



Planning Commission Agenda

Date: Thursday, March 26, 2026

Location: Dakota County Western Service Center, Room 106
14955 Galaxie Avenue Apple Valley, MN 55124

Time: 7:00 PM – 9:00 PM

I. Call to Order

II. Pledge of Allegiance

III. Public Comments

Anyone wishing to address the Planning Commission on an item not on the agenda may address the Planning Commission at this time (comments are limited to 5 minutes).

IV. Approval of Agenda

V. Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes of Meeting Held on January 22, 2026

VI. Presentations

- **Draft Parks Natural Systems Plan – Implementation Chapter – Information**

VII. Planning Manager Update and County Board Actions

- Authorized contract with City of Lakeville for Recycle Zone Plus project
- Authorized contract to prepare the Greenway Systems Plan (formerly Greenway Guidebook)
- Authorized contracts for several greenway design projects
- Approved schematic design for Lake Byllesby Park improvements
- Provided direction on the Dakota County 2050 Comprehensive Plan update

VIII. Upcoming Public Meetings/Community Outreach

- **I-35/CSAH 50 Noise Wall** discussion, Tuesday, March 24th, 5:30pm-7pm, Celebration Church, 16655 Kenyon Ave, east entrance

- **CSAH 26 (70th Street) Construction** open house, Tuesday, April 7th, 5pm-7pm, Inver Grove Heights Veterans Memorial Community, Room 1.
- **CSAH 54 and Mississippi River Greenway Design** open house (Hastings to Goodhue County), Wednesday April 8th, 5pm-7pm, Ravenna Town Hall, 20425 Red Wing Boulevard
- **CSAH 42 Modernization** (Redwood Dr. to Pennock Ave), Thursday, April 16th, 5pm-7pm, Apple Valley Senior Center, Yosemite Room
- **Recycling Zone Groundbreaking**, Wednesday, April 22nd, at 9am, 10125 217th Street West, Lakeville

IX. Topics for Next Meeting

- Mississippi River Greenway Long Range Plan – Release draft plan for public review

X. Planning Commissioner Announcements/Updates

XI. Adjourn

Next Planning Commission Meeting: Thursday, May 8, 2026, 7 – 9 p.m.



Meeting Minutes: Dakota County Planning Commission Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes-DRAFT

Date: 1/22/2026

Minutes prepared by Liz Hansen

Location: Western Service Center

Attendance

Members Present

- Jerry Rich
- Amy Hunting
- James Guttman
- Tony Nelson
- Dennis Peine
- Jill Smith
- Paul Nasvik
- Barry Graham
- Ibrahim Abdinasir
- Steve Shurts
- Andrea Vaubel

Dakota County staff members attending:

- Kurt Chatfield, Planning Manager
- Liz Hansen, Administrative Coordinator
- John Mertens, Principal Planner

Member(s) Absent:

- Kelly Kausel
- Lori Hansen

Meeting Called to Order

- Time: 7:00 p.m.
- By Planning Manager, Kurt Chatfield
- Commissioner Smith arrived at 7:02 p.m.
- Commissioner Nasvik arrived at 7:07 p.m.

Pledge of Allegiance

- The Planning Commission opened the meeting by reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

Election of 2026 Planning Commission Officers

Election of 2026 Planning Commission Chair

Kurt Chatfield provided an overview of the Planning Commission's bylaws and procedures before the Planning Commission voted on its 2026 officers. He informed the Planning Commission that the 2025 officers were eligible for a second year in their positions, and that any Planning Commission member was eligible to be nominated for any of the officer positions.

Planning Manager, Kurt Chatfield, began the election of Planning Commission positions by calling for a nomination for the Planning Commission Chair.

Commissioner Shurts nominated Commissioner Guttman for the position of Planning Commission Chair. No additional nominations were made.

Vote: unanimously approved

Commissioner Guttman then assumed the duties of Chair for 2026.

Election of 2026 Planning Commission Vice-Chair

Chair Guttman called for nominations for the position of Planning Commission Vice-Chair.

Commissioner Vaubel nominated Commissioner Graham for the position of Vice Chair. No additional nominations were made.

Vote: unanimously approved

Commissioner Graham then assumed the duties of Vice Chair.

Election of 2026 Planning Commission Secretary

Chair Guttman called for nominations for the position of Planning Commission Secretary.

Commissioner Graham nominated Commissioner Rich. No additional nominations were given.

Vote: unanimously approved

Commissioner Rich then assumed the duties of Secretary.

Public Comments

- Comments/Notes: No audience member wished to address an item not on the agenda.

Approval of Agenda

Chair Guttmann asked if there were any changes to the agenda.

The Planning Commission advised no changes, additions, or deletions.

MOTION: Commissioner Hunting moved, seconded by Commissioner Shurts, approving the agenda. Voice vote: Ayes – 10 – Nays – 0 – Unanimously Approved

Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes (from November 20, 2025)

Chair Guttmann asked if there were any changes to the previous meeting's minutes.

