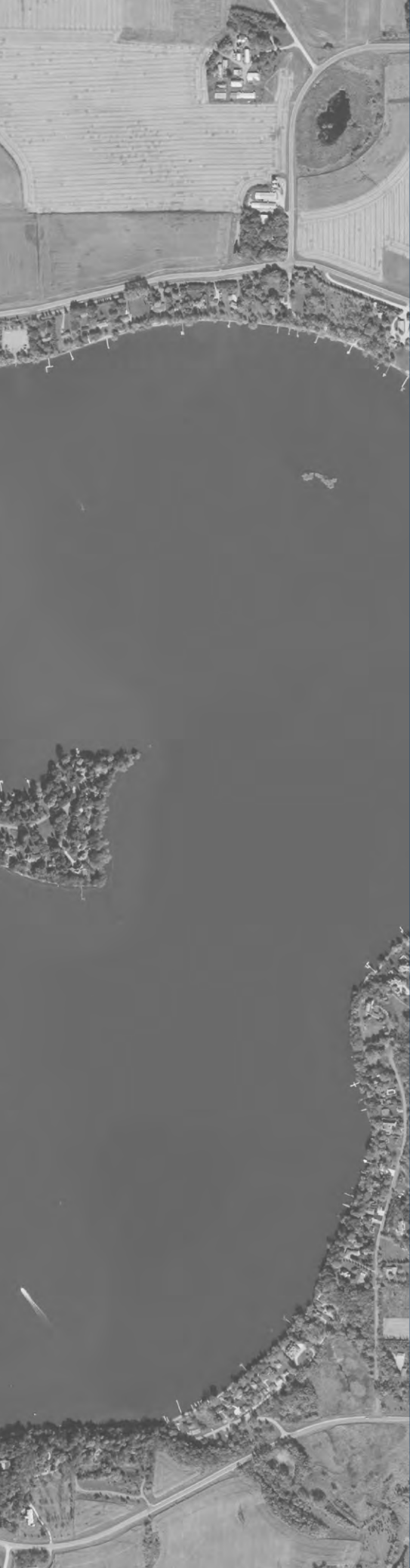
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# INTRODUCTION

## BACKGROUND

Located in Southern Minnesota, Lake Washington Regional Park and Campground is in Kasota Township at the northwest corner of Lake Washington in Le Sueur County. Lake Washington Regional Park and Campground provides a natural resource-based setting and numerous outdoor recreation facilities and activities that allow visitors to experience the outdoors. This Park draws visitors from a wide region in southern Minnesota. It has a close proximity to Sakatah Singing Hills State Trail, Minneopa and Sakatah Lake State Parks, and the communities of St. Peter and Mankato, among others. This Park offers a variety of natural settings and is located on the shore of Lake Washington.

## HISTORY

Le Sueur County is named after the Great French Explorer, Pierre Charles Le Sueur, who traveled up the St. Peter's River, now known as the Minnesota River, in 1700. The county seat of Le Sueur County is Le Center.

The closest large cities this Park serves are Mankato (population 39,309) and St. Peter (population 11,196). Other small cities nearby include Cleveland, Kasota, Eagle Lake, and Madison Lake. Le Sueur County population is 28,111. Mankato is the fourth largest city in Minnesota outside of the Minneapolis/Saint Paul metropolitan area. Mankato is the Blue Earth County seat, which is located along a large bend of the Minnesota River at its confluence with the Blue Earth River.

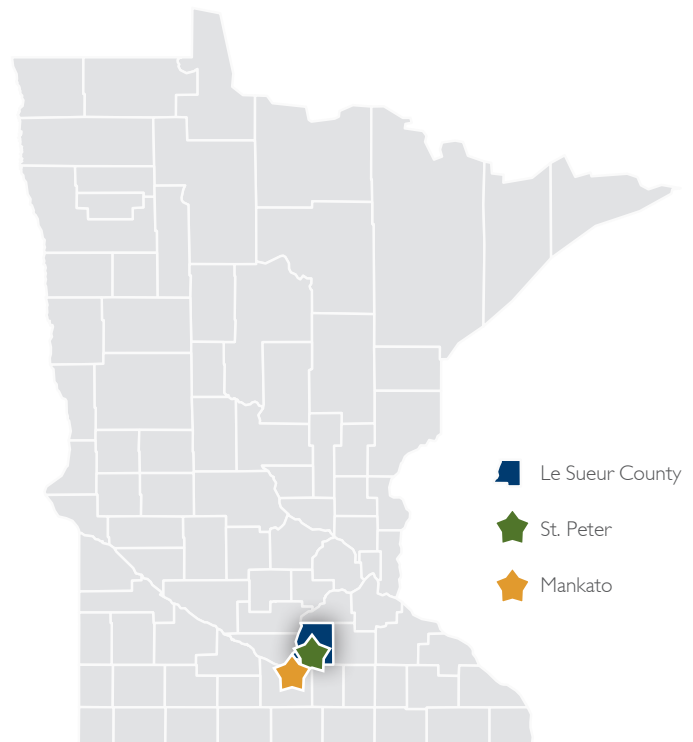
Besides the lake homes on Lake Washington, the area is predominantly agricultural land with corn and soybean crops. During the 1970's, residential development was beginning to take over much of the lakeshore along Lake Washington. Hoping to preserve the little remaining undeveloped land along the lake, the County purchased land from two separate farm families with the intention of providing a public Park for the enjoyment of everyone in the area. In 1971, Le Sueur County formally established Lake Washington Park with the purchase of 111 acres from the Theresa Baur Estate. In 1978, a second piece of adjoining property totaling 52.81 acres was purchased from the estate of Garvin Lurth and added to the Park. Together, these two properties total **166.81 acres** with nearly one mile of lakeshore along Lake Washington.

With federal, state, and county support and assistance, a headquarters building was built in 1979, and it is now known as the Community Center Building.

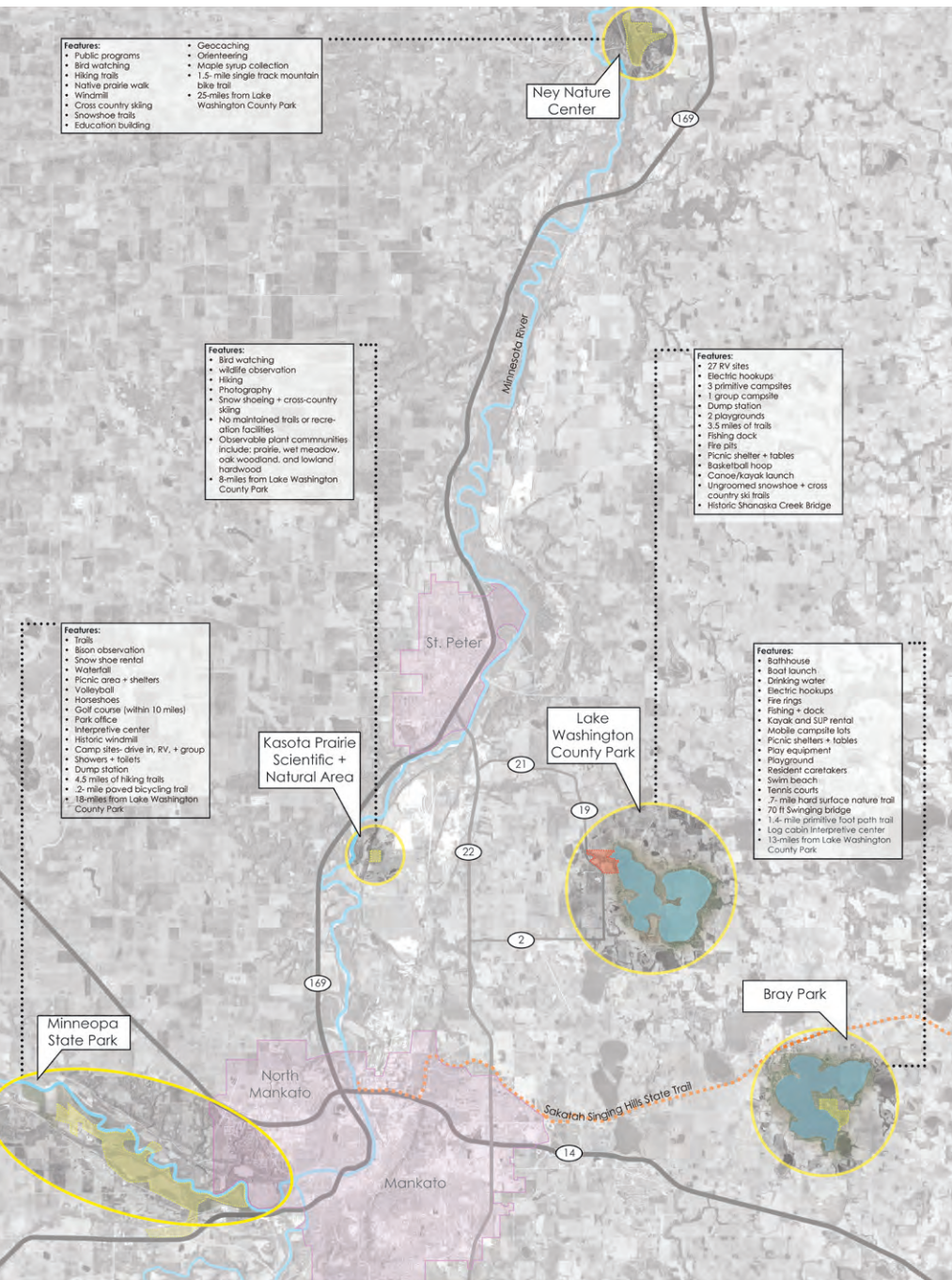


TOTAL PARK AREA - 166 ACRES

ONLY PUBLIC PARK ON LAKE WASHINGTON  
COUNTY POPULATION: ~28,111



# SETTING AND REGIONAL CONTEXT



## STATE

Lake Washington Regional Park and Campground is located near the Mankato and North Mankato Metropolitan Area and the City of Saint Peter. Together, these areas support a rapidly growing population currently estimated at 97,204.

