



*Three Rivers*  
PARK DISTRICT

Vision Plan

JULY 2010

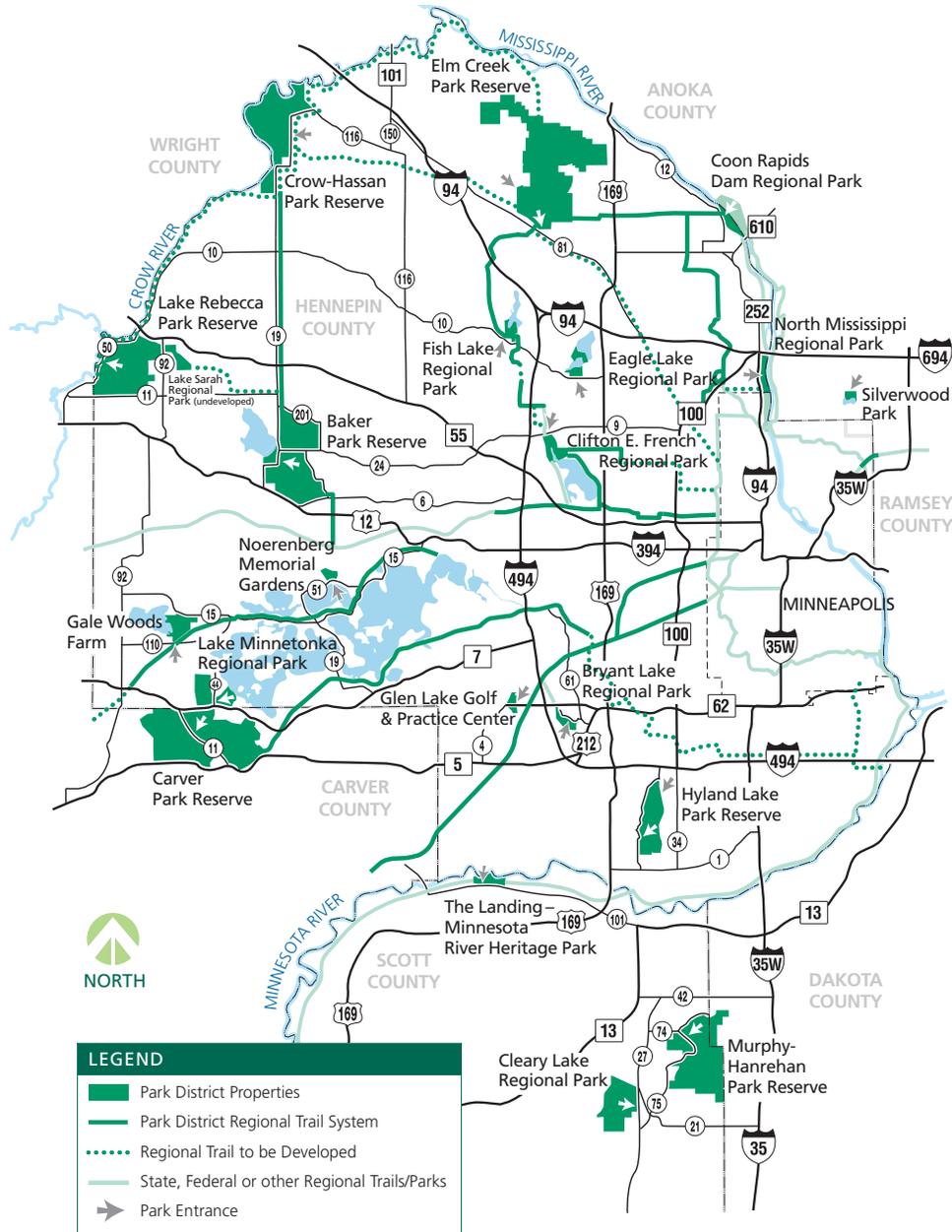
LEADERSHIP • ADVOCACY • INNOVATION • ACTION





# Three Rivers

## PARK DISTRICT



3000 Xenium Lane N. Plymouth, MN 55441-1299  
Telephone 763.559.9000 • Telephone Device for the Deaf 763.559.6719  
[ThreeRiversParks.org](http://ThreeRiversParks.org)

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## PREPARING FOR THE FUTURE

Those who've laid the foundation of protecting and expanding green space and parklands throughout the Twin Cities were never ones to let events take their course and then react. Indeed, leaders like Horace Cleveland, Theodore Wirth, Charles Doell and Clifton French - the founders of the regional parks system were known for their innovation, advocacy, and actions. Their leadership and foresight created our spectacular regional parks system and adds to our quality of life today.

Significant trends are emerging, offering challenges and opportunities for both the near and distant future. The time is again upon us to take the path less traveled, the harder road of proactively shaping our future. What is needed as we begin the next 50 years is a bold vision and a commitment to the Leadership, Advocacy, Innovation and Action required to achieve that vision.

## DEEDS, NOT WORDS

Our actions and accomplishments will be the standard by which future generations will measure this effort. To that end, this Vision Plan provides 31 Actions to be implemented over the next 10 years, including:

### ACTIONS THAT PROTECT THE REGION'S WATER AND NATURAL RESOURCES

- Creating three new parkland classifications (Greenways, Blueways and Regional Natural Areas) within the Three Rivers system, and advocating for their establishment in the Metropolitan Regional Parks System.
- Promoting innovative natural resources management projects including, but not limited to, invasive species research/control, strategic water protection, and targeted education efforts.
- Adopting and implementing a comprehensive Sustainability Plan that reflects phased targets for greenhouse gas emission, waste reduction and water consumption through 2050.

### ACTIONS THAT INSPIRE PEOPLE TO RECREATE

- Encouraging use of the regional parks by young adults, retirees, and urban-area residents.
- Reaching out to the diverse population of Hennepin County.
- Completing the critical links in the existing regional trail network within the fully-developed cities of suburban Hennepin County.



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## ACTIONS THAT CONNECT PEOPLE TO NATURE

- Exploring nature-based preschool immersion opportunities.
- Adding more environmental education opportunities for school-age children.
- Promoting environmental education through a program designed to provide meaningful and appealing learning experiences for all ages.
- Expanding mentoring and outdoor leadership training to better connect teens and young adults to nature.

## ACTIONS THAT CREATE VIBRANT PLACES

- Completing the regional trail network within Hennepin County.
- Bringing regional recreation and education facilities to people within the fully developed cities of Hennepin County.
- Building on the success of Hyland Ski & Snowboard Area to create a year-round vibrant place.

## ACTIONS THAT COLLABORATE ACROSS BOUNDARIES

- Partnering with conservation-based organizations to promote the legacy of hunting and fishing.
- Developing collaborative plans for regional resources including the Three Rivers - Mississippi, Minnesota and Crow, along with Lake Minnetonka, Medicine Lake and Minnehaha Creek.
- Addressing new funding sources for operations, maintenance and rehabilitation of the regional trail network as a key component of an integrated multi-modal transportation system.
- Collaborating with community and business leaders to craft a comprehensive vision and plan for the Twin Cities in the year 2100.
- Partnering to develop the greater Shakopee Historic District as a major state tourism destination.



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Vision Plan was developed under the leadership of the Three Rivers Board of Commissioners, the Superintendent and the senior staff of Three Rivers.

Staff played a vital role in shaping the Vision Plan. Staff in the field – those who work daily with Three Rivers’ visitors, facilities and natural resources–helped ground this plan in a universal set of core values. More than 75 staff members from across divisions and departments helped to develop the 31 Actions recommended in this plan.

Volunteers, past employees, and former Board members provided new perspectives of the challenges and opportunities facing Three Rivers and the region.

Input from visitors and the general public provided the basis of the Vision Plan. Their recognition and support for the role of Three Rivers in the community shaped the Vision, the Goals and the Actions in this plan.

## BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Sara Wyatt  
Long Lake (District 1)

Marilynn Corcoran  
Dayton (District 2)

Mark Haggerty  
New Hope (District 3)

Dale Woodbeck, Vice Chair  
Shorewood (District 4)

Rosemary Franzese  
St. Anthony (District 5)

Barbara Kinsey  
Hennepin County Appointee  
Brooklyn Park

Larry Blackstad, Chair  
Hennepin County Appointee  
Minnetonka

## SENIOR STAFF

Cris Gears, Superintendent and  
Secretary to the Board

Thomas K. McDowell, Associate Superintendent,  
Division of Recreation and Education

Margaret A. Walz, Associate Superintendent,  
Division of Parks and Natural Resources

Boe R. Carlson, Associate Superintendent,  
Division of Administration

Howard D. Koolick, Director of Finance  
Chief Financial Officer

Donald J. DeVeau,  
Director of Planning and Development

Vision Plan Authors:  
Cris Gears, Superintendent  
Jonathan Vlaming, Chief of Planning

THE **MISSION** OF  
THE PARK DISTRICT  
IS TO PROMOTE  
ENVIRONMENTAL  
**STEWARDSHIP** THROUGH  
RECREATION AND EDUCATION  
IN A **NATURAL**  
RESOURCES-BASED  
PARK SYSTEM.