The Planning Commission advised no changes, additions, or deletions.

MOTION: Commissioner Nasvik moved, seconded by Commissioner Rich, approving the previous meeting's minutes. Voice vote: Ayes – 11 – Nays – 0 Abstain – 0 – Approved

Introduction of New Planning Commissioner (by Commissioner Graham)

Vice Chair, Commissioner Graham, introduced one new member to the Planning Commission during the meeting. Andrea Vaubel has been appointed by Commissioner Workman to represent District 5.

Commissioner Vaubel is from Wisconsin and attended the University of Wisconsin – La Crosse, she currently resides in Burnsville with her family. She is the Deputy Commissioner for the Minnesota Department of Agriculture. She feels strongly about public service and stated that she is excited to join the Planning Commission.

Planning Commission Administrative Forms – Information

Administrative Coordinator, Liz Hansen, spoke about two forms that must be filled out and returned. The two forms are: "Consent to Release Private Data" and "Citizen Advisory Committee Member Statement of Representation." Every year, Planning Commissioners must fill out the two mandatory forms.

Establishment of 2026 Meeting Dates – Action

Kurt Chatfield proposed meeting dates for 2026.

Chair Guttman entertained a motion to approve the 2026 meeting dates as presented. The Planning Commission voted to approve the 2026 meeting dates.

Commissioners discussed the need to hold individual member calendars open for the months that the Planning Commission is not scheduled to meet, in case one of those dates is needed for a meeting. Those possibilities may include: if quorum is not met the month before, if a project tour is scheduled, or if a meeting is needed for any other reason.

MOTION: Commissioner Shurts moved, seconded by Commissioner Nelson, approving the 2026 Meeting Dates. Voice vote: Ayes – 11 – Nays – 0 Abstain – 0 – Approved

2026 Planning Commission Work Plan – Information

Planning Manager Kurt Chatfield outlined the County Board’s adopted 2026 Planning Commission Workplan.

A Planning Commissioner suggested several topics to be added to the workplan for staff’s consideration:

1. Receive an update on the Vermillion Greenway alignment and design.
2. Receive an update on Master Plan update schedule for Whitetail Woods and Lebanon Hills. *Staff responded that everything has been bumped back a year in response to changes to the Parks budget.*
3. Receive, update and review the sustainable trail study for the western and middle sections of Lebanon Hills.

Staff agreed to provide updates on the above projects and solicit Planning Commission comments. Following the staff update, the Planning Commission may decide to whether the update was sufficient, or whether the Planning Commission would like to amend their annual Work Plan.

Mississippi River Greenway Long-Range Plan – Information (John Mertens, Planning)

John Mertens, Principal Planner, presented this topic and responded to questions. John provided an overview of the public engagement that has been conducted to date, and described the topics that are proposed for the draft plan, scheduled to be presented to Planning Commission this Spring.

Questions and comments by the planning commissioners, along with responses from staff (italics):

Some sections of the trail seem to have more visitors. How should the plan address the busier sections, with a dual trail? *Staff responded that yes, some areas are busier than others and may need a different design. Also, busier sections of the trail and areas near trailheads may need more amenities such as benches for resting.*

Electric bikes may cause safety concerns. Will electric bike regulations be posted and enforced? *Staff responded that the electric bikes are a topic of discussion locally and nationally, and that the County will closely monitor safety issues and best practices to maintain safety. Among other strategies, the County may use its trail ambassador program to engage riders along the trail. In some instances, alternate routes can be shown on maps that may be desirable for faster riders.*

Will the Mississippi River greenway trail extend beyond Dakota County for bicycle touring? *Staff responded that there is a Mississippi River Trail (MRT) plan up to Itasca and extending south of Dakota County. Much of the state-wide route is on shoulders and low-volume roads.*

Has Dakota County coordinated with Goodhue County on the trail to Redwing? *Staff reported that meetings have been held with Goodhue County staff and there are opportunities for the trail to extend south to Red Wing.*

Will there be opportunities to camp along the greenway trail, especially between Hastings and Red Wing? *Staff responded that there are not opportunities to camp at this time, but this would be a good topic of discussion with the MN Department of Natural Resources.*

A comment was made that the plan should identify the Railroad corridor as a potential alignment, if that opportunity becomes available. *Staff agreed with the comment.*

A Commissioner noted that the 27-mile greenway trail length is the perfect marathon distance. Should the Plan propose hosting a marathon? *Staff responded that the County's greenway system hasn't hosted marathons in the past but certainly would be able to. Staff agreed with the comment.*

A comment was made that there has been good public engagement to date and that a large number of people are leaving comments on the plan. The place based comments are particularly helpful.

