



News release for individual recipients of GMRPTC grants

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\$1,250,000 grant to fund acquisition of park land on Big Elk Lake

December 7, 2021 - Elk River – People who enjoy outdoor recreation in the Sherburne County area will soon have their experiences enhanced, once recommendations are approved to fund \$1,250,000 for acquisition of the Big Elk Lake Property.

The Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission (GMRPTC) just completed its extensive application review process and chose the Big Elk Lake Project and 19 other parks and trails around the state for a record \$12.2 million in funding for Fiscal Year 2023. The GMRPTC will now ask the Minnesota Legislature to approve the recommendations through the Parks and Trails Legacy Fund, one of four funds created by the 2008 Minnesota Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment. The Legislature has annually approved GMRPTC requests; since Legacy Funds are already dedicated and may only be spent to support parks and trails of regional or statewide significance.

“We are elated to have been selected for this grant from the Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission, which will allow us to acquire this exquisite property to create a large nature-based park that prioritizes Tribal partnerships, habitat restoration and water quality protection,” said Gina Hugo, Sherburne County Parks Coordinator. “Area residents and visitors already enjoy the relaxation and beauty they find within the Sherburne County Parks and this needed funding will fill a gap in the western portion of the County – allowing more people to enjoy meaningful connection with nature and an active lifestyle.”

“Acquisition and development of this new parkland will do much more than offer additional outdoor recreational opportunities,” noted Sherburne County Commissioner Felix Schmiesing, whose district includes the new park area, “it will also protect and celebrate our community’s ancestral and historic heritage, which spans thousands of years.”

Sherburne County staff encourage you to reach out to your Legislators to encourage them to pass the Legacy Bill in the 2022 session, which not only provide critical funding for parks and trails, but also water quality, arts, and history.

“Every grant awardee is very deserving, and we commend them for how thoroughly they described their needs in their grant applications,” said GMRPTC Executive Director Renee Mattson. “It’s the dedicated people at the local level who make Greater Minnesota’s parks and trails really shine, and we’re pleased to assist them with their efforts.”



Mattson said the Commission is also allocating \$212,053 to a new Connecting People with the Outdoors Small Grant fund, which will be available to all 67 designated parks and trails in Greater Minnesota. Emphasis for grant criteria will be placed on increasing access for underserved and communities of color, enhancing handicap accessibility, transportation and programming. Grant fund applications will be available in early 2022.

The 20 parks and trails recommended for funding are below. District numbers in the grid refer to these geographic areas of Minnesota: 1-Northeast; 2-Northwest; 3-West Central; 4-East Central; 5-Southwest; 6-Southeast.

Grant Recipient	Award	District
Duluth Traverse	\$167,783.00	1
Duluth Spirit Mountain Recreation Area	\$1,254,471.00	1
Big Falls Campground and Horse Camp	\$1,043,115.00	1
Gull Lake Trail - Cass County Fairview Township	\$167,280.00	2
Red Lake River Corridor - East Grand Forks	\$851,768.00	2
Granite Falls Memorial Park	\$569,973.00	3
Isanti County Irving & John Anderson Park	\$780,225.00	4
Sherburne County Big Elk Lake Park	\$1,250,000.00	4
Wright County Robert Ney Park	\$75,000.00	4
Stearns County Beaver Island Trail	\$1,129,850.00	4
Wright County Stanley Eddy Park Reserve	\$32,200.00	4
Redwood Falls Ramsey Park	\$137,500.00	5
Lyon County Garvin Park	\$1,109,350.00	5
Lincoln County Hole in the Mountain Park	\$1,026,698.00	5
Rochester Cascade Lake Park	\$379,000.00	6
Red Wing He Mni Can/Barn Bluff Park	\$527,145.00	6
Cannon Valley Trail	\$490,463.00	6
Austin Jay C. Hormel Nature Center	\$255,552.00	6
Olmsted County Chester Woods Park	\$338,800.00	6
Winona Bluffs Traverse	\$403,320.00	6
Connecting People With the Outdoors Small Grants Fund	\$212,053.00	All
Total	\$12,201,546.00	

“Legacy Funding is an amazing and far-reaching gift that Minnesotans chose to make happen by voting to tax themselves,” added Mattson. “Without Legacy dollars, many of these projects simply would not happen or would take many years before coming to fruition.”

The GMRPTC provides recommendations to the Minnesota Legislature for grants to parks and trails of regional significance in the 80 counties outside the seven-county metropolitan area. Since 2014 the



GMRPTC has awarded more than \$52 million in grants to over 50 regional parks and trails. Combined with \$20 million in community matches, grants are used to fund infrastructure improvements, land acquisitions, new facilities, trail rehabilitation and more. Additional information may be found at gmrptcommission.org.

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