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>CHAPTER 1: THE VISION</b> .....	<b>2</b>
LEADERSHIP. ADVOCACY. INNOVATION. ACTION.....	2
SUCCESS IS BUILT ON CORE VALUES .....	2
THE VISION:.....	3
A FRAMEWORK OF SUSTAINABILITY .....	4
<b>CHAPTER 2: WHERE WE ARE TODAY</b> .....	<b>6</b>
A UNIQUE AGENCY IN MINNESOTA .....	6
WHY PARKS ARE IMPORTANT .....	9
FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY .....	10
<b>CHAPTER 3: LOOKING AHEAD</b> .....	<b>11</b>
WHY LOOK TO THE FUTURE? .....	11
<b>ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGE &amp; THREE RIVERS</b> .....	<b>11</b>
IMPAIRED WATER BODIES .....	11
CLIMATE CHANGE .....	12
URBAN DEVELOPMENT.....	12
INVASIVE SPECIES INTRODUCTIONS .....	12
HABITAT LOSS.....	12
MEETING ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES.....	12
<b>SOCIAL CHANGE &amp; THREE RIVERS</b> .....	<b>13</b>
DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGES WILL AFFECT TYPE OF DEMAND .....	13
HEALTH CRISIS.....	14
TRANSPORTATION MAY SEE SIGNIFICANT CHANGES .....	15
RECREATIONAL DIVERSITY IS IMPORTANT .....	15
THE “LAST CHILD IN THE WOODS” PHENOMENA .....	16
<b>ECONOMIC CHANGE &amp; THREE RIVERS</b> .....	<b>17</b>
MOVING FORWARD IN A DOWNTURN ECONOMY .....	17
THE CHALLENGE OF FUNDING THE REGIONAL TRAIL NETWORK.....	17
THE PRIMARY ECONOMIC CHALLENGE FACING MINNESOTA .....	18
<b>CHAPTER 4: ACTION PLAN</b> .....	<b>19</b>
POLICY ACTIONS .....	20
COLLABORATIVE INITIATIVES.....	22
EDUCATION ACTIONS.....	24
DEVELOPMENT ACTIONS.....	25
APPENDIX: ILLUSTRATIVE TEN YEAR CAPITAL FORECAST .....	29

# CHAPTER 1: THE VISION

## LEADERSHIP. ADVOCACY. INNOVATION. ACTION.

Three Rivers Park District has successfully met its mission for the last 50 years. Nearly 27,000 acres of high-quality natural resources lands are protected in perpetuity. Residents of the region log over 7 million visits annually to our parks and trails. Public support for Three Rivers has been gauged at 98 percent, and Three Rivers is known for its high level of quality – in natural resources management, recreation facilities, environmental education, maintenance, operations and public safety services.

Despite the years of success, the old adage holds true: “past performance does not guarantee future results.” As with all investments, future returns are contingent upon present-day decisions. Parks are part of society’s investments made for future generations. It is the responsibility of Three Rivers to always keep an eye towards the future, and to act today to protect society’s investment in its parks system while striving to position the parks to obtain the best possible future results.



Dylan was right – “The times they are a-changin.” As we look to the future, we see competing needs. For the region to succeed economically, the population must expand with young workers to replace the retiring baby boomers. The region is expected to add nearly a million new residents between 2000 and 2030. In turn, the development needed to accommodate the population expansion is one of the primary threats to the region’s natural resources. Socially it is important that Three Rivers continue to meet the needs of its historic visitor base, but at the same time develop opportunities and facilities that attract younger generations and the expanding minority populations. But a whole generation has now grown up “inside,” disconnected from nature, which threatens the intrinsic value of nature and the social value of open space that has been the driving factor of the quality of life for the region.

To let events take their course and then to react is an approach that has never been accepted by our region. Leaders such as Horace Cleveland, Theodore Wirth, Charles Doell, and Clifton French – the founders of the regional parks system – were known for their innovation, advocacy and actions. It was their leadership that created the regional parks system and the quality of life we enjoy today.

The time again is upon us to take the path less traveled, the harder road of proactively shaping our future. What is needed as we begin the next 50 years is a bold vision and a commitment to the Leadership, Advocacy, Innovation and Action that are required to achieve that vision.

## SUCCESS IS BUILT ON CORE VALUES

For Three Rivers, success is really a measure of the degree to which the public places value on Three Rivers' vision, mission and operations. In turn the vision, mission, and operations are a reflection of the Park District's commitment to fundamental core values. Together these core values help define Three Rivers and help shape the vision for the future.

### THREE RIVERS IS COMMITTED TO:

**1. Public Service**

Continually exploring, innovating, improving and employing ways to achieve the highest ideals of public service.

**2. Excellence**

Providing excellence in our services, facilities and programs.

**3. Creating a sustainable future**

Being responsible stewards of the environment, and embracing sustainable practices in all that we do.

**4. The idea that parks are good for people**

Improving the lives and well-being of individuals, families and the community by connecting people to nature through nature-based education and outdoor recreation.

**5. Accessibility**

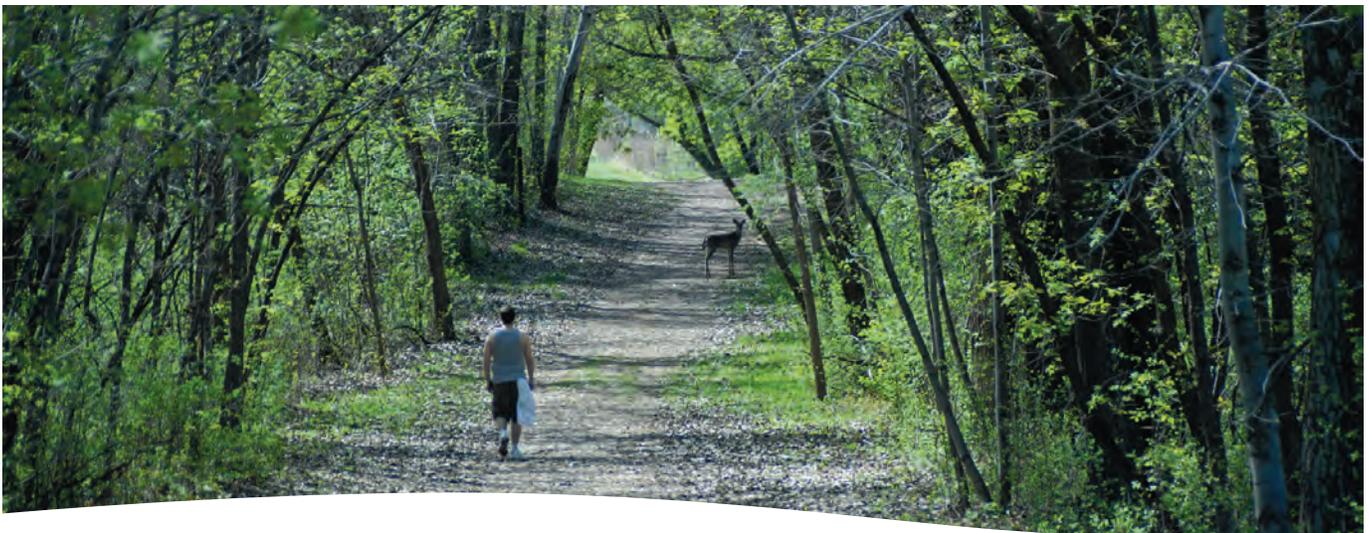
Providing access and a diversity of outdoor recreation opportunities.

### WHAT ARE CORE VALUES?

The core values of an organization are those values we hold which form the foundation on which we perform work and conduct ourselves. We have an entire universe of values, but some of them are so primary, so important to us, that throughout the changes in society, government, politics, and technology, they are **STILL** the core values we will abide by.

In an ever-changing world, core values are constant. Core values are not descriptions of the work we do or the strategies we employ to accomplish our mission. The values underlie our work, how we interact with each other, and which strategies we employ to fulfill our mission. The core values are the basic elements of how we go about our work. They are the practices we use (or should be using) every day in everything we do.

*US National Park Service*



## THE VISION:

Through leadership, advocacy, innovation and action, Three Rivers is a model of a sustainable regional system of parks and trails that meets the needs of the present while ensuring that the needs of future generations are well-met.

## ACHIEVING THE VISION:

Three Rivers embraces a Framework of Sustainability, recognizing that Ecology, Society and Economics are regionally interdependent. From this framework arises Three Rivers' commitment to apply prudent financial stewardship across five actionable goals:

1. Protect the region's water and natural resources
2. Inspire people to recreate
3. Connect people to nature
4. Create vibrant places
5. Collaborate across boundaries



## A FRAMEWORK OF SUSTAINABILITY

Three Rivers recognizes that success is determined by how well we meet the needs of the current population, while at the same time preparing to meet the needs of future generations. Not only must we work for our children, but for our children's grandchildren. The issues and opportunities discussed more in depth in Chapter 3 are significant, complex and interwoven. They can be resolved. They can be capitalized. The solution lies in embracing a framework that is holistic and that provides the ability to take specific action. That framework – a Framework of Sustainability – organizes interrelated goals and actions that address the environment, society, economy and region.

But what is “Sustainability”? Sustainability, in general terms, is the ability to maintain balance of a certain process or state in any system. A sustainable system meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Sustainability strives to provide the best outcomes, the “future returns,” for the human and natural environments.

**“In our every deliberation, we must consider the impact of our decisions on the next seven generations.”**

*-- Gayanashagowa, The Great Binding Law of the Iroquois Confederation.*

Specifically, Three Rivers can embrace and employ sustainability in three areas that directly affect its mission.

### **Ecological sustainability**

Protecting the region's bio-diversity, its water and natural areas, requires leadership, advocacy, innovation and actions such as recognizing and protecting the last best places through greenways, blueways and regionally significant natural resources areas, through reduction in carbon and other greenhouse gases, development using conservation-design principles, enhanced protection of wildlife and waterway corridors, ecosystem-based resource management, and environmental education of the public.

### **Social sustainability**

Inspiring people to recreate and connecting people to nature requires leadership, advocacy, innovation and actions such as removing social barriers, balancing the distribution of resources and facilities, providing a spectrum of recreation and education opportunities, ensuring affordable and easy access to programs and facilities, marketing and promotion, bringing nature and parks to people, and providing life-cycle opportunities for environmental education and outdoor recreation.

### **Economic sustainability**

Creating vibrant places that are needed to retain and attract workers and businesses requires leadership, advocacy, innovation and actions such as developing unique and outstanding recreation facilities and programs, providing targeted facilities for adults who are not yet in their family stage, and integrating parks and greenways into transit-oriented developments.

Parks and trails are recognized as the most attractive feature of the Twin Cities by its residents. Leadership, innovation, advocacy and actions that match the system of parks and trails to the expanding and changing population are needed to maintain the vitality of the most attractive feature of the Twin Cities.

Wise use of the public investment for development and operations is critical to economic sustainability. Three Rivers has practiced, and will continue to practice, economically sustainable operations and capital programs.