## REGION

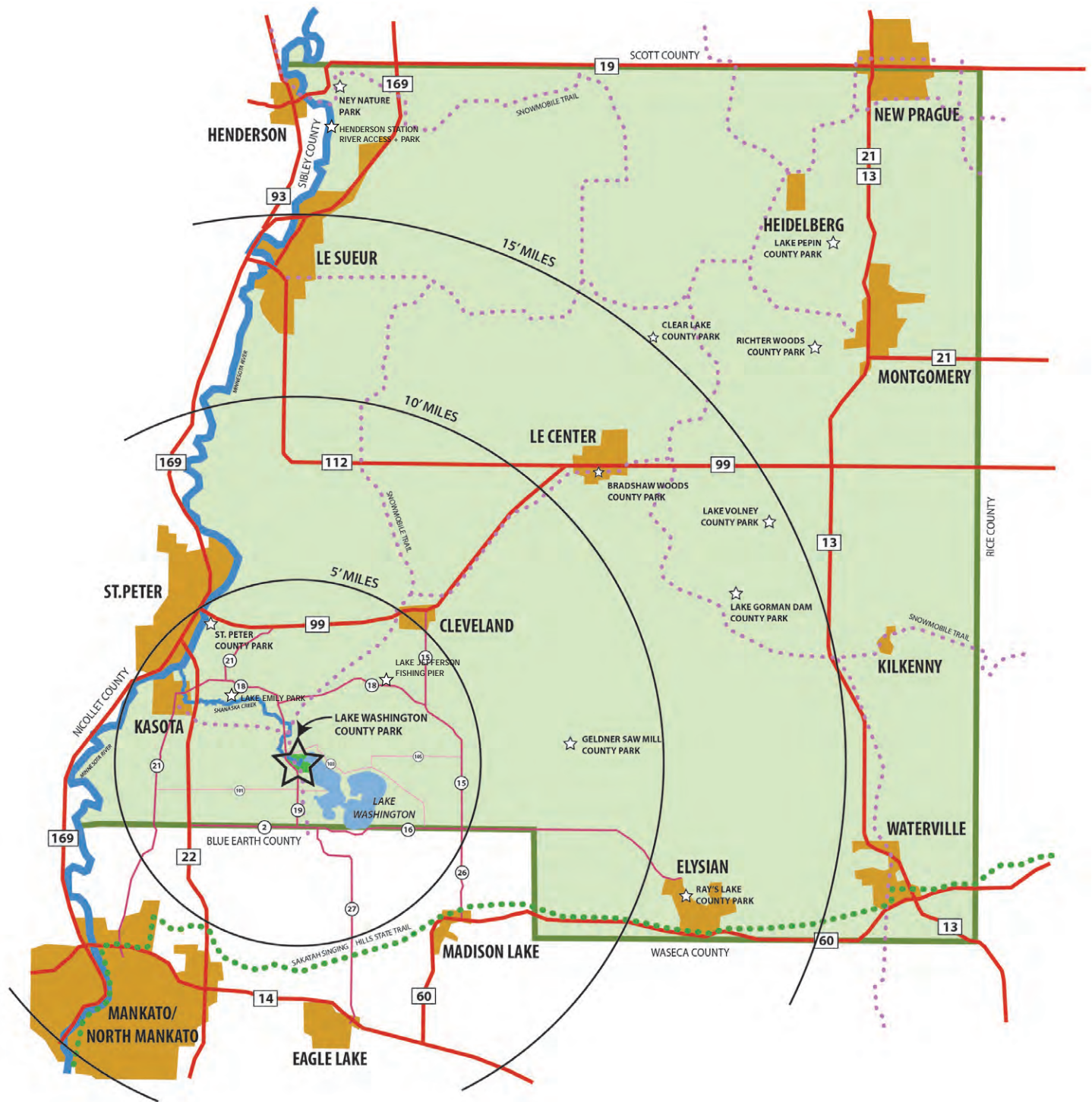
There are 11 county Parks in Le Sueur County, and many public accesses to numerous surrounding lakes and the Minnesota River (see next page). Some of the accesses belong to the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources with the balance controlled by Le Sueur County.

## SITE

Lake Washington Regional Park and Campground is the only public park on Lake Washington lake frontage. There are two boat accesses on the lake. One on the west side of the lake next to Westwood Marina, and the other on the North Side of the lake off of County Road 103. The lake is also home of Camp Patterson, a private camp, that has provided a lake experience for young boys and girls since 1923 and is run by the Kiwanis Club of Mankato.

Lake Washington Regional Park and Campground is open year round, 7 days a week from 6:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. The main access and exit serving the Park is County Road 103. The Park road is plowed during the winter months to make the Park accessible to cross country skiing and snow shoeing user groups. A caretaker lives on the property during the summer months to provide additional security and staffing at the campground.





## LE SUEUR COUNTY PARKS

There are several County Parks within Le Sueur County including:

- Bradshaw Woods Park
- Clear Lake Park
- Geldner Saw Mill Park
- Henderson Station River Access + Park
- Lake Emily Park
- Lake Gorman Dam Park
- Lake Jefferson Fishing Pier
- Lake Pepin Park and Public Access
- Lake Volney Park
- Lake Washington Regional Park and Campground
- Ney Nature Center
- Ray's Lake Park
- Richter Woods Park
- St. Peter Park





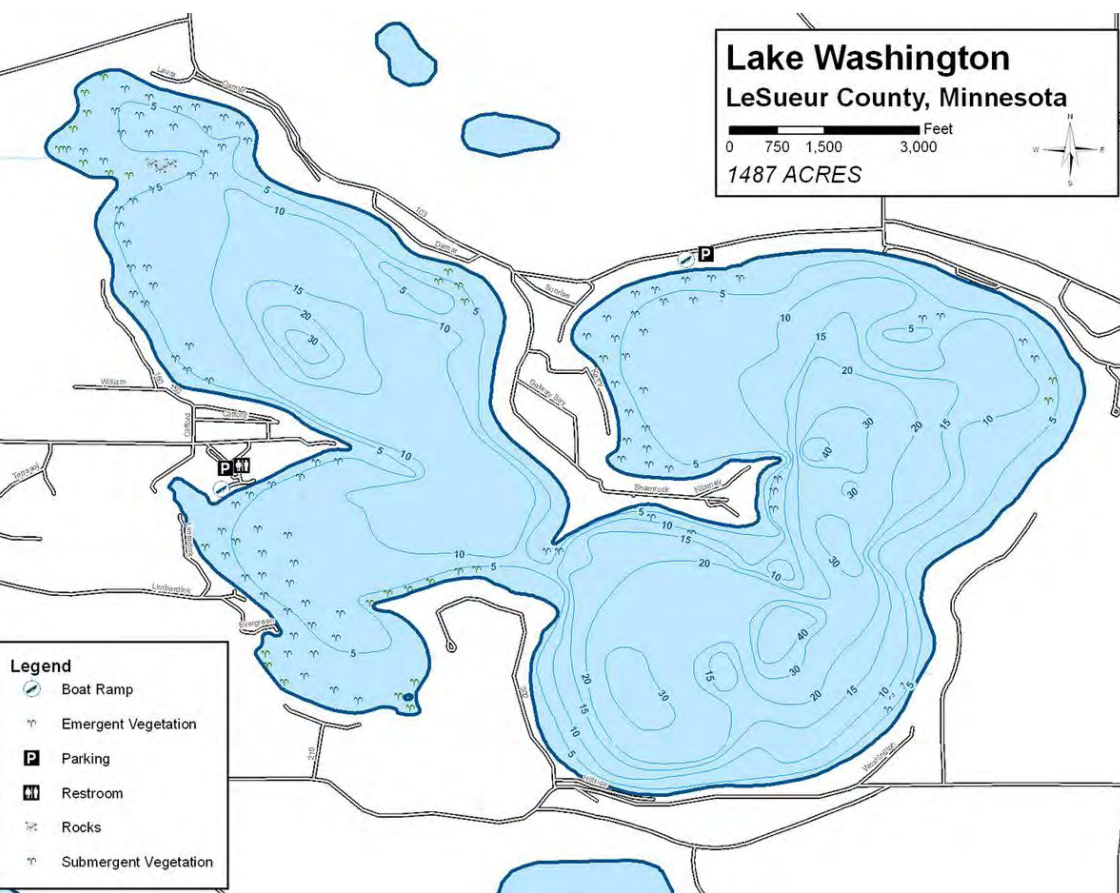
View of Lake Washington from within the Park.

## LAKE WASHINGTON

Lake Washington is located primarily in Le Sueur County, with a small part of the lake in Blue Earth County. The lake is one of the largest in southern Minnesota at 1,487 acres with 13.2 miles of shoreline. Lake Washington is adjacent to 450 homes. Approximately 80 percent of the residents live on the lake full time. Fishing and water sports are major activities on the lake. Lake Washington is known by fishermen to have the following fish:

- Crappies
- Bass
- Northern Pike
- Walleye

There are two public access ramps on the lake for launching boats.