A comment was made that the character of the Mississippi River greenway changes from that of a narrower urban setting in the north to a wider rural setting in the south. Perhaps Dakota County could have different standards for urban and rural settings. Urban greenways may need more amenities if they are not in nice natural settings. *Staff agreed with the comment.*

Planning Manager Update and County Board Actions

Comments/Notes: Kurt Chatfield, Planning Manager, provided the Planning Commission with an update on the following County Board Actions:

- Authorized joint powers agreement with Rosemount for alignment study of the Vermillion Highlands Greenway
- Approved the Planning Commission's Work Plan for 2026
- Authorized appeal of the Environmental Impact Statement for the Nelson Mine project in the Mississippi River at Spring Lake Park Reserve

Upcoming Public Meetings – Community Outreach

- Natural System Plan – Revised Objectives
 - Pop-ups, various County Park events

Topics for next meeting (Thursday, March 26, 2026)

Kurt Chatfield, Planning Manager, provided an overview of next month's meeting topics:

- Draft Parks Natural Systems Plan – Implementation Chapter

Planning Commissioner Announcements/Updates:

A Planning Commissioner announced a position opening on the Met Council due to a recent resignation.

A Planning Commissioner asked a question about the status of data centers in Dakota County. *Staff responded that they do not have any updates at this time but would share information with the Planning Commission if there are new proposals in Dakota County.*

A Planning Commissioner asked staff to give an update on the bison herd at the next meeting. *Staff agreed to return with an update.*

A question was asked about the County's legislative priorities. *Staff committed to return with a list of legislative priorities (this list was subsequently provided to the Planning Commission in an email following the meeting).*

Commissioner Guttman gave a brief update on the Dakota County Zoning Board of Adjustment meeting that he attended as part of his responsibility as Planning Commission Chair.

Adjournment

Chair Guttman asked for a motion to adjourn.

MOTION: Commissioner Graham moved, seconded by Commissioner Smith, to adjourn the meeting at 9:04 p.m. Voice Vote: Ayes – 11 – Nays – 0 – Unanimously Approved.

Next Meeting: Thursday, March 26, 2026, at 7:00 p.m., Dakota County Western Service Center, Apple Valley

Respectfully submitted,

Liz Hansen, Administrative Coordinator



Dakota County Planning Commission

Date: Thursday, March 26, 2026
Agenda Item: Update on the Natural Systems Plan (NSP)
Prepared By: Mary Jackson

Purpose

Provide Planning Commission:

1. Draft implementation elements for the Natural Systems Plan (NSP)
2. Revised draft objectives and strategies
3. An overview of ongoing stakeholder engagement

Background

Dakota County adopted a Parks Natural Resources Management System Plan ([NRMSP](#)) in 2017, and updated its Farmland and Natural Areas Protection Plan as a Land Conservation Plan ([LCP](#)) in 2020. Staff are combining the NRMSP and the LCP into a unified Natural Systems Plan as a bridge between the high-level goals of the 2050 Vision Plan and the site-specific recommendations in individual park and greenway Natural Resource Management Plans (NRMPs).

Staff presented draft objectives and strategies to the Commission in November and presented a modified version to the County Board in January (revised version attached). Current work is focused on build-out of the implementation sections of the plan, to address prioritization, five- and ten-year timeframes, metrics, budget and CIP, funding sources, partnerships, and outreach. The draft implementation elements for discussion at the Commission's March meeting will focus on:

- General context
- Prioritization of work
- Five- and ten-year work plans
- Funding resources

Stakeholder engagement is ongoing, and staff will provide an update on progress and findings. A draft plan document is anticipated for late in mid-2026.

Attachments

- Revised Objectives and Strategies
- Draft Implementation Elements for Discussion

Questions

The following questions are intended to help assist in review of the packet materials.

1. What are your thoughts on the overall pacing of restoration work in the system?
2. Which site-based projects are the highest priorities for the next five years?
3. Which organizational efforts do you think are the most important for the next five years?

Objectives and Strategies for Land Protection

A. Prioritize ecologically important areas for protection.

1. Use County Park and Greenway Plans as a framework for park land and greenway corridor acquisition.
 - a. Work with willing sellers to acquire fee title lands within approved park boundaries.
 - b. Conduct regular outreach to landowners to inform them of opportunities to sell park inholding property to Dakota County.
 - c. Work with willing landowners along greenway corridors to secure easements for greenway development, enhancement, and management.
2. Conservation Focus Areas (CFAs) as a framework for protecting and connecting other natural areas and habitat.
 - a. Refine and periodically update acquisition project evaluation criteria and weighting for different classifications (surface water, wetland and adjacent habitat, upland and mixed upland habitat) to prioritize potential land protection projects.
 - b. Conduct landowner outreach within prioritized CFAs to effectively inform and engage landowners.
 - c. Create detailed, baseline information profiles for each CFA to document natural resource attributes, quality, needs, and opportunities with evolving updates.
 - d. Prioritize identified wetland basins for landowner outreach and further hydrological analysis and cost estimates.
 - e. Use a range of voluntary land protection methods, such as fee title and easement acquisition and land registry.
 - f. Protect representative, high-quality native communities (wetlands, grasslands and forests) within the County.
 - g. Establish a technical advisory group to evaluate and develop recommendations for the use of property tax modifications as conservation incentives.
 - h. Review CFA boundaries every five years and revise as needed, based on new information.
 - i. Define and periodically reevaluate Greenway Corridor widths (100 ft Urban, 200ft Suburban, or 300 ft Rural contexts) beyond County easements to:
 - i. Prioritize partnership work with landowners on native habitat buffers and restoration priorities for connecting habitat corridors along Greenway Trails and
 - ii. incentivize larger restoration efforts on non-County public lands.
3. Expand strategic partnerships with agencies and organizations.
 - a. Continue implementing the City-County Conservation Collaborative for natural resource planning, protection, and management.
 - b. Assist townships with natural resource planning, protection and management in preparation for 2050 comprehensive planning.