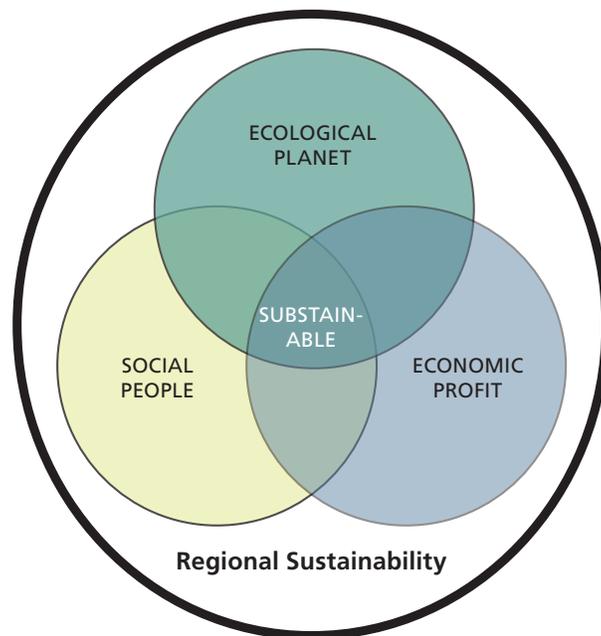
A fourth component of sustainability is also needed, one that recognizes that the Triple Bottom Line of Ecological, Economic and Social Sustainability involves stakeholders from across the public and private sectors, and that all things are connected.

**THE TRIPLE BOTTOM LINE OF SUSTAINABILITY**  
The Triple Bottom Line (TBL) was adopted by the United Nations in 2007 as the international standard for urban and community accounting. TBL captures an expanded spectrum of values and criteria for measuring organizational (and societal) success: Ecological, Social, and Economic, often referred to as Planet, People & Profit.

### REGIONAL SUSTAINABILITY

Collaborating across boundaries recognizes that all systems are interdependent. Ecological, social and economic sustainability transcend jurisdictional boundaries. As an organization that addresses environmental needs, Three Rivers Park District inherently recognizes the dynamic relationships that are integral to any organism’s ability to develop and thrive. Environmental stewardship, recreational use, and environmental education transcend jurisdictional boundaries. Unity is created through development of open communications, collaboration, and complimenting ideas, advocacy and action across agencies. Resource and park agencies (e.g. watershed districts, the DNR, local community park programs, and the regional park system’s implementing agencies) create better outcomes when they communicate openly and work together towards the common good. Three Rivers recognizes its role in collaborating across boundaries to best meet current needs and to prepare for the future.

Together, the four components of the Framework for Sustainability combine to form the basis for Three Rivers’ Vision.



To understand where we propose to go, and why we need to get there, it is important to first understand where we are and what may occur.

Chapter 2 lays out the current state of affairs for Three Rivers and the regional system of parks and trails.

Chapter 3 identifies the looming trends that will either shape the future of the region on their own, or that will be shaped to meet a desired future of the region.

Chapter 4 provides the Action Plan – the specific leadership, advocacy, innovation and actions needed over the course of the next five to 10 years that will set in place the foundation for achieving the vision of Three Rivers.

## CHAPTER 2: WHERE WE ARE TODAY

### A UNIQUE AGENCY IN MINNESOTA

Three Rivers Park District is unique within Minnesota in its history and political structure, geography, purpose, and success.

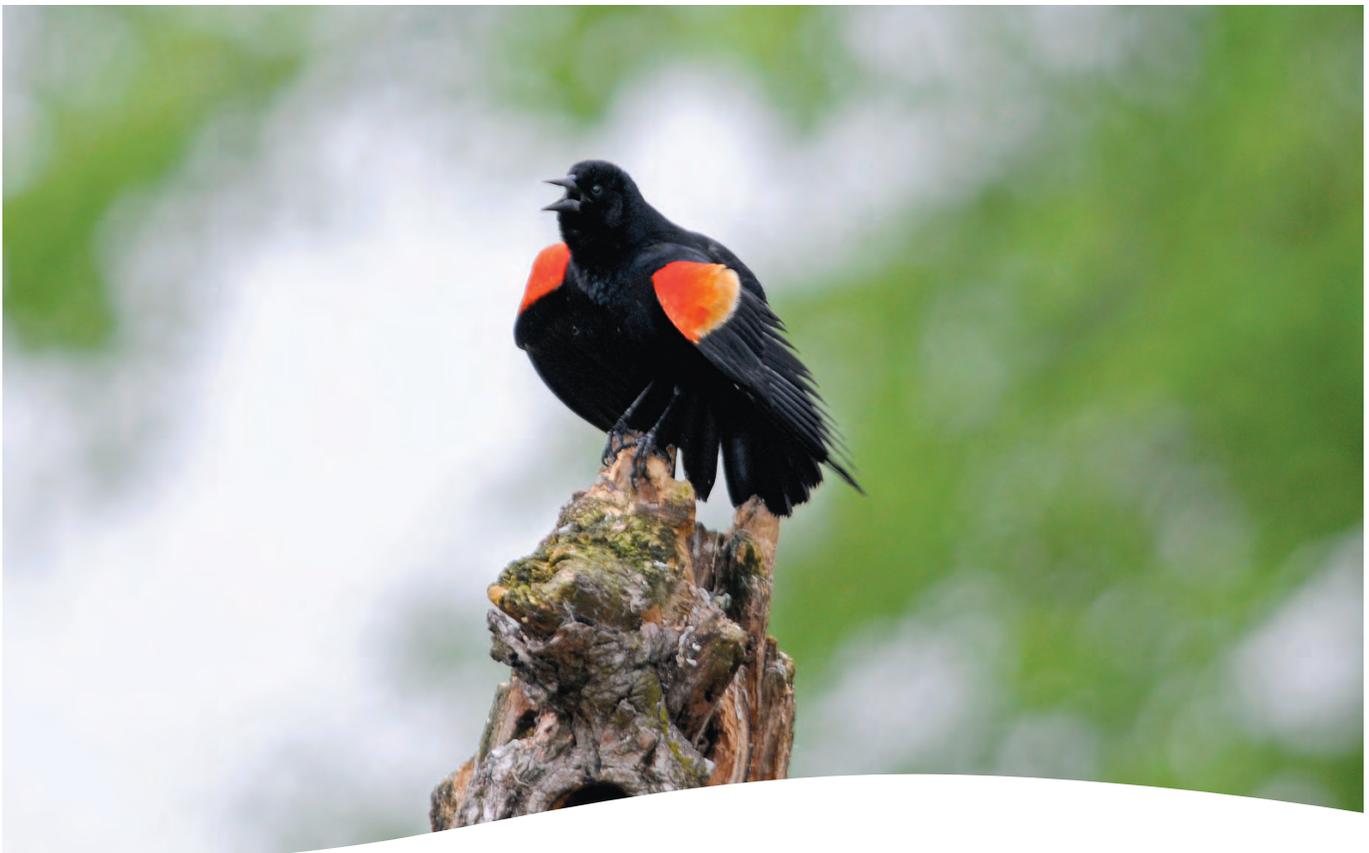
Three Rivers was the first, and remains the only, park district defined by the Minnesota Legislature. Created in 1957, Three Rivers was tasked, and has served, as the leading agency for acquisition, protection, outdoor recreation and nature education for Hennepin County, the most populated county within the state of Minnesota. The Metropolitan Regional Parks System encompasses Three Rivers, along with nine other agencies: Anoka County, Carver County, Dakota County, Ramsey County, Scott County, and the cities of Minneapolis, St. Paul and Bloomington. Together, these 10 agencies operate a regional system of 52,000 acres of land in 53 parks and along 22 regional trails.

Three Rivers is the only regional parks agency in Minnesota with an elected Board with its own taxing and bonding authority. With five elected Board members representing geographic districts, and two board members appointed by the County, Three Rivers' governance is also unique.

Three Rivers owns and operates more than half of the acreage in the Twin Cities' regional parks system, and more than half of the miles of the region's regional trail network. While Three Rivers' existing parks and reserves are concentrated in suburban Hennepin County, Three Rivers also owns and/or operates parks in Anoka, Carver, Dakota, Ramsey, Scott, and Wright counties.

#### BY LAW, THREE RIVERS HAS THE FOLLOWING PRIMARY DUTIES:

"Park district boards shall have as their primary duty not the establishment of parks and playgrounds of a local or neighborhood type but rather the acquisition, development and maintenance of large, wildlife sanctuaries, forests, and other reservations, and means for public access to historic sites and to lakes, rivers and streams and to other natural phenomena". (Minn. Stat. § 398.07)



Three Rivers also has broad powers defined by legislation, including but not limited to:

- Park districts shall have all the rights, powers, privileges and immunities of a municipal corporation at common law and they shall be subject to the duties of a municipal corporation at common law. (Minn. Stat. § 398.08)
- May acquire by lease, purchase, gift, condemnation, or otherwise such real and personal property as the purposes of the board may require and may hold, manage, control, sell, convey, lease or otherwise dispose of such property or its interests therein. (Minn. Stat. § 398.08)
- The board shall have full power and authority to acquire and establish parks and to operate, maintain, protect, improve and preserve a park system and to conduct a recreation program in its parks. (Minn. Stat. § 398.08)
- The power to regulate by ordinance the use of the waters of any lake lying wholly within a park established under this chapter. (Minn. Stat. § 398.09)
- The power to acquire lands either within or without the park district for conversion into forest reserves and for the conservation of the natural resources of the state, including streams, lakes, submerged lands and swamplands, and to these ends may create parks, parkways, forest reservations and other reservations and afforest, develop, improve, protect and promote the use of the same in such manner as is conducive to the general welfare. (Minn. Stat. § 398.09)
- The power to fix, alter, change, and collect fees, tolls, and charges for the use of facilities of the park district. (Minn. Stat. § 398.09)
- The power to cooperate with any public or municipal corporation, with the counties and with any private or public organization engaged in conservation, recreational activities, protection of the public health and safety, prevention of water pollution, sanitation, and/or mosquito abatement for any constructive purpose. (Minn. Stat. § 398.09)
- The power, upon request, to assume control of all or a portion of any existing parks or park lands owned by any county government or municipal corporation in the park district; such control shall be assumed only at the request of and by agreement with the public authority in control of such parks or park lands. (Minn. Stat. § 398.09)
- The power to enter into an agreement under section 471.59 with any political subdivision, governmental unit, or agency, including an elected park and recreation board in a city of the first class, to expend public money, including bond proceeds, in its possession for any metropolitan regional park purposes. (Minn. Stat. § 398.09)
- Three Rivers Park District is authorized to acquire, establish, operate, and maintain trail systems. (Minn. Stat. § 383B.71)

In 1983 Three Rivers' Board developed a mission that has helped guide Three Rivers over the last 26 years:

***The mission of Three Rivers is to promote environmental stewardship through recreation and education in a natural resources-based park system.***

Over the last 50 years, Three Rivers Park District has developed an outstanding system of nearly 27,000 acres in 10 regional parks, seven park reserves, 101 miles on 10 different regional trails, and five special recreation features.