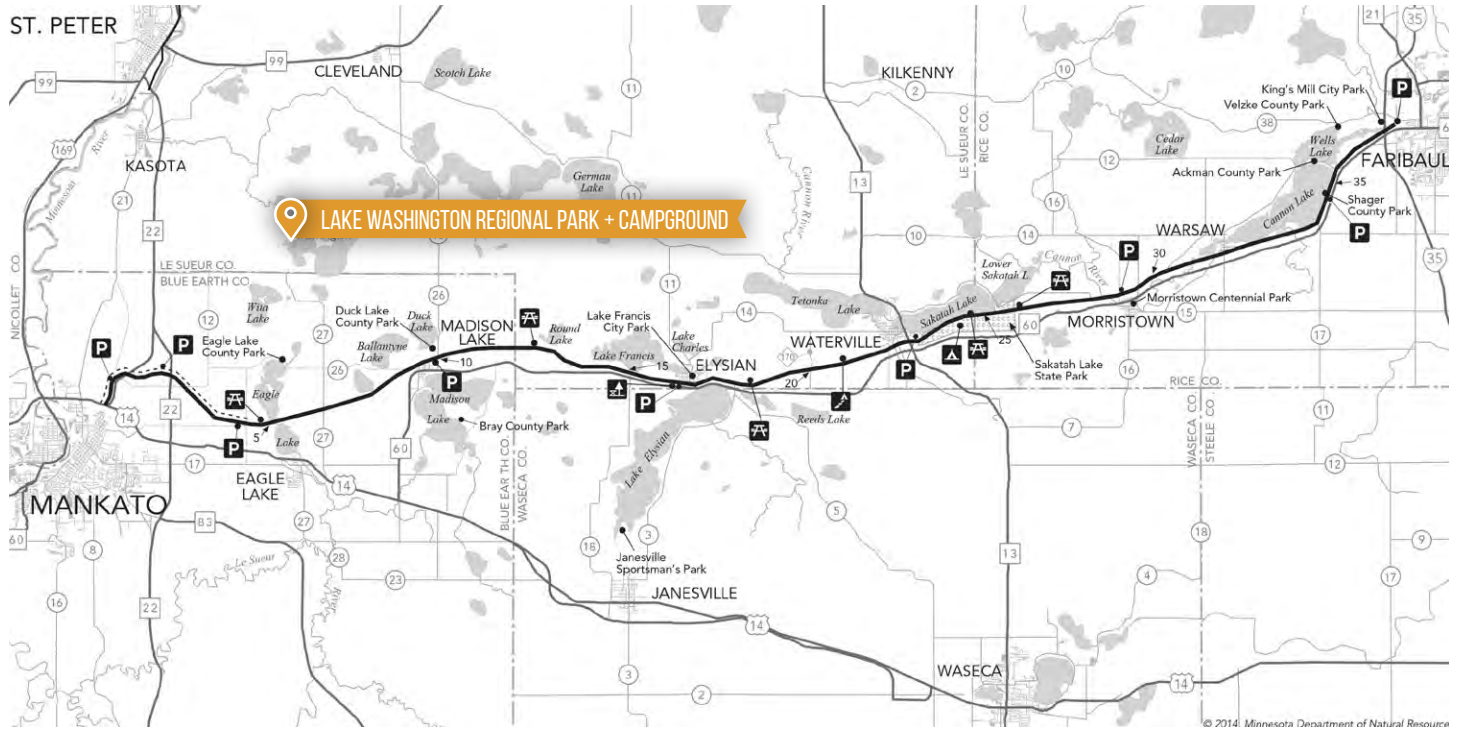


Lake Washington Map (Source: Minnesota Department of Natural Resources).

80% OF RESIDENTS LIVE ON THE LAKE FULL TIME // 450 HOMES // 13.2 MILES OF SHORELINE

## STATE TRAILS AND PARKS

Lake Washington Regional Park and Campground is located within 15 miles of Minneopa State Park and is just over six miles from the Sakatah Singing Hills State Trail. Lake Washington Regional Park and Campground complements recreational opportunities in the region, especially the Sakatah Singing Hills State Trail because of the recreational use and camping amenities for those who use the Trail. Future plans for Lake Washington Regional Park and Campground include connecting the Park to the trail with bike routes. Located on a converted rail-trail, the Sakatah Singing Hills State Trail offers 39 miles of paved trail between Mankato and Faribault. The trail is available for bicycling, hiking, in-line skating, horseback riding, snowmobiling, and cross-country skiing.



Sakatah Singing Hills State Trail (Source: William Wesen Appraiser).

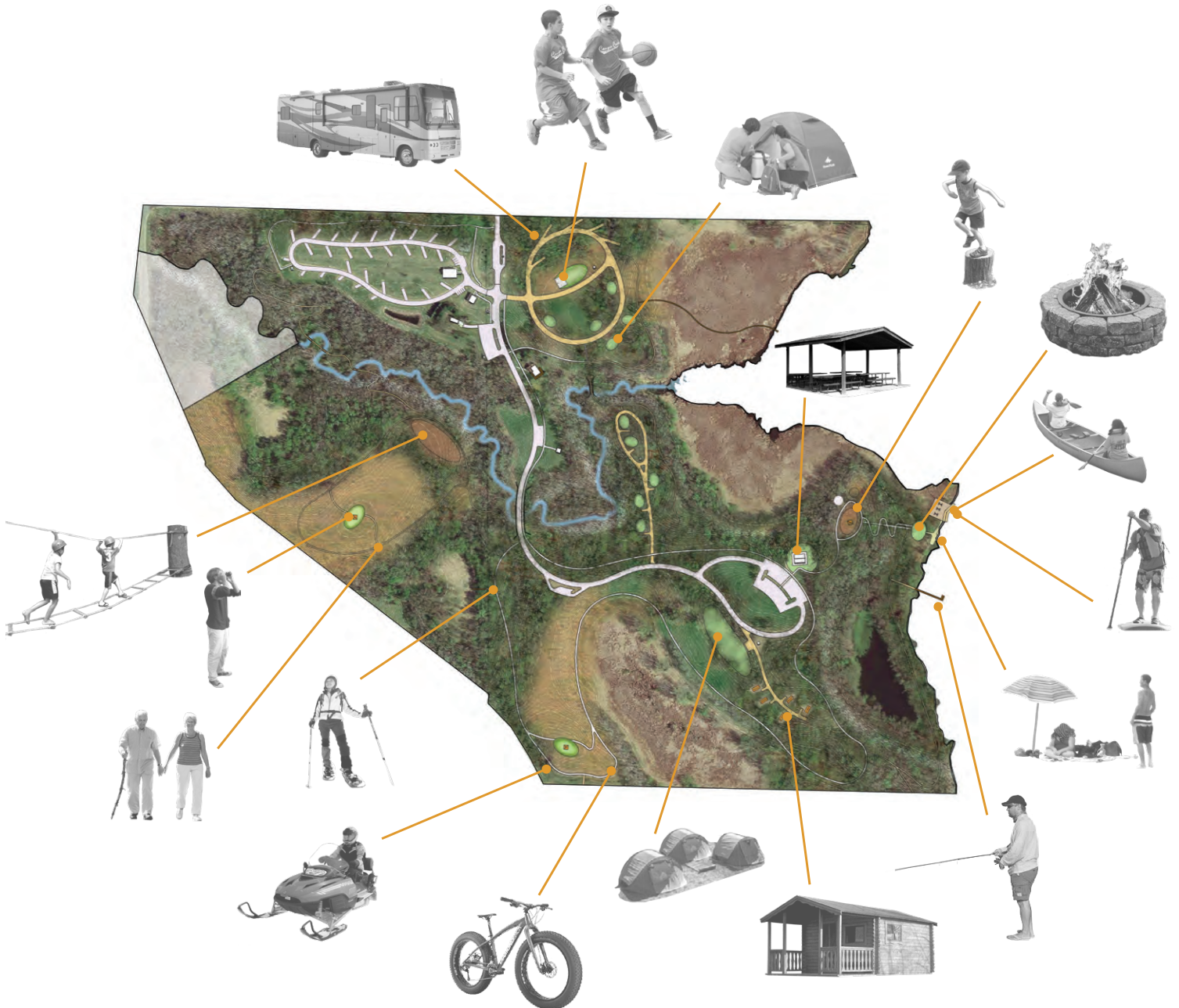
LAKE WASHINGTON IS THE LARGEST LAKE IN SOUTHERN MINNESOTA



## PARK PROGRAMMING

Currently all trails are self-guided and there are no formal program offerings at the Park. The County provides programming at the Ney Nature Center in cooperation with the Ney Nature Center staff and its Board of Directors.

Future programming at Lake Washington Regional Park and Campground will be based off of the highly successful events provided by Ney Nature Center but tailored to the specific natural features of the Park. Some programs may include tree identification, geocaching, bird watching, summer day camps, canoeing, snow shoeing and skiing events, as well as others that will include children and adults, especially those camping at the Park. The following page identifies programming opportunities for Lake Washington Park and Campground.



As a programming plan and schedule are developed, it will be necessary to promote the offerings to visitors and potential visitors to grow the number of users at the Park. Each of the offerings should be promoted in a variety of ways and identified within the marketing plan. The following events and activities have been identified as possible programming additions to the Park.

Develop and promote outdoor recreation and tourism in Lake Washington Regional Park and Campground by providing the following amenities, activities, and programs:

- Canoe and kayak rentals.
- Natural and paved multi-use trails for a variety of users and activities.
- Year round use of trails including dedicated snowshoe trails and cross country ski trails.
- Select weekends for themed camping with appropriate staff or vendors brought in to run programs.
- Family Weekend: Work with Ney Nature Center and other vendors to create a number of activities that appeal to an entire family for a weekend.
- Outdoor Skills and Survival Camping: Work with Ney Nature Center to provide an outdoor survival and skills program that is suitable to children and families staying in the campground.
- Develop relationships with instructors who provide fitness programs and classes, then offer select weekends dedicated to fitness for Park guests. Programs could include "sunrise or campground yoga," "Fitness in the Parks," "Group Trail Runs," or a number of other programs or topics.
- Establish relationships with area groups or businesses looking to fundraise or sponsor events that could become annual activities. Ideas would include hosting 5K's within the Park, youth or family fishing events from shore, and a number of other smaller family friendly events such as barbecue contests or cookouts, car shows, etc.
- Work with outside vendors to bring in equipment for family fun water activities; possibilities include canoe, kayak, stand up paddleboard rentals and demonstrations.
- Continue developing relationships with schools, environmental groups, non-profits, and other organizations to host celebrations, fun days, service learning days, and other activities within the Park.
- Offer environmental education programs with Ney Nature Center staff including themed hikes such as bird or tree identification, geocaching, snowshoeing; youth or family programs dedicated towards things like maple syrup, archery, kayaking, and exploring nature.

# VISION, TRENDS AND PUBLIC VALUES

## DEMOGRAPHICS

The population data for Le Sueur County are from the Census' American Community Survey 2016, five year estimates and the Census 2017 Population Estimates. With 28,111 people, Le Sueur County is the 38th most populated County in the state of Minnesota out of 87 Counties.

The largest Le Sueur County racial /ethnic groups are White (91.8%) followed by Hispanic (5.6%) and a combination of other groups (1%).