B. Protect and enhance water quality and quantity.

1. Use preliminary CFAs to identify, prioritize, protect, and restore wetland basins, shoreland, headwaters, and groundwater recharge areas to improve water quality and supply and to reduce flooding.
 - a. Review and revise evaluation criteria and weighting as needed to prioritize potential protection and restoration projects.
 - b. Conduct landowner outreach within prioritized CFAs to effectively inform and engage landowners.
 - c. Use a range of voluntary land protection methods, such as fee title and easement acquisition and explore options for long-term agreements.
2. Protect and restore critical infiltration areas outside CFAs identified in the County Groundwater Plan.
 - a. Establish evaluation criteria and weighting to prioritize potential protection and restoration projects.
 - b. Conduct landowner outreach in other important areas to inform and engage landowners and initiate wetland restoration.
 - c. Use a range of voluntary land protection methods, such as fee title and permanent or temporary easements.

C. Use CFAs as a framework for restoring and sustaining biodiversity.

1. Use CFAs to identify and prioritize habitat protection for rare, declining, and special concern species on public lands.
 - a. Identify and inventory areas of existing high biodiversity and high restoration potential.
 - b. Develop baseline biodiversity data, goals, priorities, and monitoring protocols for the County and each CFA.
2. Use CFAs to identify and protect habitat for rare, declining, and special concern species on private lands.
 - a. Prioritize biodiversity in CFA protection and restoration criteria, weighting, and implementation.

D. Inform and engage the public in natural resource protection and management.

1. Provide timely and relevant Land Conservation Program information.
 - a. Update the Land Conservation Communication Plan to provide a wide variety of information and stories to the general public throughout the year.
 - b. Develop a collaborative, countywide, web-based network and interactive map to share natural resource information with the general public.
 - c. Provide environmental assessments for interested landowners.
 - d. Provide regular program updates and information to property owners with County easements information and two-way communication opportunities for participating landowners.
2. Work with partners to engage the public through in-person conservation events and activities.

- a. Facilitate volunteer opportunities in partnership with other agencies and organizations (e.g., BioBlitz, seed collection, invasive species control, and vegetation and wildlife monitoring).
- b. Provide programs, workshops, and tours.

E. Enhance nature-based recreational access to conservation lands.

1. Add new publicly accessible recreational lands within CFAs.
 - a. Work with landowners and partners to add and/or expand publicly accessible land within each CFA.
 - b. Inventory and select multiple countywide locations for the public to experience high quality, representative wetland, grassland and forest communities.
 - c. Recreational amenities in conservation lands should be passive in nature and require minimal operations and maintenance, defined with a new minimum amenity package (to be developed). NEW
2. Restore, enhance, and maintain non-County land used for outdoor recreation
 - a. Partner with other public entities to increase restoration, enhancement, and long-term management of natural resources on non-County public lands.
 - b. Work with partners to provide natural resource information for outdoor recreation participants through multiple venues and methods. Work with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources to provide more public amenities (kiosks, benches, trails) on state Wildlife and Aquatic Management Areas.

Objectives and Tactics for Natural Systems Management on Protected Lands

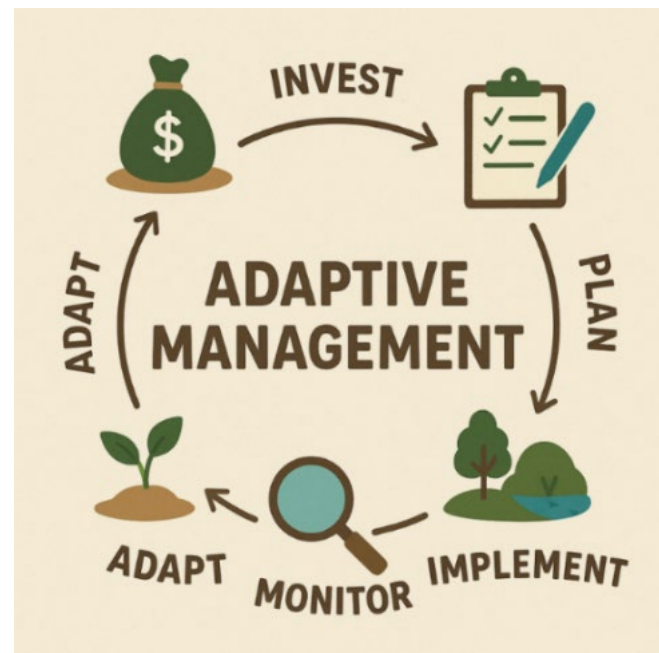
The purpose of these objectives is to enable the work of natural systems management on a year-to-year basis and improve staff ability to work with others, without being overly prescriptive. They provide direction in the space between the high-level goals of the 2050 Vision Plan and the individual unit NRMPs.