Surveys indicate that Three Rivers is well known and well respected by visitors and non-visitors alike. The general public and visitors give very high ratings to Three Rivers for environmental stewardship, environmental education, recreation, maintenance and operations, and public safety services. The popularity and success of Three Rivers is also reflected in the doubling of visitation to the system over the last 10 years – from 3.3 million visits in 1998 to more than 7 million visits in 2008. Assuming no significant events, visitation will likely grow to 14 million annual visits by 2030, split evenly between parks and regional trails.

## CONTEXT OF THE VISION PLAN

In 1967, the Three Rivers Board of Commissioners adopted its first Policy Statement as a guide for the future. The Policy Statement provides Board interpretation of Minnesota State Statutes, Chapter 398, the Three Rivers enabling legislation and establishes those principles that Three Rivers should follow in the orderly continuation of governance, finance, planning, acquisition, development, and operations. The Policy Statement provides invaluable assistance to Three Rivers Commissioners, staff, and the general public in the acquisition, development and operation of the system. The Policy Statement has been updated in 1982, 1993, and 2007. The underlying principles and concepts of these Policy Statements are generally as appropriate today as they were years ago.

The Mission of Three Rivers is defined as part of the Policy Statement. The Mission describes “what we do.” The Vision Plan describes “Where we want to go” and “How we get there.” The Vision Plan is intended to work in concert with the Policy Statement and the Mission of Three Rivers. The Vision Plan provides recommended actions that can be implemented to further the organization towards its vision. Some of these actions recommend consideration of modifications to the Policy Statement (e.g. adding new park unit classifications), but the intent of the Vision Plan is to not supersede the fundamentals of the Policy Statement nor modify the Mission of Three Rivers.

The Policy Statement, Mission, and Vision Plan help guide development of more specific plans such as park master plans, education plans, and natural resource plans.

Future Three Rivers Boards are bound only by the enabling legislation. Policy Statements, the Mission and the Vision are subject to periodic Board review and updates as needed to address new trends, new challenges, and new opportunities.



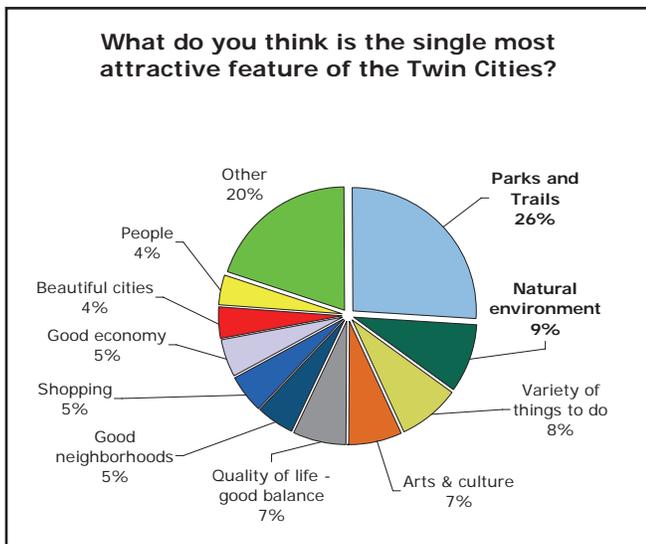
## WHY PARKS ARE IMPORTANT

Residents of suburban Hennepin County recognize the importance of the regional park system. A 2008 survey found that 98 percent of residents felt that:

- “Preserving natural landscapes and habitats is very important in preserving the quality of life in this area;”
- “Offering outdoor recreational opportunities is very important in preserving the quality of life in this area;” and
- “Regional parks are valuable even if I don’t use them very much.”

Quality of life is critical to the region’s economic future because it is a primary driver for recruiting new workers and businesses and retaining existing workers and businesses. The Metropolitan Council’s annual metro resident survey indicates that the region’s parks and trails are the single most attractive feature for the Twin Cities.

The benefits of park systems to individuals, the community, the economy and the environment have been well documented. Parks play a critical role in providing opportunities for children and adults of all ages to improve their physical and mental health. Parks and trails help strengthen family relationships and connect communities. The size and diversity of the park system are key indices for measuring quality of life. Parks and trail corridors improve property values. Park reserves and regional trails’ greenway corridors together create critical wildlife habitat, protect and improve surface and drinking water quality, and preserve large areas of woodlands and prairie communities around which the metropolitan area has developed. Healthy green spaces support thriving communities.



*Metropolitan Council data indicates that parks and trails are a primary driver of the high quality of life in the metro area.*



*Homes within ½ mile of Three Rivers’ parks see a value premium of \$15,000.*

## FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY

Three Rivers ensures internal economic sustainability and responsible use of the public dollar through an annual General Fund Operating Budget and an annual Asset Management Program Budget.

The General Fund Operating Budget provides for keeping parks and trails open and clean, making programs available, planting gardens, managing natural resources, and supporting ongoing administrative services for the 7 million annual visitors who visit the parks. The budget reflects the Board's commitment to prudent fiscal stewardship and service to the public. The budget is funded through a combination of property taxes, user fees, intergovernmental revenues and other miscellaneous revenues.

The Asset Management Program provides a sound, comprehensive, fiscally responsible method to manage capital development, maintenance, rehabilitation, information technology, and other significant activities of Three Rivers at a system-wide level. An effective Asset Management Program facilitates decision making that prioritizes projects, reduces costs, and maximizes assets.

Implementation of the Asset Management Program as authorized by the Board is accomplished through administration of five internal programs (see below). Four of the five programs are responsible for ongoing maintenance of existing infrastructure and facilities – or “Taking care of what we have.” Those programs play a critical role in the successful functioning of Three Rivers. Each of these functional programs has a project decision-making process developed by a program committee. The committees maintain, manage, and replace existing assets over their lifecycle through the development of annual, short-term (5 year) and long-term (20+ year) plans in accordance with industry best management practices.

In contrast, the Capital Investment Program (CIP) focuses on new initiatives that take Three Rivers beyond its current functional state. Land acquisition, new development, and the functional redesign of existing facilities are all considered new initiatives under the Asset Management Program. New initiatives are not critical to the current function of Three Rivers, and as such can be considered discretionary. However, new initiatives are critical to achieving the Vision, keeping Three Rivers competitive and relevant in a changing society. As new initiatives are funded through the CIP, the operations and maintenance required for those initiatives are folded into the general fund operating budget.

The Three Rivers Board of Commissioners is responsible for setting the Asset Management Program Budget each year. Within the context of the Vision Plan, the Board has determined that the distribution of capital funding needed for the Asset Management Program be based on the following unranked principles:

- Take good care of what we already have through provision of the necessary funding to maintain parks and trails using recognized national standards scheduling for roads, trails, buildings and other park infrastructure.
- Give preference to capital projects that best meet the goals of the Vision Plan.
- Give preference to capital projects that reduce operational expenses or that generate additional net revenue.
- Give preference to capital projects that have matching dollars/resources from outside sources.

### ASSET MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

#### 1. Infrastructure

Inventory, catalog and prioritize major infra-structure improvement requirements.

#### 2. Preservation/Rehabilitation

Inventory, catalog and prioritize maintenance and rehabilitation capital requirements.

#### 3. Public/Life Safety

Maintain functional fire and life safety systems.

#### 4. Information Technology

Maintain a functional technology system.

#### 5. Capital Investment

Acquire park property, develop new facilities and redesign of existing facilities.

## CHAPTER 3: LOOKING AHEAD

### WHY LOOK TO THE FUTURE?

Three Rivers has successfully met its mission for the last 50 years, protecting the environment while providing outdoor recreation opportunities and nature-based education to the people of the Twin Cities metropolitan area. However, the region is changing, and what works today may not work very well in the future. Exceptional organizations identify threats and opportunities for future success and relevance.

### CHANGE IS AFOOT

How is the region changing? What do those changes imply for Three Rivers? What are the opportunities and challenges that lie ahead?

There are three broad categories of regional change that will likely affect Three Rivers' success in meeting its mission. The environment is changing, in part due to actions at the local level, and in part due to global phenomena. Society is changing - its demographics, its technologies, and the values it places on interacting with nature. The regional and state economy may also change, with stark warnings of negative change unless action is taken soon. These three themes of change offer both challenges and opportunities for Three Rivers to evolve to meet and capitalize on change, to prepare for the future, to help guide the future to improve the quality of life for the region, and to meet its mission.

## ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGE & THREE RIVERS

Water and natural resources management in Three Rivers Park District, along with resources management elsewhere, faces many new challenges that have become severe in the past few years. The most critical among these are global warming, urban development adjacent to parks, invasive species introductions, and habitat loss.

These challenges also threaten the bio-diversity of the metropolitan region, with additional effects on other aspects of sustainability. A draft report from the United Nations, dubbed the "Stern for Nature" report after a similar report on climate change, indicates that the value of saving natural goods and services, such as pollination, medicines, fertile soils, clean air and water, will be between 10 and 100 times the cost of saving the habitats and species which provide them.

### IMPAIRED WATER BODIES

Three Rivers manages a diverse array of water resources (e.g., lakes, streams, rivers, beaches, wetlands, storm water and ground water) throughout Hennepin, Scott, Dakota, Anoka and Ramsey counties. Throughout the Park District, there are 43 lakes and 14 rivers and streams (30 stream miles) and approximately 8,000 acres of wetlands that are managed primarily for recreational use and fish/wildlife habitat. Despite the large number and diversity of water resources within its borders, Three Rivers owns a relatively small percentage of the total land area (i.e., the watershed) that drains to these water bodies.