### RACIAL + ETHNIC GROUPS

**91.8%**  
White

**5.6%**  
Hispanic

**1.0%**  
Other

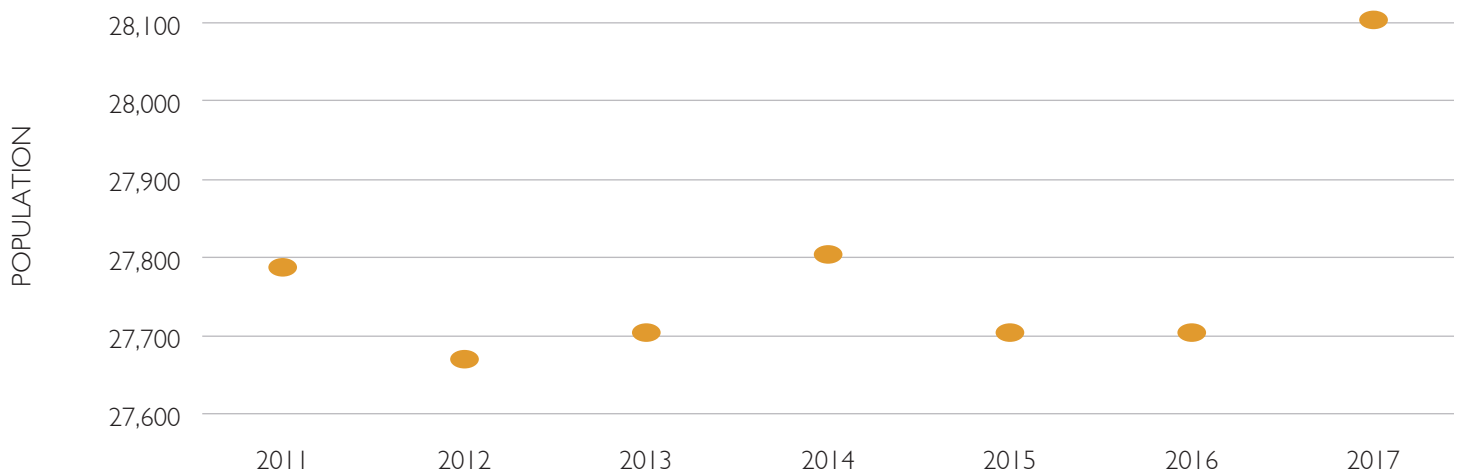
### HOUSEHOLD INCOME

**\$62,462**  
Le Sueur County households

**\$61,501**  
Nicollet County households

**\$52,119**  
Blue Earth County households

### LE SUEUR COUNTY POPULATION



MEDIAN AGE: 41.5 YEARS // 10,760 HOUSEHOLDS // 8.5% POVERTY



## PLAN GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

### A VISION FOR THE FUTURE

By creating a consolidated, comprehensive resource for Le Sueur County Parks Department, Lake Washington Regional Park can proactively address growth challenges that naturally occur over time, embrace current heritage and positive progression throughout the years, and respond to emerging trends and upcoming opportunities, among other items.

A public input process provides feedback and ideas on concepts that are incorporated into the planning process and includes surveys, open houses, and other public meetings. In addition to general members of the public, these events also include important stakeholders including park board members, staff, and community leaders and representatives.

An important purpose of the 2018 Master Plan is to consolidate ideas from multiple sources into a single place so the County presents a unified, comprehensive vision and plan. This enables the County to take full responsibility and a leadership role in long-range planning efforts while recognizing the important contributions of the Stakeholder Group, and the Le Sueur County Parks Board.

Lastly, the master plan serves as a formal commitment to the positive development, evolution, and progression of the County. It will strengthen the County's mission while providing meaningful, direct, and measurable recommendations that will carry Le Sueur County forward for the next 10+ years.



### GOALS OF THE MASTER PLAN

The goals of the master planning process are to:

1. Create a narrative to describe the master plan designs and maps.
2. Design a plan for future activities and improvements.
3. Identify priorities and timeline for implementation.
4. Develop community input and engagement through the master planning process and continue to receive public input as future improvements are further considered and developed.
5. Enable future development of Lake Washington Regional Park and Campground that will reflect the shared values of the community.
6. Serve as a tool to promote Lake Washington Regional Park and Campground.



Lake Washington Park provides an optimum location for programs like canoeing and kayaking.



## MASTER PLAN PROCESS

### 2017-2018

#### LE SUEUR COUNTY PARKS BOARD

In the fall of 2017, Le Sueur County created the Le Sueur County Parks Board which held its first meeting in January 2018 and now meets on the third Tuesday of each month. The seven member Le Sueur County Parks Board consists of one member from each of the County's five districts, plus two County commissioners. In January 2018, Le Sueur County Parks began working with ISG to properly update the 2015 master plan.

#### LAKE WASHINGTON PARK AND CAMPGROUND STAKEHOLDER GROUP

To update the master plan and receive appropriate public feedback, the Le Sueur County Parks Board created a 10 member, Lake Washington Park and Campground Stakeholder Group, which has appropriate representation from several areas associated with the Park, including:

- 2 Le Sueur County Parks Board members that reside in the district of the Park and represent the local homeowners.
- 3 Le Sueur County Parks Board members that reside in other districts of the County and offer unbiased opinions to the region, including one member that is the District Manager of the Le Sueur County Soil and Water Conservation District.
- 2 County Commissioners, including the commissioner representing the area of the Park.
- The Lake Washington Improvement Association President, to represent all the homeowners of the lake.
- Campground Caretakers who serve as the seasonal day-to-day operators of the Park.

There were a total of six (6) meetings, which included five (5) with the Task Force and Parks Board, three (2) with the public, and one with (1) with County Commissioners.

#### January

Stakeholder Group

#### February

Stakeholder Group / Parks Board Meeting and Public Open House

#### March

Stakeholder Group / Parks Board Meeting and Public Open House

#### April

Stakeholder Group / Parks Board Meeting

#### June

Stakeholder Group / Parks Board Meeting,  
County Board Meeting

## PAST COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

### 2006-2007

There were two public meetings in 2005-2006 when the Park was developed to get feedback about establishing the campground and all of the current facilities. The concepts were very well received by community members. A public meeting was held in 2006 to discuss the potential features and amenities the Park would offer. Input from the community helped develop the initial Park master plan. A public hearing with the Le Sueur County Commission was held on February 13, 2007. Public Meetings

### 2008

Based on community input, a development/master plan was created.

### 2010

In 2010, a grant was awarded from the Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment funding from the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources for \$400,000. As a result of the development plan for the Park, a campground was constructed and included 28 camp sites, a shower house, potable water, picnic shelter, electricity throughout the campground and Park, dump station, parking lot, and main campground access road.

- Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment funding
- Campground constructed

### 2015

In 2015, campground users were given a survey to fill out after their stay indicating what they would like to see for future development and amenities within the Park and campground. Also in 2015, a master plan was put together in large part to become a Regionally Significant Park.

- Survey
- Master Plan



## KICK-OFF MEETING

A kick-off meeting for the 2018 Lake Washington Park and Campground Master Plan update was held on Wednesday, January 24, 2018 in the Park's community room.

In addition to Le Sueur County Parks Board members, Lake Washington Improvement Association members, Park Caretakers, and other interested parties attended. The event covered the proposed project schedule, goals and site history, project basemapping, and existing conditions. In addition, a visioning exercise focused on the following:

- Connectivity to other facilities within the County
- Local, regional, and statewide trail systems
- County and park signage standards
- Relationship of park to adjacent developments
- Existing park facilities and amenities
- Redevelopment and improvement opportunities
- Public safety
- Park programming
- Maintenance
- Funding

A Public Open House with stakeholders and surrounding community members as provided all participants to voice their opinions. Participants at the Public Open House meeting were able to see photos, maps, and renderings of potential options for the future of the Park.

## PUBLIC OPEN HOUSES

A public open house was held on Wednesday, February 28, 2018 with nearly 50 attendees. The event focused on gathering ideas and thoughts regarding the future development plans for the Park and to review preliminary plans. Attendees were able to participate in a question and answer period and review preliminary concepts.

Three (3) concepts were presented by ISG to the Le Sueur County Parks Board for review and input prior to the public open house. Comment cards and written comments were received. In general there was not a strong preference to any one concept but rather to elements from all three plans that incorporated the following elements:

- Access and site entrance location
- Camping expansion
- Minnesota Department of Natural Resources coordination
- Amenities

On March 28, 2018, a second public open house was held at Lake Washington Park Community Building with nearly 50 people in attendance. ISG and the stakeholder group presented one Master Plan concept to the public that was well received. Attendees commented that they were encouraged to see that their thoughts from the first open house were listened to and their opinions were valued.

Le Sueur County Parks wants to get continual feedback from the public on the long term plans for Lake Washington Regional Park and Campground. The county is looking to further utilize its relationship with the Lake Washington Improvement Association as a sounding voice in the overall development of the Park for the region. The Park plans to establish a drop box at the information board within the Park where day users and campers can provide anonymous feedback, as well as creating a survey form that will be posted on the County website.







## PARTNERSHIPS

Developing strong partnerships with local and regional organizations will serve as catalysts for programming at the Park. The following groups, organizations, and businesses have been identified for potential partnerships with programming, funding, or other opportunities for the Park and visitors:

- Scouts - Girl/Boy
- Local community school districts
- Gustavus Adolphus College
- Minnesota State University Parks and Recreation Program
- Le Sueur County Soil & Water Conservation District
- Lake Washington Improvement Association
- Ney Nature Center
- Carl & Verna Schmidt Foundation
- Unimin Corporation
- Bent River Outfitters

## NEY NATURE CENTER LE SUEUR COUNTY PARK

In order to maximize and build partnerships, and well-received programming needs to be implemented within the Park and throughout the community and region in conjunction with Lake Washington Regional Park and Campground. Educational opportunities should continue to be provided and expanded where possible through partnerships with the Ney Nature Center staff and others.