These objectives and strategies also serve to clarify County role and its need to engage to a greater extent with other resource management agencies and landowners. The first objective begins by defining an overarching approach grounded in the concept of Adaptive Management, an ongoing cycle of investment, planning, implementing, monitoring, and adapting. This approach allows for adjustment in approaches based on real results.

A. Manage natural systems on protected lands in a comprehensive and sustainable manner.

1. **Invest:** Commit to natural systems restoration and perpetual maintenance.
 - a. Periodically review restoration target acreages with Board requests for funding and staff resources to improve the long-term integrity of natural systems, increasing resources as the system grows.
 - b. To protect the ecological and financial investment in the acres restored, secure stable funding for long-term adaptive management.
 - c. Build and sustain partnerships with other public agencies, organizations, and individuals (cities, SWCD, state, federal, tribes, non-profit organizations, landowners, volunteers, community members).
 - d. Continue requiring ongoing restoration, management and maintenance activities as part of land protection easement agreements.
 - e. Explore options for using a private funding entity to secure and disburse private funds for natural resource

restoration and maintenance on protected private lands.



- 2. Plan:** Develop a coordinated, science-based framework that guides natural resources management across all parks, greenways and easements.
 - a. Base management plans in sound ecological science incorporating goals that align with site ecology, planned site uses, available resources, and projected climate change effects. Make reasonable plans to avoid conflicts between site use and ecological needs.
 - b. Designate selected areas within the park system that have higher natural resource quality, unique habitat value, restored areas, or areas with sensitive cultural resources as places where the priority use and management will be to protect, improve and maintain resource integrity. Limit recreational use and access in areas with the most sensitive resources on a temporary or permanent basis.
 - c. Identify and adhere to standards for desired restoration outcomes that reflect ecological context, intensity of site uses, and potential climate impacts.
 - d. Develop individual and prioritized natural resource management plans (NRMP) for each park, greenway, and easement being managed, and update plans regularly and integrate priorities across individual NRMPs into system-wide priorities.
 - e. Apply the CFA framework and data from individual NRMPs to establish criteria and weighting for project prioritization, ensuring site-level priorities integrate into a coordinated, system-wide strategy.
 - f. Engage partners, landowners, stakeholders, and experts in scoping and planning initiatives.
 - g. Develop a streamlined, clearly defined staffing structure that focuses on system priorities, enhances efficiency, supports staff development, and aligns with organizational needs.
- 3. Implement:** Implement plans in accordance with the principles of natural systems management and the 2050 Vision Plan.
 - a. Base plan implementation in sound ecological science and established priorities for the system.
 - b. Develop workplans that adhere to the Adaptive Management principle of maintaining flexibility to address emerging issues and opportunities.
 - c. Continue implementing the City-County Conservation Collaborative to increase natural resource management within ecologically significant city lands using shared and leveraged resources.
- 4. Monitor:** Utilize a coordinated, science-based framework to monitor work progress and natural system change over time.
 - a. Monitor vegetation, water and wildlife to track natural system change using a well-designed system that can be sustained over time.
 - b. Use disease monitoring and Invasive Species Early Detection monitoring protocols to track and respond to emergent issues.
- 5. Adapt:** Learn from project outcomes and monitoring results and adjust implementation strategies accordingly.

- a. Refine and improve management approaches based on adaptive management principles and lessons learned.
- b. Create opportunities to test new resource management approaches.
- c. Incorporate flexibility in plans to account for unforeseen changes and opportunities.
- d. Continually revisit and refine programs, including cost share funding formulae.