The quality of water resources throughout Three Rivers varies widely. Some water bodies are considered exceptional resources (e.g., Murphy and Hanrehan lakes in Murphy-Hanrehan Park Reserve). However, many water bodies are also impaired by a range of pollutants – the most significant of which are phosphorus and mercury. Currently, 20 lakes (46 percent) and 23 stream miles (77 percent) are listed as impaired by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA). The primary factors affecting Three Rivers' water resources are changes in regional climate, land use and exotic species introduction.

## CLIMATE CHANGE

Indications are that the Minnesota climate will resemble Kansas by the end of the century, affecting both the plant and animal species that will survive in our parks. One highly visible change has been the establishment of opossum populations in the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area (TCMA) over the past 10 years. In addition, significant hydrologic impacts are occurring, the most problematic being alteration of rainfall patterns. For example, the design 100-year 24-hour rainfall event for the TCMA that has been used for the past 50 years or more is 5.9 inches. Statistical analysis of rainfall patterns over the past 25 years, however, suggests that the current 100-year 24-hour rainfall event is 11 inches. Because storm sewer pipes and ponds were designed using the 5.9-inch rainfall event, the frequent large rainfall events have caused significant flooding and channel erosion problems in most of Minnesota. Maintaining a high quality natural resources base as these changes continue to occur will be a significant challenge for resources managers.

## URBAN DEVELOPMENT

Another major challenge to Park District resources is the continued urban development adjacent to the parks. In addition to increasing water flow and pollutant loading into lakes, streams and wetlands, these developments provide direct pathways for invasive species and force wildlife into the parks, creating additional stress on existing populations. Encroachments in the form of unauthorized trails, expanded mowing patterns, and illegal vegetation removal also disturb natural resources in the parks. Developing more effective strategies to manage these impacts will be an ongoing challenge for Three Rivers.

## INVASIVE SPECIES INTRODUCTIONS

Invasive species introductions are accelerating, presumably in response to the warming climate and the global economic transport of goods. Aquatic species such as hydrilla, that were once thought to be unable to persist because of cold winters, are moving northward as ice cover periods decline. The increasing international transport of goods and services also increases the international movement of plants and animals. Without their natural biological control agents, many of these species become significant invasive pests. For example, bighead and silver carp are in the process of migrating north into the Minnesota's waters via the Mississippi River, posing a significant threat to native fisheries.

## HABITAT LOSS

Habitat loss, resulting from urban development, invasive species and climate change, threatens to convert the park reserves into isolated islands, limiting movement of many species between the park units. Developing and managing natural corridors between park units to facilitate the movement of plant and animal species responding to climate change patterns will be necessary to maintain sustainable native species populations in the park reserves.

## MEETING ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES

Meeting the threat posed by global warming, invasive species introductions, habitat loss, and urban development requires coordination with local, regional and state agencies. Three Rivers natural resources managers currently work with many outside agencies to protect and manage district resources. Continued cooperation and coordination with these groups will become even more critical as the threats to the natural resources base increase. Three Rivers will need to better define the degree of leadership it must assume in order to best protect the natural resources base in the system.

## SOCIAL CHANGE & THREE RIVERS

There are several social trends that will affect Three Rivers' ability to successfully meet its mission in the future.

### DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGES WILL AFFECT TYPE OF DEMAND

The "baby boom" population – people born between 1946 and 1964 – represents an unnaturally large percentage of the population. As this demographic passes through its natural life cycle, the population distribution is expected to achieve a more even distribution across age groups.

Baby boomers historically have been one of the primary visitor groups to the Three Rivers system. The pending retirement and aging of this group will result in changing recreational demand. For example, Three Rivers' visitor studies have found that the baby boomers are now embracing trail use, but are using parks less than they have in the past. Facilities developed specifically for this demographic group will need to be flexible, with the potential for modification and redirection when this demographic group moves beyond the use of parks and trails.

Minority populations have been, and are expected to continue to be, the fastest growing segment of the population in the region. This demographic group is underserved by Three Rivers, in part because different ethnic and racial groups have different recreational motivations and needs and in part because of lack of engagement with them. Future facility design and programming will need to reflect the diverse needs of this growing population.



## HEALTH CRISIS

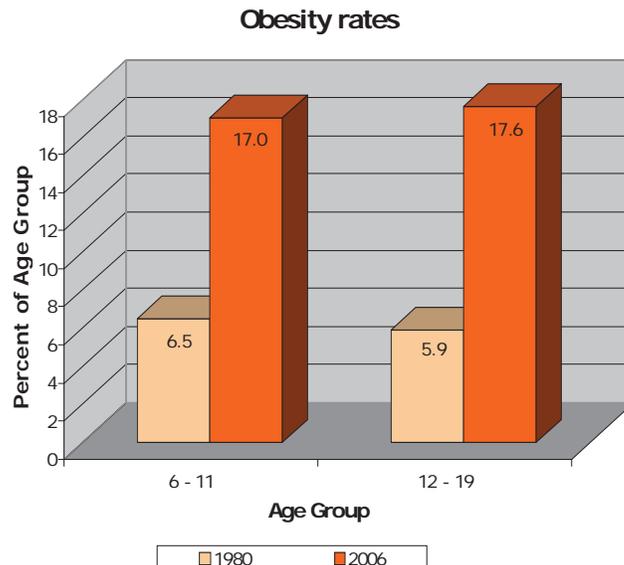
Our nation is facing an obesity epidemic that is claiming lives and causing health care costs to rise. Obesity significantly contributes to the development and severity of chronic diseases. These diseases cause major limitations in daily living for almost one out of 10 Americans, affecting both adults and children. According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the obesity rate in children ages 6-11 more than doubled from 6.5 percent in 1980 to 17.0 percent in 2006, and tripled among those ages 12-19 to 17.6 percent during this same time period. Adults and children are being robbed of their quality of life, and rising health care costs resulting from obesity and chronic disease are affecting economies both nationally and locally.

Solutions to this problem are multi-faceted; however, parks and recreation agencies at all levels can and do play an ever-increasing role in addressing this problem. The CDC has called for more parks and playgrounds as one solution to the increased incidence of obesity. Studies have shown that when people have access to parks, they exercise more. A 2006 report prepared by the Trust Fund for Public Land, *The Health Benefits of Parks*, states that parks, playgrounds, greenways, trails and community open spaces help keep Americans and their communities fit and healthy. Three Rivers is a major provider of facilities that offer people inviting and accessible places to be active.

Equally important to the provision of places to be active is the need to inspire people to be active and to educate people on the benefits. A U.S. Surgeon General report found that people who engage in regular physical activity improve their quality of life. The report included the following facts about the benefits of physical activity that are also inherent results of participation in outdoor recreation activities:

- Americans can substantially improve their health and quality of life by including moderate amounts of physical activity in their daily lives;
- Health benefits appear to be proportional to the amount of activity;
- Physical activity can relieve symptoms of depression and anxiety, improve moods, and enhance psychological well-being.

Despite knowledge of the benefits of physical activity, only 20-30 percent of the adults and adolescents in this country engage in recommended levels of physical activity. Three Rivers' marketing and programming efforts, in addition to increased diversity and accessibility of facilities, can inspire and motivate people to be active. Three Rivers was founded on the need to provide people outdoor places to recreate because recreation is good for people. We are uniquely positioned to contribute to reducing this national health epidemic through recreation and education in a natural resources-based park system.



## TRANSPORTATION MAY SEE SIGNIFICANT CHANGES

Eighty-eight percent of visitors to Three Rivers Parks arrive via automobile. The automobile-based transportation system is unstable, with potentially significant reductions in efficiency if fuel prices were to rise, or if the population were to increase dramatically. The Minnesota Department of Transportation already recognizes the potential stress on infrastructure from future population increases. Regional transportation plans do not adequately address a multi-modal transportation system that would connect population centers with Three Rivers’ outlying park reserves. Together these situations could create a significant barrier to visitation for most regional parks and reserves.

The regional trail network will likely become an increasingly important component of the multi-modal transportation network. Over the last 10 years commuter use of the regional trail network has tripled, with 12 percent of all Three Rivers’ regional trail visits now being for the purpose of commuting. That transportation role has been recognized and supported through partnerships with Hennepin County and through federal transportation grants. However, as commuter use increases, it is important that future regional trail development is more fully recognized and funded in part through additional regional and state partnerships.

**REGIONAL TRAILS ARE ALSO USED FOR COMMUTING:**  
**In 2008 there were over 200,000 bicycle commuting trips on Cedar Lake LRT and North Cedar Lake Regional Trails.**

## RECREATIONAL DIVERSITY IS IMPORTANT

Recreation research has provided important concepts and findings that can improve the recreational offerings of the regional park system. Elwood Shafer’s seminal piece, *“The average camper who doesn’t exist,”* was published by the U.S. Forest Service in 1969. Shafer’s work was one of the first recreation studies to identify the idea that within a specific activity, there is a diversity of recreation users. The “average” user may exist only statistically—a composite of the diversity of the users. Consequently, managing parks for the “average” user may inadvertently exclude the majority of users who participate in an activity, but for very different reasons.

Research has shown that visitors have diverse tastes that may change over time and adjust to their age and their degree of specialization. Visitors to Three Rivers Park District and to the Metropolitan Regional Parks System are not static in their recreation activities.

Over time, visitors tend to become more specialized in their activities. For example, campers may be introduced to family camping at Baker Park Reserve campground. Later some of these campers will further develop their camping skills and may seek more advanced camping opportunities in more remote areas without the full support services found at the Baker Park Reserve campground. Specialization also is found among trail users. Visitors may start out by walking or biking around Lake Harriet. Some trail users will eventually seek more challenging biking or hiking trails, or seek more natural surroundings or solitude. Paved trails in Elm Creek, Carver, or Lake Rebecca park reserves will help meet these changing needs. However, specialization among these visitors is ongoing and some of them may seek very challenging or remote trails such as those found in Murphy-Hanrehan Park Reserve.

To accommodate this specialization, it is necessary to provide a diversity of outdoor recreation across a Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS), ranging from very urban settings such as the Minneapolis Chain of Lakes Regional Park to the wilderness-like settings found in Murphy-Hanrehan Park Reserve. As the saying goes, “Variety is the spice of life.”



## THE “LAST CHILD IN THE WOODS” PHENOMENA

In 2005, a movement was born based on Richard Louv’s book, *“Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder.”* The book served as a call to arms, documenting how lifestyle changes over the past 30 years have had powerful and pervasive detrimental effects on children. The hypothesized causes that children no longer have adequate free time outdoors are: increasingly hectic schedules, burgeoning dependence on electronic stimuli, manifesting paranoia of children abduction, or some combination thereof.