The County offers a wide range of programs and activities at the Ney Nature Center. The County works closely with the Le Sueur County Parks Board, Friends and staff at Ney Nature Center. The Park offers year round programs and recreation opportunities for families, senior citizens, home-schooled, youth, school field trips, public, and private events, many of which are listed below:

- Geocaching
- Carving
- Archery
- Kayaking
- Reading
- Summer Day Camps
- Outdoor Crafts
- Live Animal Meet & Greets
- Maple Syrup Tours
- Outdoor Challenge Camps
- Outdoor Survival Skills
- Bluebird & Wood Duck House Building
- Cross Country Ski & Snowshoe Rentals
- Guided Year-Round Hikes or Snowshoeing
- Monarch Butterfly Tagging
- Bird Counts
- Environmental Education Programs
- Annual Events (Fall Festival and Spring Fling Fundraiser)

Using the Ney Nature Center model, the Le Sueur County Parks Department is in the process of developing a Programming Plan to provide classes, activities, and outdoor experiences for campers, day users, and community members at Lake Washington Regional Park and Campground.

## LAKE WASHINGTON IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION AND OTHERS

Through the development of this master plan, Lake Washington Improvement Association has become a partner that will have an evolving relationship in the future. The Park looks forward to working with the Association in a number of areas, whether hosting events or fundraisers, promoting the lake and region, or providing additional benefits to local homeowners as well as regional guests.

Proposed future partnerships include creating relationships with area businesses that may be interested in sponsoring specific improvements within the Park that are in line with their programs beliefs or goals. Working with non-profits or groups that can utilize their Park to their benefit, whether teaching about the environment, service learning, or stewardship, or providing a location to host their events.



# EXISTING PARK CONDITIONS AND AMENITIES

The following outlines existing conditions and amenities currently found within the Park.



Lake Washington Regional Park and Campground Existing Condition Map.



COMMUNITY CENTER BUILDING

The Community Center Building is the original Park building and provides meeting and gathering space for up to 50 people. A kitchen and restrooms are located inside. The Community Room features views of Lake Washington and the Park grounds. Parking and picnic tables are located at the site.



PICNIC SHELTER

There is one main large picnic shelter in the campground area. Located inside the camping loop it is equipped with 12 picnic tables, electricity, and a water spigot. A restroom / shower house is located nearby.





## RESTROOMS AND SHOWER HOUSE

Adjacent to the campground area is a modern restroom and shower facility. It includes a utility sink and two drinking fountains, plus men's and women's facilities, each with two showers (one ADA), two sinks, and three toilets (one ADA).



## CHILDREN'S PLAY AREA

There are two playgrounds within the main camping area providing an assortment of slides, swings, tunnels, and climbing.



## TRAILS

A variety of trail options are available to visitors where hikers can experience a wide range of vegetation, views, and wildlife. Whether it be walking along the creek, through a grove of walnut trees, woodland areas, or among the Park's many amenities, the trails allow visitors to experience the Park in different settings all while being connected with nature.





## CAMPGROUND

The campground is open seasonally April through October. There are 27 electric drive-in campsites, 4 non-electric tent-only campsites, and one group campsite that provides four more electric hookups. The campground has a modern restroom facility complete with showers. Three water spigots are located throughout the campground for guest use. A dump station is also available and well-placed near the Park/Campground exit.

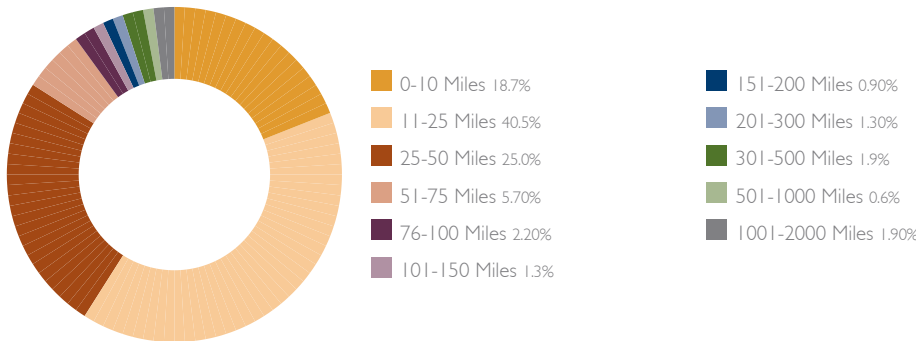
All camping spaces are for short term rental only. Overnight camping fees are \$15 non-electrical and \$25 for sites with electric service hookups. The designated tent-only camping area is rented on a first come first served basis. Senior Citizen discounts are available during non-holiday periods for \$20 per night (Sunday-Thursday).



Restrooms	1 Group Site
27 Electric Sites	4 Non-Electric Sites

	# of Campers
2012	197
2013	177
2014	179
2015	209
2017	316

## 2017 CAMPGROUND USERS BY DISTANCE TRAVELED



**84%**  
OF ALL VISITORS  
TRAVEL LESS THAN  
50 MILES TO VISIT  
LAKE WASHINGTON.

## AVERAGE LENGTH OF STAY IN 2017

	1 Day Stay	2 Day Stay	3 Day Stay	4 Day Stay	5 Day Stay	6 Day Stay	7+ Day Stay
TOTAL	37	188	64	31	10	17	15

## 2017 CAMPGROUND USERS BY DISTANCE TRAVELED

Residence			Miles
State	CITY	Number	Distance
MN	Albert Lea	1	63
	Arlington	1	34
	Belle Plaine	7	32
	Blue Earth	1	56
	Burnsville	1	63
	Brownston	1	53
	Cleveland	11	7
	Coon Rapids	1	89
	Courtland	3	26
	Delano	2	63
	Delavan	1	41
	Duluth	1	228
	Eagle Lake	9	10
	Elgin	1	105
	Faribault	2	38
	Farmington	2	61
	Garden City	1	27
	Gaylord	4	34
	Gibbon	1	47
	Good Thunder	1	28
	International Falls	1	369
	Janesville	4	18
	Jordan	4	40
	Kasota	6	5
	Kasson	1	71
	Lafayette	1	35
	Lake City	1	95
	Lake Crystal	4	26
	Le Center	31	15
	Le Sueur	10	18
	Lonsdale	4	36
	Madelia	3	37
	Madison Lake	4	9
	Mankato	33	12
	Mapleton	4	28
	Maple Grove	1	77
	Minneapolis	3	75
	Montgomery	3	25
	Morristown	1	28
	New Prague	2	33

Residence			Miles
State	CITY	Number	Distance
	New Ulm	16	35
	Nicollet	10	18
	North Mankato	37	13
	Prior Lake	1	51
	Redwood Falls	1	74
	Renville	2	92
	Rochester	1	85
	Sauk Centre	1	147
	Shakopee	1	51
	St. James	1	49
	St. Peter	29	7
	Truman	2	52
	Vernon Center	1	33
	Waseca	10	33
	Watertown	1	56
	Winthrop	7	40
CO	Berthoud	1	805
FL	Venice	2	1,604
	Unkown*	1	1,327
IA	Lake Park	1	117
	Muscatine	1	313
	Unkown*	2	214
MO	Sedalia	2	468
NE	Unknown*	1	352
NV	Reno	1	1,681
SD	Box Elder	1	497
	Sioux Falls	2	169
	Rapid City	1	507
	Volga	1	164
TX	Mission	2	1461
WI	Hager City	1	88
	Mondovi	1	140
	Unkown*	1	297

\* Campers did not provide details.

2017 Total Guests	316
2017 Total Traveled Distance	21,602
2017 Average Distance Traveled	68.36

# ECOLOGICAL STEWARDSHIP PLAN

Lake Washington Regional Park and Campground provides a natural and scenic setting along the shores of Lake Washington in a vast agricultural area. In addition to being located adjacent to Lake Washington, there are a variety of natural settings, not often found in one Park. They include wetlands, prairie, forested areas, including a walnut grove, and a creek. Wildlife include deer and turkey, as well as other small animals.

## BALANCING HUMAN USES WITH ECOLOGICAL PROTECTION

Finding the right balance between human use of the Park, and its ecological preservation and protection, was an important and consistent public concern throughout the planning process. Since regional parks place significant emphasis on preserving natural values, the planning process included extensive lengths to ensure that the natural qualities present within the Park would be preserved. In addition to its intrinsic values, stewardship of the Park’s natural landscape will also enrich the human, or cultural, experience for those visiting the Park.

## VEGETATION

A portion of the Park is currently utilized for agricultural land, which follows a traditional rotation of corn and soybeans. The agricultural land includes a farmed wetland area, and a large wetland complex along the eastern edge of the site which transitions into Lake Washington. An upland buffer separates the large wetland complex from the agricultural field, and the wooded areas within the project site are typical deciduous woodland areas. The reconstructed prairie is a mixture of native and non-native species listed in the table below.

In 2006, a Wetland Investigation Report was prepared for the Park to ensure no future development would negatively impact the existing wetlands and ecosystem.



Top photo: existing marsh area  
Bottom photo: existing trail through wooded area.

Ag Land/ Framed Wetland	yellow nut sedge, smartweed, and switchgrass
Wetland Complex	reed canary grass, narrowleaf cattail, sedge species, Eastern cottonwood, and black willow, and water lillies (deeper wetland complex)
Upland Buffer	smooth brome, stinging nettle, perennial rye, quack grass, and sweet clover
Wooded Areas	American elm, slippery elm, green ash, boxelder, bur oak, sumac, black raspberry, American basswood, Eastern cottonwood, hackberry, and prickly gooseberry.
Reconstructed Prairies	mixture of native and non-native species; primarily switchgrass, big blue stem, Canada bluegrass, Kentucky bluegrass, and Indian grass



## WATER RESOURCES, FISH AND WILDLIFE

Fish species within Lake Washington move into Shanaska Creek located in the project area, which serves as an outlet for the lake. The Park currently serves as a public access to Lake Washington, which is utilized for fishing. The following fish species were identified in Lake Washington during a 2016 survey completed by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources; black bullhead, black crappie, bluegill, largemouth bass, northern pike, walleye, white sucker, yellow bullhead, yellow perch, bowfin, common carp, and freshwater drum. Additional fish species that may be present within the stream on the project site include; common shiner, creek chub, white sucker, common stoneroller, southern redbelly dace, and johnny darter.

## ECOLOGICAL STEWARDSHIP

### FOCUS: WATER QUALITY + MAINTENANCE

The long-term ecological stewardship of Lake Washington Park and Campground is currently dependent on the commitment of the Le Sueur County Parks Department, on-going support of various organizations, and growing enthusiasm of Park users who take advantage of the wide range of nature-based outdoor activities, such as hiking, camping, wildlife viewing, and photography.