B. Manage natural systems to mitigate and improve resilience to the impacts of a changing climate.

1. Strengthen ecosystem diversity and health to withstand climate impacts.
 - a. Maintain and restore diverse natural communities that can better withstand extreme temperatures, severe storm events, drought, and the influx of new pests and diseases from other climate zones.
 - b. Increase species diversity as a critical element of climate resilience.
2. Use adaptive, science-based practices to prepare for future conditions.
 - a. When supported by science, explore the use of assisted migration methods to carefully introduce selected species that are native to warmer climate zones.
 - b. Apply emerging research to anticipate and manage ecological changes linked to climate trends.
3. Increase carbon sequestration within the system and in other areas of opportunity.
 - a. Restore diverse native communities that sequester carbon, including grasslands and woodlands.
 - b. Maintain the health of native communities to reduce loss of sequestration capacity.
 - c. Work with and advise other County departments and partners to increase ecologically appropriate and diverse tree and vegetative plantings as a cooling and carbon sequestration mechanism in targeted locations.
4. Reduce the carbon footprint of management activities.
 - a. Reduce emissions from restoration and maintenance work through practices such as using biochar in lieu of burning wood.
 - b. Transition maintenance equipment and operations toward electric or low-emission alternatives.

C. Improve ecological quality in County Parks, on other public lands and permanently protected private lands.

1. Restore, enhance, and maintain natural systems on County-owned public lands. (*formerly the NRMSP vegetation goals*)
 - a. Enhance ecological functioning in targeted restorations with the addition of selected native species. (new)

- b. Propagate local native ecotypes for vegetation restoration projects (new)
 - c. Where full ecological restoration is not possible due to site constraints but other public benefits are achievable, develop native landscaping projects with educational value and targeted ecological benefits, such as pollinator gardens, raingardens, and native plantings along greenways and at County facilities.
2. Restore, enhance, and maintain natural resources on non-County public lands. *(from Land Conservation Plan)*
 - a. Use the CFA framework to develop criteria and weighting for prioritizing potential natural resource management projects within CFAs.
 - b. Review funding formulas for restoration projects on public lands within and outside of CFAs.
 3. Restore, enhance, and maintain natural resources on protected private lands. *(from Land Conservation Plan)*
 - a. Provide new incentives for improved natural resource management on protected and non-protected private lands.
 4. Identify natural system management gaps not addressed through County lands, other public protected lands, and permanently protected private lands. *(from Land Conservation Plan)*
 - a. Consider refinements to the Conservation Focus Areas as new opportunities arise for stewardship of sensitive natural resource lands.
 - b. Consider opportunities to assist other private property managers in managing natural systems on their lands.

D. Manage permanently protected land to improve surface and groundwater quality.

1. Support partner efforts to address surface water impairments in County Parks based on lakes study and collected data. *(Adapted from NRMSP water goals)*
 - a. Support partner efforts to address the most significant aquatic invasive species (AIS) and the most significant wetland invasive species.
 - b. Support partner efforts to install stormwater best practices at priority locations in park watersheds outside of park boundaries to address impairments.
2. Use a range of natural resource management techniques within and outside of CFAs to restore, enhance and maintain lands for improved water quality, infiltration and storage to reduce flooding and provide wildlife habitat benefits. *(from Land Conservation Plan)*
3. Partner with the SWCD and watershed organizations to promote, incentivize and implement water quality and quantity management and soil health practices in agricultural use areas within or outside of CFAs (e.g., functional buffers, perennial vegetation on critical recharge areas, erosion control, wetland restoration, water retention basins). *(from Land Conservation Plan)*
 - a. Review existing programs to determine if there are gaps or new opportunities and develop and implementation plan.

- b. Secure new cost-share funding for best management practice (BMP) implementation.
- c. Promote awareness of BMP opportunities among landowners and operators.
- d. Leverage financial and staff resources to implement projects on protected lands.

E. Manage habitat to sustain native and rare species, increase biodiversity, and enhance ecosystem health on permanently protected lands.

1. Monitor and manage wildlife populations to sustain ecological balance and support adaptive management.
 - a. Monitor selected resident and migratory species (both short- and long-term) to track progress, evaluate ecosystem health, and inform management priorities.
 - b. Control overabundant species that negatively impact natural systems.
 - c. Seek opportunities for the reintroduction of appropriate native species in coordination with regional and state partners.
 - d. Manage the Spring Lake Park Reserve Bison herd to sustain their health and provide ecological and cultural benefits within their range.
2. Enhance habitat connectivity and wildlife movement across the landscape.
 - a. Enhance wildlife movement corridors in greenways, parks, and adjacent lands to maintain population genetic diversity and resilience.
 - b. Partner with the MN DNR, adjacent jurisdictions, and others on regional wildlife habitat and connectivity.
 - c. Identify and remove barriers to wildlife movement, prioritizing locations with high ecological or connectivity value.

D. Expand capacity for natural systems management by building and sustaining effective partnerships and supporting the efforts of others.

1. Build enduring partnerships to share expertise and resources.
 - a. Create and foster long-term partnerships with County departments, cities, tribes, state and federal agencies, and organizations to manage natural systems using a coordinated, systems-based approach.
 - b. Engage and learn from Indigenous partners and experts in Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) to inform management practices.
 - c. Explore co-management opportunities for areas that contain significant cultural resources.
 - d. Strengthen and expand collaborative initiatives such as the City-County Conservation Collaborative and the Greenway Collaborative.
 - e. Partner with transportation agencies and utilities to improve pollinator habitat within right-of-way and corridors.
2. Increase the capacity of others to manage natural systems.