Studies have shown that children are smarter, more cooperative, happier and healthier when they have frequent and varied opportunities for free and unstructured play in the outdoors. Simply, nature is good for children.

A society that grows up without nature tends to value it less (see below). And the trend will worsen over generations, as the children reared inside have even fewer nature experiences to share and teach to their children. The feedback loop portends diminished commitments to nature.

Three River is part of a strong grassroots movement to try to connect people with nature. This movement fits perfectly with the mission of Three Rivers, and provides an opportunity to address what is the most serious social challenge to environmental stewardship, parks and open space to develop in our lifetimes. Beyond goodwill, direct engagement is imperative to the organization’s future.

**The health of children is at stake, but so is the health of the Earth. Studies show that, almost to a person, conservationists or any adults with environmental awareness had some transcendent experience in nature when they were children. For some, the epiphanies took place in a national park; for others, in the clump of trees at the end of the cul-de-sac.**

**But if experiences in nature are radically reduced for future generations, where will stewards of the Earth come from?**

*Children & Nature Network, 2008*



## ECONOMIC CHANGE & THREE RIVERS

### MOVING FORWARD IN A DOWNTURN ECONOMY

As this Vision Plan was being developed, the United States entered what has been identified as the most significant economic downturn since the Great Depression. Minnesota and the Twin Cities region have not been spared this economic pain, resulting in high unemployment and a significant decrease in home values, the primary source of wealth for most Minnesotans.

Leading economic indicators point towards a lengthy recovery, which impedes investment and growth in the short term. This is a long-wave economic cycle, and a full recovery is expected. New jobs will be created, market values will return, and the population will resume expansion.

The regional parks system has played an important role during these hard economic times. It is providing opportunities for people to “staycation” at or near home at a fraction of the cost of a regular travel-based vacation. The best things in life may indeed be free when parks and open space are readily available to the public.

### THE CHALLENGE OF FUNDING THE REGIONAL TRAIL NETWORK

Across the Twin Cities, there are over 200 miles of regional trails open to public use, and an additional 600 miles of planned regional trails. These trails provide recreation and health opportunities for all users. They also serve as the “first point of contact” for potential bicycle commuters, acting as a safe, car-free place to learn to ride.

Commuter use of the regional trail network has increased dramatically over the last 10 years, with Three Rivers seeing a four-fold increase in bicycle commuting on its regional trails. The Metropolitan Council encourages and expects this trend to continue across the region as the trail network is more fully developed.

Trails come with costs for the initial infrastructure development, and for ongoing maintenance, rehabilitation, operations and public safety. Currently there are federal transportation grants available to help alleviate costs of infrastructure development. There are no significant transportation funding sources for operations and maintenance of regional trails.

As demand for the regional trail network to serve as a core component of the greater multi-modal transportation network increases, so will the operational and maintenance costs of the expanded trail network. This results in park agencies such as Three Rivers having to direct limited financial resources away from parks to cover the costs of the multi-modal transportation network.

A funding solution that recognizes and addresses the role of the regional trail network as part of the larger multi-modal transportation network must be developed now, before the funding imbalance becomes so great that new regional trails are no longer financially feasible.



## THE PRIMARY ECONOMIC CHALLENGE FACING MINNESOTA

The Minnesota State Economist and Minnesota State Demographer have been crossing the state warning of another looming economic change, and one that requires immediate attention if the state wishes to avoid becoming part of the rustbelt.

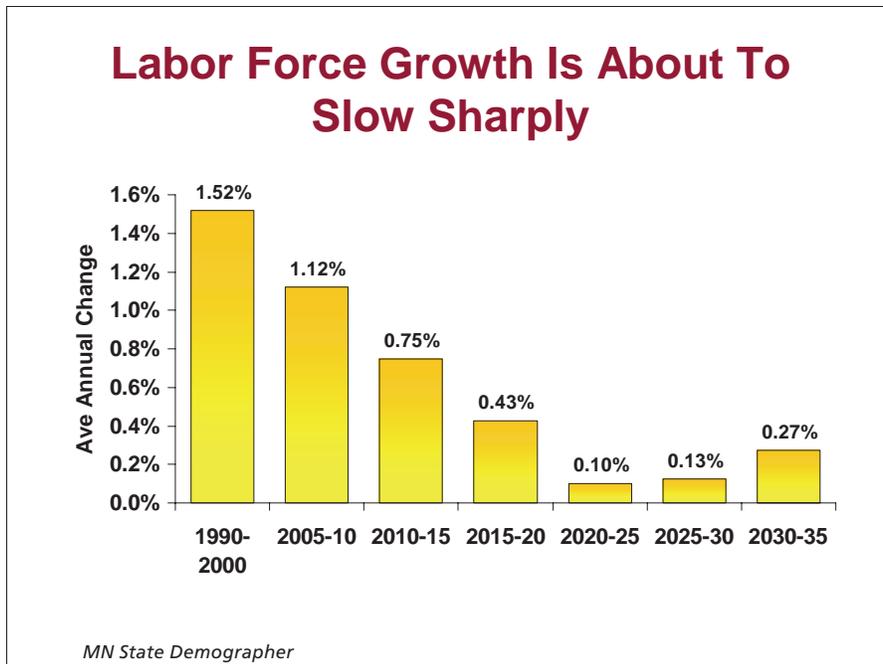
The eldest members of the baby boomer generation are now at retirement age. When a working person retires, he or she shifts from being a wealth generator to a wealth consumer. His or her health care costs rises, income typically decreases as do tax contributions, and he or she tends to purchase fewer goods. When a population is in balance across age groups, for each retiree a new young worker enters the work force, helping to share the costs of the aging population and assuming the role of consumer. The problem is that the population age distribution is out of balance – the baby boomer generation is quite large, and is much larger than the emerging population of new young workers. This imbalance is expected to occur across the United States.

To maintain the economic status quo, Minnesota will need to retain and recruit new businesses and new workers. Competition for business and workers across the country is expected to be fierce. Given its lack of notoriety and its cold-weather climate, how will Minnesota ever hope to compete with places such as Atlanta, Houston or Phoenix?

Quality of life in the region is critical to the region’s economic future because it is a primary driver for recruiting new workers and businesses and retaining existing workers and businesses. The size and diversity of the park system are key indices for measuring quality of life. The regional park system can play an important role in retention and recruitment of new businesses and workers through expansion of the system to beef up its quality of life indices, and more directly, to target the new- worker age class through recreational opportunities and the creation of the vibrant places that are attractive to that group.

**Vibrant public spaces provide people with welcoming, well-defined public areas for personal interaction, celebration and reflection, nature, art and cultural appreciation, civic participation and public events.**

*American Institute of Architects Ten Principles for Livable Communities*



## CHAPTER 4: ACTION PLAN

Three Rivers embraces a Framework of Sustainability recognizing that Ecology, Society and Economics are regionally interdependent. From this framework arises Three Rivers' commitment to apply prudent financial stewardship across five actionable goals:

- 1. Protect the region's water and natural resources**
- 2. Inspire people to recreate**
- 3. Connect people to nature**
- 4. Create vibrant places**
- 5. Collaborate across boundaries**

To achieve these goals, the Vision Plan proposes 31 distinct actions to occur over the course of the next five to 10 years.

The actions were chosen based on how well they could meet the goals of the Vision Plan. Many of the actions help meet multiple goals. Figure 4.1 (pages 26-28) provides a summary list of the actions and the degree to which each action is expected to meet the five goals.

For the purposes of this plan, the actions are grouped by the primary approach required to implement the action. There are four primary approaches:

- 1. Policy Actions**

14 Actions that are implemented primarily through actions of the Three Rivers Board of Commissioners.

- 2. Collaborative Initiatives**

7 Actions that are implemented primarily through collaborative efforts with other partners.

- 3. Education Actions**

5 Actions that are implemented primarily through revisions and additions to the educational and programming efforts of Three Rivers.

- 4. Development Actions**

5 Actions that are implemented primarily through development of facilities.



## POLICY ACTIONS

**P 1. Create three new parkland classifications within the Three Rivers system, and advocate for their establishment in the metropolitan regional parks system:**

- a. Regional Natural Area (RNA) classification, focusing on protection, preservation and restoration of water bodies and natural resources.
- b. Regional Greenway classification, focusing on linear parks that act as wildlife and ecological corridors, and that provide the opportunity for future recreational trail development.
- c. Regional Blueway, or regional water trail classification, focusing on protection and recreational use of streams and rivers.

**P 2. Designate search areas for additional regional park units and the remainder of the regional trail network.**

- a. Work with local and regional partners to identify a search area for a regional park near Crow-Hassan Park Reserve to alleviate future pressure for development of that park reserve.
- b. Work with local and regional partners to finalize the long-range regional trail network within Hennepin County.
- c. Explore with other agencies additional opportunities to bring regional recreation and education facilities to people within the fully developed cities of Hennepin County.

**P 3. Advocate for greater protection of public lands and open space.**

- a. Partner with local community planners in efforts to minimize impacts on regional parklands.
- b. Revise Three Rivers policies as needed.
- c. Advocate for stronger regional and legislative protection of publicly owned open space.

**P 4. Adopt and implement a comprehensive Sustainability Plan that reflects phased targets for greenhouse gas emission, waste reduction, and water consumption targets through 2050.**

- a. Follow recommendations as outlined in the plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, generation of waste materials, and groundwater consumption to meet 2015, 2025 and 2050 targets.
- b. Prioritize staff resources to coordinate implementation of the Sustainability Plan.
- c. Prioritize capital resources for development and redevelopment of buildings to increase energy efficiency.

**P 5. Lead efforts to acquire private properties within parks and to secure land or easements as needed for other initiatives.**

- a. Provide funding as a match to regional and state acquisition funding programs.
- b. Continue to acquire private properties within park boundaries from willing sellers.

**P 6. Promote innovative natural resources management approaches and projects.**

- a. Provide funding for natural resources initiatives within the Three Rivers system.
- b. Participate in public/private research partnerships to control and adapt to invasive species.
- c. Partner with local, regional and state agencies to complete plans and strengthen enforcement tools that will protect water quality in lakes and streams in or adjacent to Three Rivers' properties.
- d. Design and implement environmental education programs for the public and for decision-makers.