Some of the ecological challenges that the Park currently faces and will increasingly face in the future involve water quality. Phosphate and nitrite levels, which affect the habitat for fish and wildlife, are influenced by adjacent and nearby agricultural lands. By securing additional areas dedicated to natural resource-based parkland, water and habitat quality will improve. By maintaining high-quality prairie and wetlands, and ensuring runoff is treated before entering the water-bodies, will allow pollutants to be filtered through the soil.

The ecological function of the Park serves as it's greatest asset. The continuation of natural resource management through active maintenance and best practices is imperative.



Fishing dock example accommodating children and Shanaska Creek.

# DEVELOPMENT PLAN

## EXPANSION

After initial construction, the Park opened to camping in 2012. The County Parks Department quickly realized the Park was well received from the local community and the regional area for camping, hiking, and outdoor recreation due to the influx of visitors and increasing demand for facilities.

A master plan design addressing expansion of the campground and complementary features was completed in 2014-2015. In 2015, the County Commission signed a petition to seek classification as a Regional Park by the Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission (GMRPTC), which was granted by the GMRPTC shortly thereafter.

In 2017 efforts to update the Master Plan began. Consistent with the 2014-2015 Plan, the 2018 Master Plan expands camping opportunities while also adding new recreational activities. The 2018 Master Plan for Lake Washington Regional Park and Campground are suitable for and large enough to accommodate desired recreational uses without undue impacts to the 166 acre land resource. All land is completely acquired for planned development within the expansion plan design.

While funding for the expansion plan is not secured, the County established the master plan for future planning, programming, and funding opportunities. Because of several factors including its location between two metropolitan areas, the County wanted the Park to be recognized as a Regionally significant Park.



## FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

The following pages detail lists of short-term Improvements (to be accomplished in 2-5 years), mid-term Improvements (to be accomplished within 5-10 years), and long-term Improvements (to be accomplished within 10+years). However, if funding becomes available for future phases it is desired by the County that the entire project be completed as soon as possible. All of the Improvements outlined within the Development Plan are in alignment with the Parks Departments vision for the area. Corresponding illustrative site plans demonstrate the short-term, mid-term, and long-term improvements as they would appear physically throughout the Park. This plan is meant to serve as an overall schematic plan only and further detailed designs and construction drawings will be needed for implementation of the ideas. It is also recommended that as these improvements are implemented, the various stakeholders and public user groups are kept informed of the process as previously stated in the Community Engagement Section.









## Parking + Circulation | |

- ① Road Extension
  - 24' wide
- ② Proposed Parking
  - Approx. 175 stalls

## Camping | |

- ③ RV Camp Expansion
  - 5 additional sites - electric + water hookups
- ④ Primitive Camping Expansion
  - 10 individual campsites, 3 group campsites
  - Aggregate pad, picnic table + fire ring
- ⑤ Camping Cabins
  - 5 300 sqft cabins w/ electricity
  - Outdoor deck space
  - Picnic table + fire ring
- Restroom Building
  - 18-20 sq ft

## Trails | |

- ⑥ 1.5- Mile Bituminous Trail Loop
  - 8' wide
- ⑦ Mowed/Natural Surface Trails
  - 5' wide
- ⑧ Floating Boardwalk
  - 5' wide
- ⑨ Rest Stop
  - Trail and/or educational signage
  - Picnic table + waste receptacle

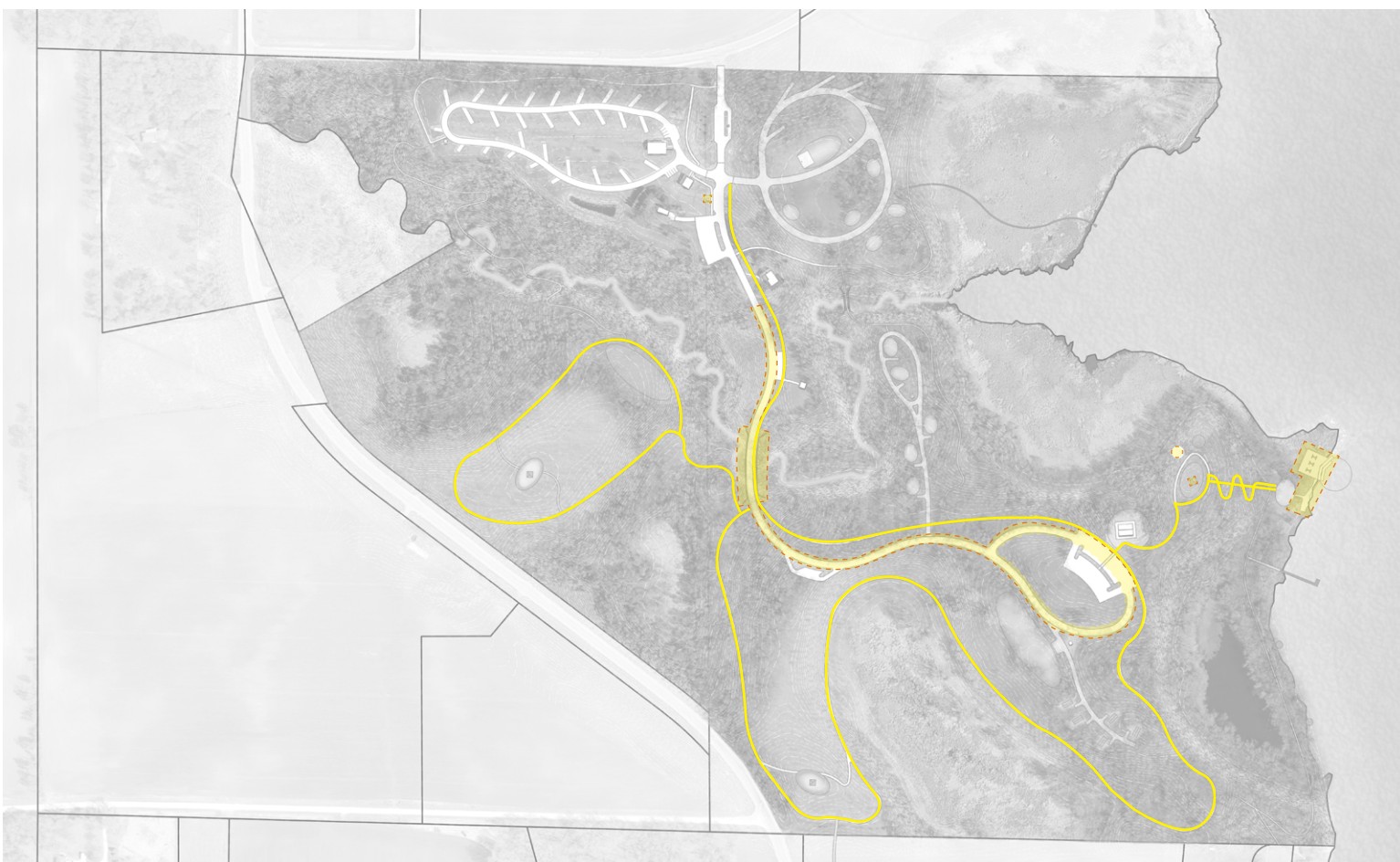
## Water Play | |

- ⑩ Non-motorized Watercraft Launch
  - Accessible
  - Storage racks
- ⑪ Shoreline Water Access
  - Approx. 10' wide x 100' long
- ⑫ Water Touch Point
- ⑬ Fishing Pier

## Outdoor Recreation | |

- ⑭ Open Games Lawn
  - Mowed, maintained grass
- ⑮ Nature Play
  - Approx. 14,000- 16,000 sq ft play area
  - Natural play elements
- ⑯ Low Ropes Course
  - Low impact ropes course for all ages
  - Linear course along Shanaska Creek
- ⑰ Observation Tower
- ⑱ Nature Viewing Platform
- ⑲ Picnic Area
  - Picnic tables, grill stations, waste receptacles, open-air shelters
  - Amenities vary on location
- ⑳ Council Ring
- ㉑ Welcome Kiosk + Signage
- ㉒ Half Court Basketball
  - 42' x 50'
  - Striped





PHASE ONE IMPROVEMENT MAP (2-5 YEARS)



## PHASE ONE IMPROVEMENTS

Phase one improvements are those that are of highest interest and desire and are intended to occur within the next 2-5 years.

### ROADWAY EXTENSION

- Add a 24' wide extension of the road further into the Park

### UPGRADE EXISTING TRAIL SYSTEM

- Develop a paved, 8' wide, multi-use, ADA accessible trail loop
- Develop first phase of the nature trail system
- Provide stairway and ADA accessible ramp to access shoreline
- Install a trailhead kiosk at the entrance of the Park
- Develop small rest areas along trail system that includes seating, trail signage, and recycling/waste receptacles
- Install trail bollards at various locations to prohibit motorized vehicle use

### ACTIVATE SHORELINE

- Install non-motorized watercraft launch area
- Develop canoe/kayak rental program
- Provide canoe/kayak storage racks
- Clean and restore beach and shoreline (per DNR regulations)