- a. Provide technical assistance, training, and educational resources for public and private landowners.
 - i. Support volunteer training, coordination, and ongoing engagement in restoration and monitoring.
 - ii. Work with educational institutions, training programs, and organizations to build the natural systems management workforce.
 - iii. Evaluate and implement mechanisms—such as technical assistance, incentives, or cooperative programs—to help private landowners, corporations, and institutions manage land for ecological benefit.
- 3. Promote stewardship through outreach and education.**
 - a. Promote County parks as living classrooms and demonstration sites for restoration and stewardship best practices.
 - b. Share knowledge and lessons learned from County projects to inspire and inform partner and community stewardship efforts.

Attachment: Draft NSP Implementation Initiatives

This attachment includes draft content for selected sections of the proposed implementation chapter of the new Natural Systems Plan, for discussion among the Planning Commission members at their March 26, 2026, meeting.

- Long Term-Management Approach
- Prioritization
- Desired Outcomes with Five Years

The remaining sections are under development and will be presented at a future meeting.

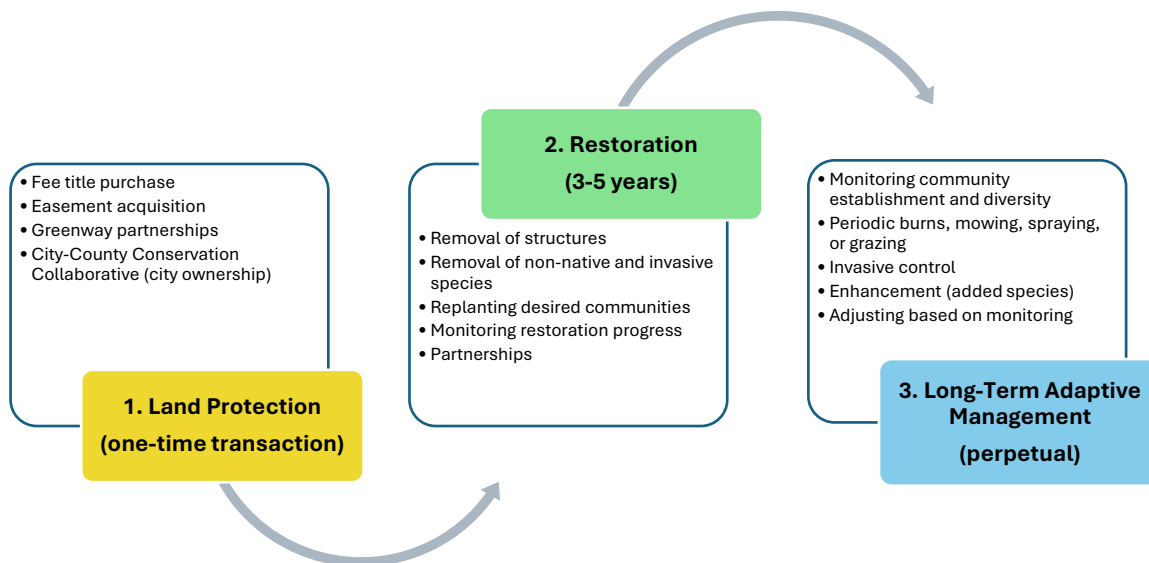
Draft Implementation Chapter Content

Note: Implementation of this plan is subject to annual budget and Capital Improvement Program (CIP) approval by the County Board. Staff will develop annual workplans that build on the system vision and previous work, target high-priority projects, leverage external funding, and sustain maintenance of restored lands.

1. Long Term Management Approach

The Plan has a clear vision for protecting, restoring, and maintaining County lands and private easements over the long term. As new lands are added to the system, whether through easements, new parks, or greenway corridor projects, they will require restoration and management to improve and protect their ecological quality.

The following graphic illustrates how land transitions from initial protection through restoration into its long-term adaptive management state.



Lands currently in the system are at different points in this progression and new lands are being added. The County has typically worked with willing sellers for park land acquisition and willing landowners for easement purchases. It is difficult to predict exactly how many new acres will be protected over the coming five years, although it is almost certain that the system will grow.

A key question is how to set the pace of park land restoration, recognizing that:

- Park land historically has not been restored or managed immediately upon acquisition or other protection; easements require management from the outset.
- Roughly half of the park system is not currently managed, consisting mostly of land retired from as much as a century of farming over the past 50-plus years, as well as some inaccessible areas.
- Once restored, lands transition into perpetual long-term adaptive management, which will grow to become the largest management category. All lands that have been restored require long-term management to protect the investment made in restoring them.