**P 7. Restore the non-paved trail network, focusing on one regional park reserve per year, to reflect current best practices in sustainable trail development and management.**

- a. Provide funding for the non-paved trail restoration program.
- b. Prioritize restoration based on greatest environmental benefits.
- c. Apply new sustainable trail guidelines and best practices as they are developed.

**P 8. Provide a spectrum of outdoor recreation and education settings, ranging from the semi-primitive nature of Murphy-Hanrehan and Crow-Hassan park reserves, to the vibrant urban spaces of Silverwood Park and French Regional Park.**

- a. Assign the role of each park unit to a place on the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum.
- b. Guide future master plans based on the assigned role of the park unit.
- c. Revise Three Rivers policies to reflect this action.

**P 9. Reach out to the diverse population of Hennepin County.**

- a. Open a dialogue with community leaders.
- b. Conduct research to determine minority desires and constraints related to the regional park system.
- c. Develop additional actions and tactics as needed to address needs and constraints.

**P 10. Identify how Three Rivers can encourage use of the regional parks by young adults, retirees, and urban-area residents.**

- a. Conduct research with these targeted age groups to determine their needs and constraints.
- b. Develop additional actions and tactics as needed to address needs and constraints.

**P 11. Engage a diverse pool of volunteers in all levels of the organization.**

- a. Increase capacity for TRPD staff to work cross-culturally and across generations.
- b. Develop collaborative relationships and partnerships with community agencies, schools, corporations, faith community, service clubs, higher education, k-12 public and private schools, and other non-Park District entities.
- c. Implement outreach strategies in collaboration with TRPD divisions and sections that support intentional volunteer recruitment, retention, and recognition activities.

**P 12. Advocate for a comprehensive 2100 Vision Plan for the Twin Cities area.**

- a. Collaborate with public agencies, public leaders and business leaders to craft a comprehensive vision and plan for the Twin Cities in the year 2100.

**P 13. Prioritize capital funding based on the following unranked principles:**

- Take good care of what we already have through provision of the necessary funding to maintain parks and trails using recognized national standards schedules for roads, trails, buildings and other park infrastructure.
- Give preference to capital projects that best meet the goals of the Vision Plan.
- Give preference to capital projects that reduce operational expenses or generate additional net revenue.
- Give preference to capital projects that have matching dollars/resources from outside sources.

**P 14. Assess the progress towards meeting the Vision on an annual basis.**

- a. Assess initiated actions to determine their progress towards meeting the Vision of Three Rivers. Modify actions as needed.
- b. Assess new actions and opportunities as they arise.
- c. Update the prioritization and implementation schedule of actions to reflect current economic data and to consider new actions and opportunities.

## COLLABORATIVE INITIATIVES

**C 1. Collaborate with other agencies and entities to explore pooling resources to maximize efficiencies and products.**

- a. Programming and outdoor education products and efficiencies.
- b. Maintenance, natural resources management and other operational products and efficiencies.
- c. Planning, development, communications, finance and other administrative products and efficiencies.

**C 2. Promote and partner in the development of a joint comprehensive natural resources management plan for the Three Rivers service area.**

- a. Identify and invite partners to participate in the planning effort.
- b. Set goals and actions.
- c. Identify funding sources.

**C 3. Partner to promote the legacy of conservation through a center that teaches classic hunting and fishing skills.**

- a. Bring together the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, non-profit groups such as the Minnesota Deer Hunters Association, Pheasants Forever, National Wild Turkey Federation, and Metro Bowhunters, and the sporting goods industry to explore the potential for development of a conservation skills center.
- b. Set goals and actions.
- c. Identify roles of the partners for capital development, education and operations.

**C 4. Educate the public about the historic and cultural connections between Native Americans, early settlers, sacred spaces, historic places, and the Minnesota River environment through partnered planning, financing and development of The Landing and the greater Shakopee Historic District as a major state tourism destination.**

- a. Form a partnership with the appropriate Native American nations, the cities of Shakopee and Eden Prairie, Scott and Hennepin counties, the Scott County Historical Society, the Minnesota Historical Society, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, the Minnesota Office of Tourism, and the United States Fish and Wildlife Service to develop a vision and implementation plan for the greater Shakopee Historic District.
- b. Identify roles of the partners for capital financing, development, education, and operations of the Historic District resource.

**C 5. Develop collaborative plans for regional resources including the three major rivers, major lakes and creeks, and transportation nodes:**

- a. **Mississippi River** – Build upon the National Park Service’s plans for the Mississippi River National Recreation Area by focusing on development of a collaborative Plan for the Coon Rapids Dam resource that engages all partners, addresses ongoing concerns such as the modification and use of the dam as a barrier to bighead carp and other invasive species, maximizes benefits, and secures funding for the ongoing operations and maintenance of the dam resource.
- b. **Minnesota River** – a Plan that lays out a recreation, history and education system and vision for the urban and urbanizing stretches of the river, through collaboration with Hennepin, Scott, and Carver counties, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, United States Fish and Wildlife Service, Native Americans, watershed management organizations, and the local communities along the river.
- c. **Crow River** – a Plan that lays out a vision for the Crow River through collaboration with Hennepin, Wright and Carver counties, the watershed management organizations, and the 14-plus local communities along the river.
- d. **Lake Minnetonka** – a Plan that includes its regional and local parks, trails, recreation, historic, and interpretive opportunities and island opportunities. Partners would include the lake communities, the various water management agencies involved with the lake and its watershed, Hennepin County, and other agencies with interests in the lake resource.
- e. **Medicine Lake** – a Plan that includes its local and regional parks, local and regional trails, water recreation opportunities, the two surrounding communities, the Bassett Creek Watershed Management Organization, and other involved partners.
- f. **Minnehaha Creek** – a Plan that includes the five communities along the creek, Hennepin County, the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District, Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, and Three Rivers.
- g. **Transit Nodes** – a Plan that determines the role of regional recreation and open space at transit nodes along transit lines, including park-and-ride facilities, the Southwest LRT, and other potential rail, light-rail and/or bus rapid transit corridors. Partners in this plan would include Metropolitan Council, the Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authority, and other involved agencies. In addition, the plan would address the protection of existing trail resources within potential commuter corridors.

**C 6. For all new initiatives, work collaboratively to include funding solutions for the operation and maintenance associated with those initiatives.**

**C 7. Work collaboratively to address new funding sources for operations, maintenance and rehabilitation of the regional trail network as part of the multi-modal transportation system.**

- a. Bring together the 10 regional park implementing agencies, county public works departments, the Metropolitan Council, the Minnesota Department of Transportation, the Federal Transportation Department, and other interested parties.
- b. Determine the current and future role of the regional trail network in the multi-modal transportation system.
- c. Identify new funding sources and structures that recognize the role and associated costs of the regional trail network as part of the multi-modal transportation system.

## EDUCATION ACTIONS

### **E 1. Explore nature-based preschool immersion opportunities.**

- a. Identify and assess preferred preschool model(s) such as private and public partnerships, internal facilities/programs, and an internal but independent model.
- b. Identify the preferred location(s) and implementation model(s).

### **E 2. Expand environmental education opportunities for school-age children.**

- a. Conduct research to identify the needs and barriers for environmental education with school districts, private schools, charter schools, and home school groups.
- b. Bring nature to schools and other popular locations through use of a travelling interpretive program.

### **E 3. Promote environmental education through a program designed to provide meaningful and appealing learning experiences for all ages.**

- a. Examine current education/recreation programming efforts with an eye to what age groups and skill levels are served and underserved (likely teens, young adults, and adults over 45).
- b. Redesign the education/recreation program to provide ongoing opportunities through all phases of an individual's life (e.g. children, teens, young adults, young parents, parents with older children, empty-nesters, retirees, etc.).

### **E 4. Promote mentoring and outdoor leadership training to better connect teens and young adults to nature.**

- a. Provide additional opportunities for youth to grow through participation in youth leadership programs, mentoring opportunities, internships, and employment with Three Rivers.
- b. Actively strive for demographic representation in these programs.
- c. Monitor participation and continue expansion to meet demand.

### **E 5. Promote parks as an alternative health/exercise provider.**

- a. Promote the concept of parks as the "Outdoor Gym."
- b. Continue development of the "Green Fit Program," which provides fitness classes within the parks.
- c. Partner with health-oriented organizations such as hospitals, health care providers, health insurance companies and government health organizations to promote the use of parks as a recognized form and forum for exercise.

## DEVELOPMENT ACTIONS

### **D 1. Complete the critical links in the existing regional trail network within the fully-developed cities of suburban Hennepin County.**

- a. Complete the Bassett Creek Regional Trail in Crystal, Golden Valley and New Hope.
- b. Complete the Twin Lakes Regional Trail in Brooklyn Center and Robbinsdale.
- c. Using secured federal transportation funding, along with local matches, develop:
  - i. The Intercity Regional Trail in Bloomington and Richfield;
  - ii. The Crystal Lake Regional Trail in Robbinsdale;
  - iii. A safe bridge on the Cedar Lake LRT Regional Trail in St. Louis Park;
  - iv. A safe bridge on the Luce Line Regional Trail in Plymouth; and
  - v. A safe bridge on the Lake Minnetonka LRT Regional Trail in Shorewood/Tonka Bay.
- d. Upon approval of a final route by the City of Edina and Three Rivers, seek federal transportation funding and local matches to complete the Nine Mile Creek Regional Trail.
- e. Solicit additional outside funding to reduce Three River's capital, operations, and maintenance costs for regional trails.

### **D 2. Renovate and expand Eastman Nature Center to maximize the Three Rivers' Vision and meet the needs of the current and future population of northwest Hennepin County.**

- a. Determine the desired scope of renovation and expansion through a creative selection process that addresses Board goals.
- b. Fund improvements as needed.

### **D 3. Build on the success of Hyland Ski & Snowboard Area (HSSA) to create a year-round vibrant place.**

- a. Develop a comprehensive HSSA Campus Plan to meet both winter and summer needs and opportunities, and to enhance its role as a vibrant gathering place for teens, young adults and parents.
- b. Identify the potential benefits and negative impacts if HSSA were to be recognized as a component of the regional recreational open space system.
- c. Seek and provide funding to meet the infrastructure and operations costs associated with improvements and initiatives identified in the HSSA Campus Plan.