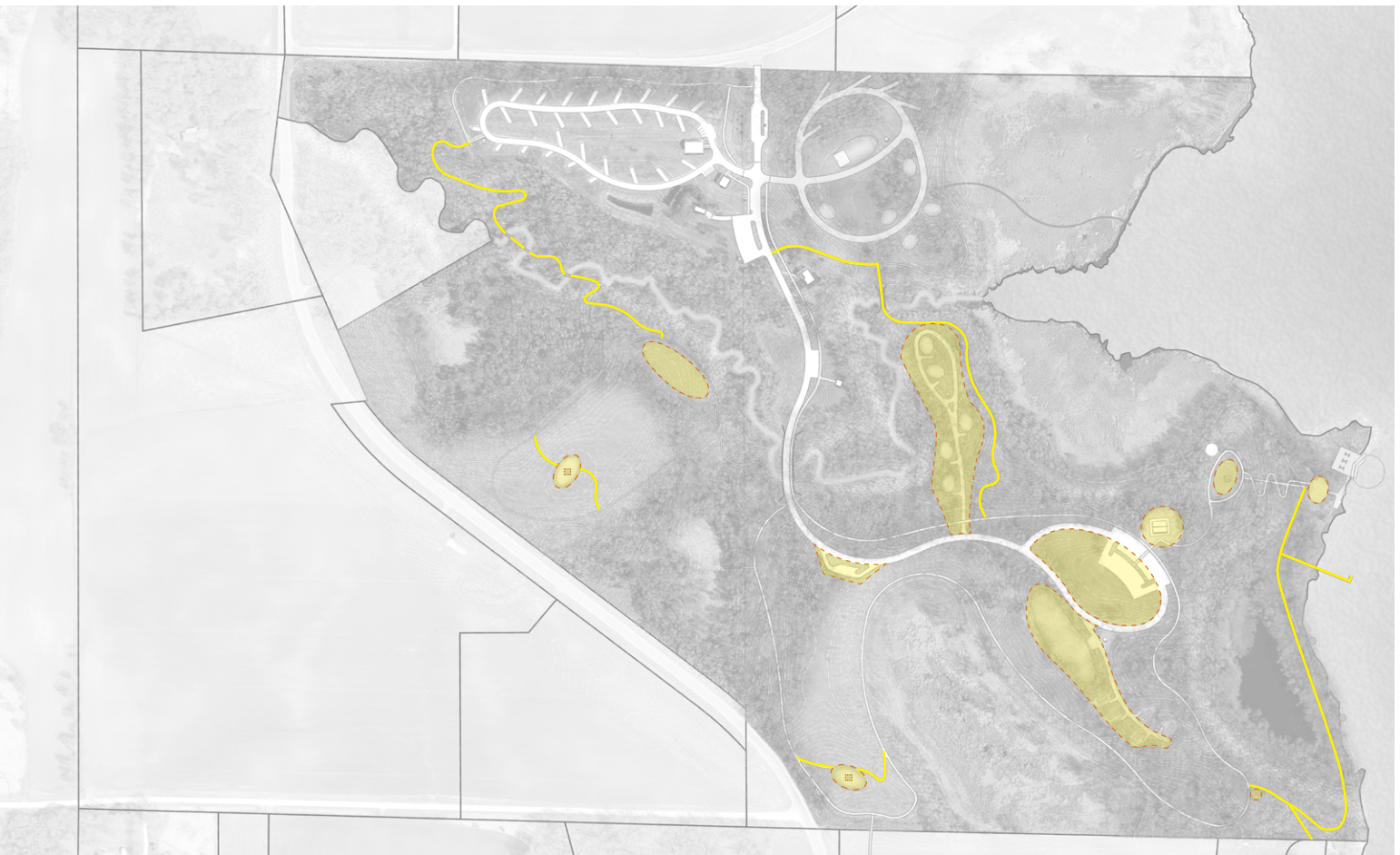
### OVERLOOK TOWER

- Construct an observation tower climbing structure to provide an iconic feature for Park

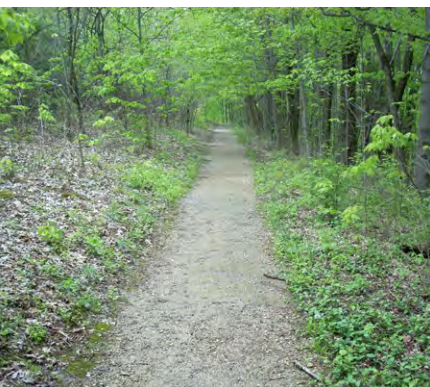
### RESTORATION

- Prairie/forest restoration
- Invasive species removal





PHASE TWO IMPROVEMENT MAP (5-10 YEARS)



## PHASE TWO IMPROVEMENTS

Phase two improvements are those that are intended to occur within the next 5-10 years.

### ROAD EXTENSION AND ADDITIONAL PARKING

- Expand roads to accommodate additional camping
- Add parking

### UPDATE NATURE TRAIL SYSTEM

- Install new nature trails and reconstruct existing

### CAMPING EXPANSION

- Expand primitive camping with earthwork, picnic table, fire ring, parking space, and campsite marker
- Add group camping with earthwork, picnic tables, fire rings, and campsite markers
- Add camper cabins with 4-season cabin, earthwork, aggregate base, electricity hookups, outdoor seating area, and fire ring
- Provide a restroom building to the south of the primitive camping area with sanitary, water, and electricity connections

### NATURE PLAY

- Construct a natural play area from reclaimed natural materials
- Install a linear low ropes course along Shanaska Creek

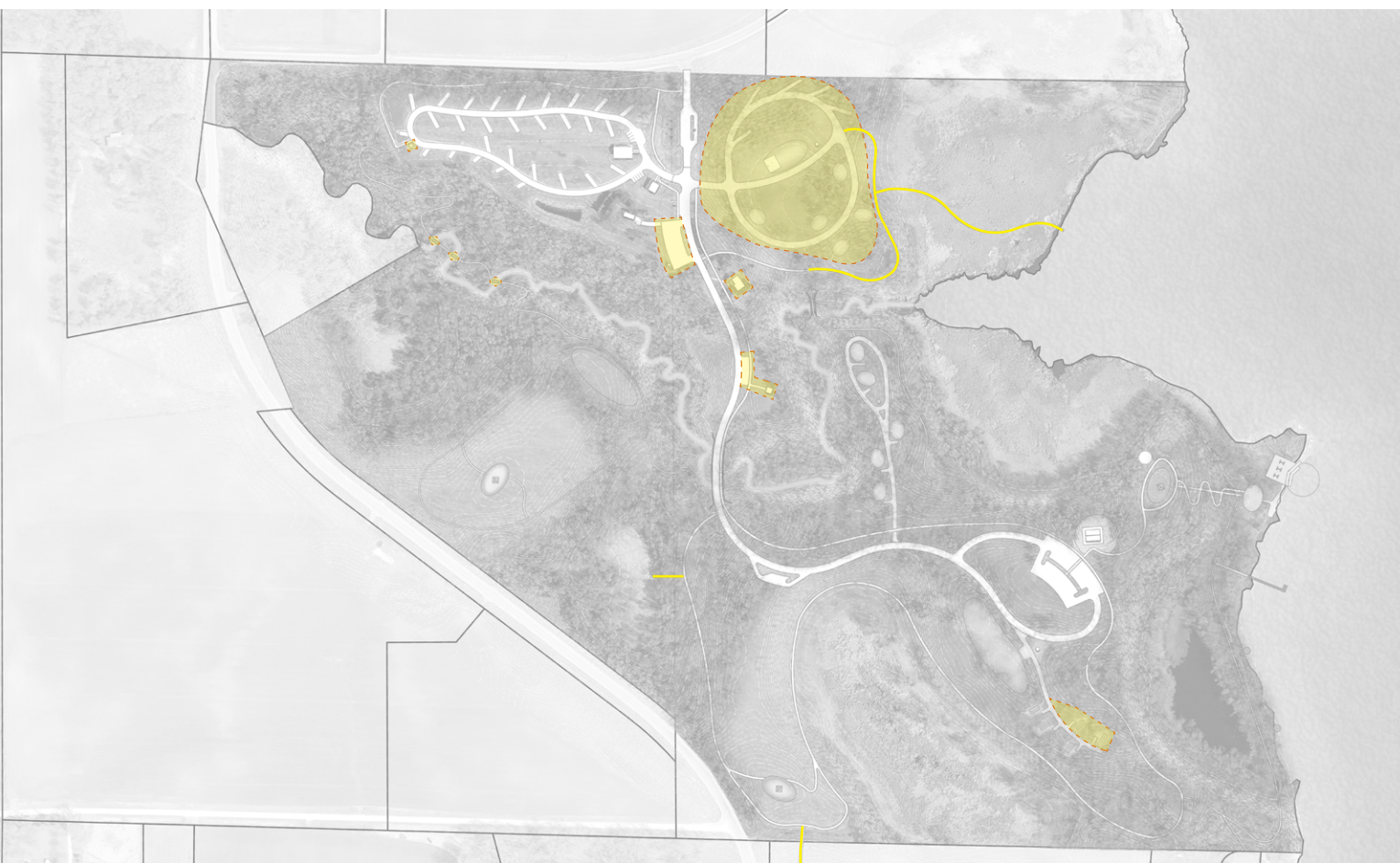
### ADDITIONAL FACILITIES

- Construct a picnic shelter and restroom building including concrete pad (30'x50') and sanitary, water, and electricity connections
- Construct overlook structures along both the paved trail and nature trail
- Construct a trailhead kiosk with park maps and welcome information
- Install a fishing pier
- Install a council ring fire pit

### RESTORATION

- Prairie/forest restoration
- Invasive species removal





PHASE THREE IMPROVEMENT MAP (10+ YEARS)

## PHASE THREE IMPROVEMENTS

Phase three improvements are those that are intended to occur within the next 10+ years.

### CAMPING EXPANSION

- Expand RV camping with 5 additional sites including water and electricity hookups
- Expand primitive camping sites (including, earthwork, picnic table, fire ring, parking space, and a campsite marker)
- Install additional camper cabins
- Construct a restroom building to the northeast of new RV and primitive campgrounds with sanitary, water, and electricity connections

### AMENITIES

- Add a 1/2 court basketball court and install pavement, stripe, and a durable hoop
- Install a floating boardwalk with overlook at lake edge
- Construct a wetland boardwalk with overlook at wetland edge

### ADDITIONAL FACILITIES AND FEATURES

- Renovate community center building
- Construct a picnic shelter with concrete pad (20'x20')
- Install pedestrian bridges along nature trails
- Install directional/wayfinding and policy signage

### RESTORATION

- Prairie/forest restoration
- Invasive species removal



	Improvements
Phase 1	Roadway Extension Upgrade Existing Trail System Activate Shoreline Overlook Tower Restoration
Phase 2	Additional Parking Update Nature Trail System Camping Expansion Nature Play Additional Facilities and Features Restoration
Phase 3	Camping Expansion Amenity Improvements/Additions Additional Facilities and Features Restoration

## RECOMMENDATIONS

As additional funding becomes available, it will be important that each of the improvements noted above are reviewed at a detailed level and the appropriate design consultants are engaged. It is recommended that the following steps be taken:



Provide opportunities for community and stakeholder engagement prior to any future design or construction work takes place.



Evaluate current signage needs and develop a cohesive signage plan for the Park.



Evaluate overall natural resource impacts for critical protection of unique elements.

## SUSTAINABLE AND RESILIENT INFRASTRUCTURE

### FOCUS: PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT + COHESION

In order for Lake Washington Regional Park and Campground to continue as a natural resource-based Park with valuable recreational amenities and high-quality wildlife habitat, stewardship of the Park is key. Without the hard work and dedication of the Le Sueur County Parks Department, the Lake Washington Improvement Association, and countless volunteers, the landscape which exist today would not be possible, and would likely not be able to sustain itself in the future.

All future designs to be implemented within the Park shall include a public engagement process. Additionally, the highest quality aesthetic designs shall be proposed, within the means of reasonable finances. Strict aesthetic design guidelines are not to be established through this document. However, all future buildings, structures, and developments within and related to Lake Washington Regional Park and Campground should demonstrate the vision of this master plan.

## ENERGY EFFICIENT, EASY TO MAINTAIN AND RECYCLED/ RECYCLABLE MATERIALS

### FOCUS: SUSTAINABILITY

All building improvements should consider energy efficient lighting, recyclable and local materials, and other means of reducing long-term maintenance and operation costs.

## ACCESSIBILITY

### FOCUS: UNIVERSAL USE

Le Sueur County strives to develop Lake Washington Regional Park and Campground into a user friendly camp and recreation area. All structures shall comply with the Minnesota State Building Code (SBC) and the International Building Code (IBC). All infrastructure components shall comply with ADA and ADAAG standards. Access to and from playgrounds, and components shall be accessible. The playground surface areas shall be accessible and composed of fall protective material. All buildings and shelters shall be slab on grade and accessible with means of egress (stoops, sidewalks, walkways, etc.) at a maximum of 1:20 slope. Interior space and components shall be the prescribed dimensions for handicapped maneuverability and accessibility. All campsites and picnic tables and shelter shall have concrete aprons of the prescribed size for handicapped maneuverability.

## DEVELOPMENT RELATED COST PROJECTIONS

The cost analysis defines the potential costs associated with each development component of the master plan. It is based on a combination of site-specific development requirements and projects of similar size and complexity. The costs are also based on having the work completed by private contractors and specialists. It does not take into consideration, any work that could be performed by County staff, volunteer groups, or by other means.

The cost figures below are based on master plan level evaluation, which brings with it inherent limitations. The cost figures are provided for general budgeting purposes, project phasing, and comparing the relative cost of one item to that of another. The costs were calculated using anticipated cost in 2018. Although intended to be conservative, actual costs will vary depending on the year that each aspect of the master plan is implemented, implementation parameters, economic conditions affecting bidding, and the actual site conditions found in the field during construction.

PHASE 1	
Description	Cost Estimate
General Construction	\$390,937.50
Trails, Roadways, and Parking	\$819,187.50
Trail Amenities, Signage, and Site Furnishings	\$89,375.00
Water Recreation Amenities and Specialty Features	\$210,000.00
Restoration and Natural Resources Enhancements	\$205,000.00
Phase 1 Improvements Total:	\$1,714,500.00
PHASE 2	
Description	Cost Estimate
General Construction	\$335,937.50
Trails, Roadways, and Parking	\$102,125.00
Camping Development	\$300,000.00
Building Improvements	\$743,750.00
Trail Amenities, Signage, and Site Features	\$116,250.00
Water Recreation Amenities and Play Features	\$308,750.00
Restoration and Natural Resource Enhancements	\$67,500.00
Phase 2 Improvement Total:	\$1,974,312.50
PHASE 3	
Description	Cost Estimate
General Construction	\$363,437.50
Trails, Roadways, and Parking	\$890,087.50
Camping Development	\$581,250.00
Building Improvements	\$262,500.00
Play Features, Signage, and Site Furnishings	\$98,750.00
Restoration and Natural Resource Enhancements	\$63,750.00
Phase 3 Improvement Total:	\$2,259,775.00
GRAND TOTAL	
	\$5,948,587.50

Note: these costs do not reflect design, engineering, testing, or permitting fees.



# OPERATIONS AND MANAGEMENT, AND MARKETING PLAN

## OVERVIEW

Implementing the master plan for Lake Washington Regional Park and Campground will require significant initial and long-term capital investments for operations and maintenance, and marketing. This section considers an overall strategy for implementing the plan that takes these factors into consideration, along with future revisions and updates.

## OPERATIONS AND MANAGEMENT

Currently, operations and maintenance are the responsibility of the Le Sueur County Parks Department. As Park amenities increase, such as the construction of additional facilities, amenities and specialty attractions, additional funding will be sought to cover the cost of additional labor involved to maintain and clean these facilities. This additional funding will need to be secured through a variety of sources and grant opportunities.

## MARKETING PLAN

The County Parks Department has recently redesigned the Parks Department webpage, and launched social media pages on Facebook and Instagram, in addition to Lake Washington Regional Park and Campground getting its own Facebook page.

A robust marketing plan with specific tactical elements and schedule will need to be developed for Lake Washington Regional Park and Campground including media, social media, and community engagement strategies. The Parks Department is in the process of creating an overall County Parks brochure, as well as Park or facility specific brochures or handouts that will be distributed in the county and region.

The Parks Department intends to have a public presence in the community and at local events. Between the Parks Department, Le Sueur County Parks Board, Ney Nature Center, and Lake Washington Regional Park and Campground, there will be an informative booth with interactive public programming at the Le Sueur County Fair and other events.

Utilizing social media and public events, Lake Washington Regional Park and Campground and activities can be promoted to families through simple strategies such as a prize drawings or occasional Facebook giveaways for discounted stays.

## NETWORKING

By networking with other regional and area Parks, especially those that offer camping, Lake Washington Regional Park and Campground can maximize its reach to visitors. This is one of the easiest and least expensive ways to market the Park. Leveraging the partnership with Blue Earth County Parks and campgrounds would benefit both parties as often times, Blue Earth County will send campers to Lake Washington Regional Park and Campground when Blue Earth is at capacity. Identifying other partnerships especially ones that bolster program opportunities within the Park will help market the facilities and natural resources.

## SHORT TERM AND LONG TERM IMPROVEMENTS

Short and long term marketing improvements should be identified and updated regularly. Short term would include updating the Le Sueur County website with seasonal photos of the Park and amenities, as well as providing a way to complete camp reservations online. Keeping an updated website with photographs and information is key in today's world of instant communication. The Park facilities and amenities offer an opportunity for wonderful photography that could easily be shared through these resources allowing potential campers and visitors to visualize the Park, setting, campsites, and other amenities.

## SOCIAL MEDIA

Additional social media platforms include Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook all of which offer unique ways to market the existing facilities. The marketing plan will identify the platforms that will best serve the Park. Ongoing management of these accounts is something that should be given careful consideration.

## BRANDING/WAYFINDING

Develop and build a Lake Washington Park and Campground Brand and style list for print materials. Include a consistent brand and graphics on all signage.

## PRINT MATERIALS

Print materials will also need to be a part of the marketing plan. These can also be used as images on the website. A simple brochure should be designed with basic information about the Park and include photos of the campsites and other features. These print materials can be distributed to travel centers and other area campgrounds.

## STRATEGY OVERVIEW

Visitors to the Park are provided access to natural beauty, history, and wealth of recreational possibilities. There are many opportunities to promote these amenities to current and potential users both within the region and beyond. A marketing plan should be developed that incorporates short and long term Improvements for promoting the Park and its year-round amenities. The marketing plan will outline tactics and general approach needed to achieve Park Improvements as well as ensure awareness and user growth. The plan will define specific Improvements, messages and supportive marketing tactics.



Update Page on County Website



Video with Voiceover  
*Low Budget, Similar to What is Done in Real Estate*



Posters on Local Community Boards  
*Coffee Shops, Centers, Schools*



Event Pages - Facebook



Update Page on County Facebook Page



Advertising in Local Publications

## INFLUENCERS AND STAKEHOLDERS

Explore Minnesota  
Local Hospitals and Larger Employers  
Kasota Community  
Mankato and St. Peter Chambers of Commerce  
Schools and Universities  
Scouts  
Visit Greater Mankato

## PROJECT MILESTONES

Identify key influencers and stakeholders  
Create communication schedule  
Create materials (posters, postcards)  
Update page on County website

## GOALS

Build and maintain Park awareness, visitor attendance, and participation in programming and events with the community and region.

Create excitement and sense of ownership in the Park and its recreational experiences.

Create a long-lasting engagement cycle for Park audience that carries through after marketing tactics are initiated.

## APPROACH

The key elements to a successful strategic marketing plan are: presence, persistence, and personalization. Awareness activities will focus on a holistic approach with complementary yet diverse strategies that are consistently communicated and marketed to an inclusive target audience and community.

## ATTRACTIONS AND REACH

Identifying local influencers and groups will allow efforts to span a wide network, and additional groups will include those that may use the Park spaces including the community building and picnic shelter for events such as:

Weddings + Reunions  
Company Events  
Board Meetings

## MASTER PLAN REVISIONS AND UPDATES

The master plan is a dynamic planning tool that will evolve and be fine-tuned as it moves through implementation steps. Over time, there may be justification for revisions and updates to the master plan in response to new information, trends, and general demands. Situations that could potentially prompt review of the master plan include:

- Recreation trend information uncovers a need that has not been adequately addressed by the master plan
- Circumstances change pertaining to existing uses warrants review of the master plan
- Existing facilities prove inadequate to meet demand or require design changes for improvement
- Capacity to meet recreational needs or address maintenance and safety concerns arises
- Requests from citizens and special interest groups to review a particular aspect of the plan, which would only be accepted if the Park Commission has determined that an issue has enough merit, and are approved
- Justification to warrant review prior to scheduled master plan updates

If a review is found to be warranted, Le Sueur County will undertake an appropriate public process that includes input from the Park Commission and groups that are directly impacted by a given concern, as well as other groups that have a general interest in the Park. This approach to reviewing a given situation ensures that the conclusions can be supported by the broader community. It also ensures that a balance between recreational uses and ecological preservation is maintained.