### **D 4. Expand camping opportunities.**

- a. Develop the Elm Creek Campground, including a campground office/support building for winter recreation and summer disc golf.
- b. Add 12 new camper cabins at select sites.
- c. Create backpack/canoe campsites in park reserves, and camping opportunities on islands.

### **D 5. Meet demand for cross-country ski trails with snowmaking features.**

- a. Seek funding for development of a 5-kilometer ski trail network with snowmaking at Hyland Lake Park Reserve, with updates to the Hyland Visitor Center to accommodate increased winter use.

Figure 4.1: Actions meeting Goals

Vision Plan ID	Action	Protect the region's water and natural resources	Inspire people to recreate	Connect people to nature	Create vibrant places	Collaborate across boundaries
P1	Create three new parkland classifications within the Three Rivers system, and advocate for their establishment in the metropolitan regional parks system.	Excellent	Good	Marginal	Marginal	Marginal
P2	Designate search areas for additional regional park units and the remainder of the regional trail network.	Excellent	Good	Excellent	Excellent	Marginal
P3	Advocate for greater protection of public lands and open space.	Excellent	Marginal	Marginal	Marginal	Marginal
P4	Adopt and implement a comprehensive Sustainability Plan that reflects phased targets for greenhouse gas emissions, waste reduction and water consumption targets through 2050.	Excellent	Marginal	Marginal	Marginal	Marginal
P5	Lead efforts to acquire private properties within parks, and to secure land or easements as needed for other initiatives.	Excellent	Good	Good	Good	Excellent
P6	Promote innovative natural resources management projects through allocation of capital dollars for initiatives, invasives research/control, TMDL projects, and targeted education efforts.	Excellent	Marginal	Marginal	Marginal	Excellent
P7	Restore the non-paved trail network, focusing on one regional park reserve per year, to reflect current best practices in sustainable trail development and management.	Excellent	Good	Good	Good	Marginal
P8	Provide a spectrum of outdoor recreation and education settings, ranging from the semi-primitive nature of Murphy-Hanrehan and Crow-Hassan park reserves, to the vibrant urban spaces of Silverwood Park and French Regional Park.	Marginal	Excellent	Good	Excellent	Good
P9	Reach out to the diverse population of Hennepin County.	Marginal	Excellent	Excellent	Marginal	Marginal
P10	Identify how Three Rivers can encourage use of the regional parks by young adults, retirees, and urban-area residents.	Marginal	Excellent	Excellent	Good	Marginal
P11	Engage a diverse pool of volunteers in all levels of the organization.	Marginal	Excellent	Excellent	Good	Marginal
P12	Advocate for a comprehensive 2100 Vision Plan for the Twin Cities area.	Excellent	Marginal	Marginal	Excellent	Excellent
P13	Prioritize capital funding based on taking care of what we have, meeting the Vision, reducing operational costs, and obtaining matching funding.	Marginal	Good	Marginal	Marginal	Marginal
P14	Assess the progress towards meeting the Vision on an annual basis.	Marginal	Good	Marginal	Marginal	Marginal

How well the Action meets the Goal

is Excellent
  is Good
  is Marginal

Figure 4.1: Actions meeting Goals - continued

Vision Plan ID	Action	Protect the region's water and natural resources	Inspire people to recreate	Connect people to nature	Create vibrant places	Collaborate across boundaries
C1	Collaborate with other agencies and entities to explore pooling resources to maximize efficiencies and products.	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent
C2	Promote and partner in the development of a joint comprehensive natural resources management plan for the Three Rivers service area.	Excellent	Marginal	Marginal	Marginal	Excellent
C3	Partner with conservation-based organizations to promote the legacy of conservation through a conservation center that teaches classic hunting and fishing skills.	Marginal	Excellent	Marginal	Marginal	Excellent
C4	Educate the public about the historic and cultural connections between Native Americans, early settlers, sacred spaces, historic places, and the Minnesota River environment through partnered planning, financing and development of The Landing and the greater Shakopee Historic District as a major state tourism destination.	Marginal	Marginal	Marginal	Excellent	Excellent
C5	Develop collaborative plans for regional resources including the three major rivers, major lakes and creeks, and transportation nodes.	Marginal	Excellent	Marginal	Excellent	Excellent
C6	For all new initiatives, work collaboratively to include funding solutions for the operation and maintenance associated with those initiatives.	Marginal	Excellent	Marginal	Excellent	Excellent
C7	Work collaboratively to address new funding sources for operations, maintenance and rehabilitation of the regional trail network as part of the multi-modal transportation system.	Marginal	Excellent	Marginal	Excellent	Excellent
E1	Explore nature-based preschool immersion opportunities.	Marginal	Marginal	Excellent	Marginal	Marginal
E2	Expand environmental education opportunities for school-age children.	Marginal	Marginal	Excellent	Marginal	Excellent
E3	Promote environmental education through a program designed to provide meaningful and appealing learning experiences for all ages.	Marginal	Marginal	Excellent	Marginal	Marginal
E4	Promote mentoring and outdoor leadership training to better connect teens and young adults to nature.	Marginal	Marginal	Excellent	Marginal	Marginal
E5	Promote parks as an alternative health/exercise provider.	Marginal	Excellent	Marginal	Marginal	Excellent

How well the Action meets the Goal

is Excellent
  is Good
  is Marginal

Vision Plan ID	Action	Protect the region's water and natural resources	Inspire people to recreate	Connect people to nature	Create vibrant places	Collaborate across boundaries
D1	Complete the critical links in the existing regional trail network within the fully-developed cities of suburban Hennepin County.	Good	Excellent	Good	Good	Excellent
D2	Renovate and expand Eastman Nature Center to maximize the Three Rivers' Vision and meet the needs of the current and future population of northwest Hennepin County.	Good	Good	Excellent	Good	Good
D3	Build on the success of Hyland Ski & Snowboard Area (HSSA) to create a year-round vibrant place.	Marginal	Excellent	Good	Excellent	Marginal
D4	Expand camping opportunities through development of Elm Creek Campground, additional camper cabins, backpack/canoe sites, and island camping opportunities.	Marginal	Excellent	Excellent	Good	Marginal
D5	Meet demand for cross-country ski trails with snowmaking features.	Marginal	Excellent	Good	Excellent	Marginal

**How well the Action meets the Goal**

is Excellent
  is Good
  is Marginal

## APPENDIX: ILLUSTRATIVE TEN YEAR CAPITAL FORECAST

### Three Rivers Park District Illustrative 2011-2020 Vision Plan Capital Forecast

Action ID	Vision Plan Action	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Estimated Total Cost	Funding Sources <sup>1</sup>
		(\$ millions)											
P5	Land Acquisition	\$2.3	\$2.3	\$2.3	\$2.3	\$2.3	\$2.3	\$2.3	\$2.3	\$2.3	\$2.3	\$22.7	A, B, C, D, E
P6	Natural Resource Management Projects	\$0.5	\$0.5	\$0.5	\$0.5	\$0.5	\$0.5	\$0.5	\$0.5	\$0.5	\$0.5	\$5.0	A, B, C
P7	Non-paved Trail Rehabilitation	\$0.2	\$0.2	\$0.2	\$0.2	\$0.2	\$0.2	\$0.2	\$0.2	\$0.2	\$0.2	\$2.0	A
P13	Creative Improvement Program - small projects	\$1.5	\$1.5	\$1.0	\$0.5	\$3.0	\$1.0	\$2.0	\$1.5	\$1.5	\$1.5	\$15.0	A, B
P13	Functional Asset Management <i>(taking care of what we have)</i>	\$7.0	\$7.0	\$7.0	\$7.0	\$7.0	\$7.0	\$7.0	\$7.0	\$7.0	\$7.0	\$70.0	A, B
C3	Conservation Center								\$5.0			\$5.0	A, B, C, D, E
C4	Landing/Historic District Initiative							\$5.0	\$5.0	\$5.0	\$3.0	\$18.0	A, B, C, D, E
D 1	Bassett Creek Regional Trail	\$0.5	\$1.0	\$2.0								\$3.5	A, B, E
D 1	Crystal Lake Regional Trail		\$0.3		\$2.9							\$3.3	A, B, E
D 1	Intercity Regional Trail	\$0.9			\$7.7							\$8.6	A, B, C, E
D 1	Nine Mile Creek Regional Trail		\$0.5	\$1.6	\$1.0	\$5.0	\$10.0					\$18.1	A, B, C, E
D 1	Twin Lakes Regional Trail					\$1.3						\$1.3	A, B, E
D 1	Safe Bridge - Lk Mtka LRT Regional Trail		\$0.3		\$2.3							\$2.5	A, B, C, E
D 1	Safe Bridge - Luce Line Regional Trail	\$0.2		\$2.0								\$2.2	A, B, C, E
D 1	Safe Bridge - Cedar Lake LRT Regional Trail		\$1.8									\$1.8	A, B, C, E
D2	Eastman Nature Center	\$5.1										\$5.1	A, B
D3	HSSA Campus Renovation/Expansion	\$0.5	\$8.3									\$8.8	A, E
D4	Camper Cabins	\$0.1	\$0.1	\$0.1	\$0.1	\$0.1						\$0.5	A, B
D4	Elm Creek Campground							\$1.5	\$1.5			\$3.0	A, B
D4	Island/Backpack Camping						\$0.5					\$0.5	A, B
D5	Hyland XC Ski/Visitor Center										\$7.0	\$7.0	A, B, D, E
E2	Interpretive Travelling Program	\$0.5										\$0.5	A
<b>Estimated Total Expenditures</b>		<b>\$18.7</b>	<b>\$23.8</b>	<b>\$16.7</b>	<b>\$24.5</b>	<b>\$19.4</b>	<b>\$21.5</b>	<b>\$18.5</b>	<b>\$23.0</b>	<b>\$16.5</b>	<b>\$21.5</b>	<b>\$203.9</b>	

<sup>1</sup> Funding Sources:	
A	Park District
B	State
C	Federal
D	Partnerships
E	Other



*Three Rivers*  
PARK DISTRICT