While it may make ecological sense to restore all unmanaged park acres as quickly as possible, several fundamental drivers and constraints influence the pace of transitioning park system lands and easements from unmanaged, to restoration, and to long-term adaptive management, including:

Costs at each phase:

- Acquisition costs per acre (\$2,250-\$40,000 for easements, \$88,000 to \$127,000 for inholdings)
- Restoration cost per acre (\$4,500 to \$30,000+ per acre)
- Long-term adaptive management costs (\$300 to \$1,000 per acre)

Finite funding availability for each phase:

- Acquisition sources (outside funding available with County match)
- Restoration funding sources (outside funding available with 10-25% County match)
- Long-term adaptive management funding sources (generally County-funded)

Staff capacity to manage new projects:

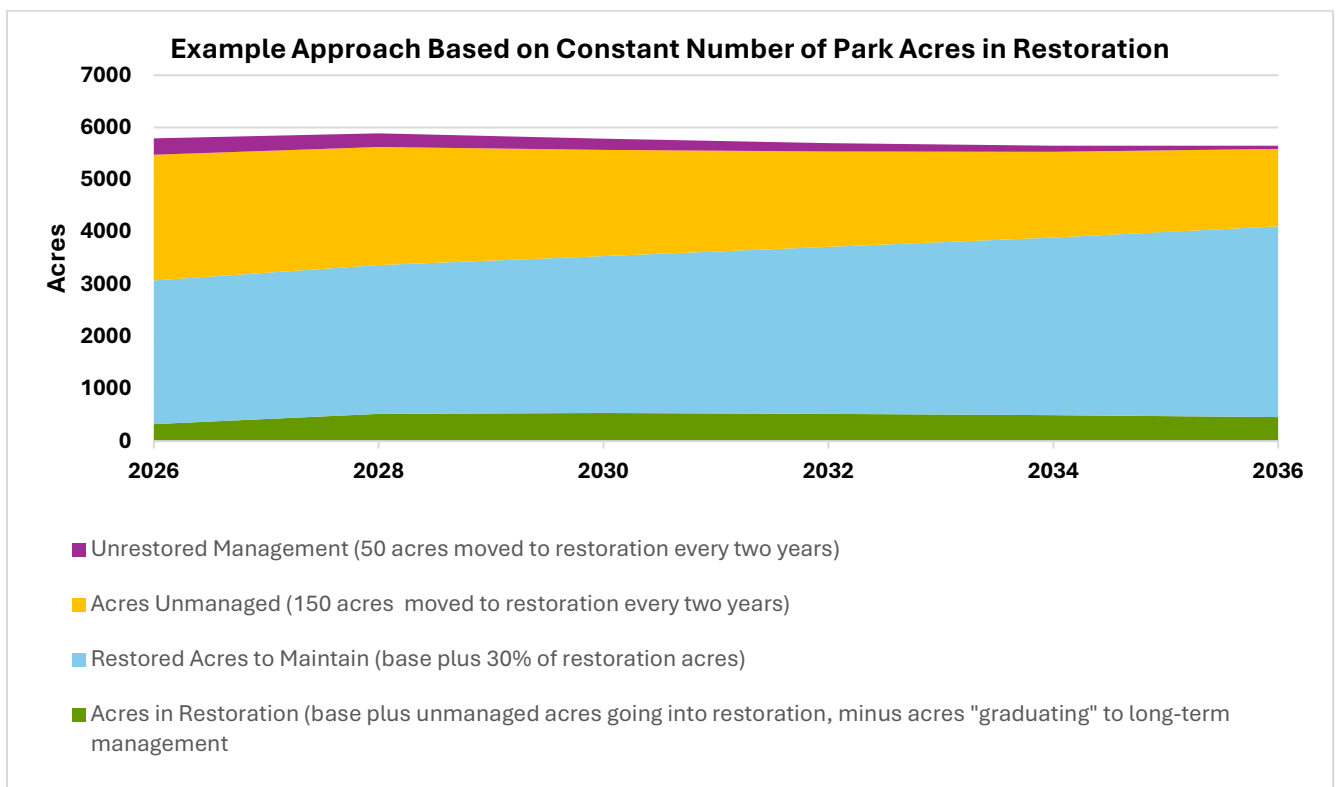
- Staff project management (includes in-house projects and contracted projects)
- Staff-coordinated partnership projects
- Staff-coordinated volunteer efforts
- Staff participation in non-NRMP park and greenway plans (adding natural resources perspective)
- New management units/projects being added to the system (via NRMPs, greenways, projects at non-park County buildings, smaller restoration projects added in conjunction with major park developments)

A primary funding issue is that some acquisition and restoration funding is generally available from outside sources, while funding for long-term adaptive management falls mostly to the County. The number of acres in long-term adaptive management will only increase over the next decade, going from roughly 2,750 acres today to potentially 4,000 or more acres. Although the per-acre cost of long-term management is generally much smaller than the per-acre cost of restoration, securing

funding for the long-term adaptive management work will be imperative to protect the investments made in land protection and restoration.

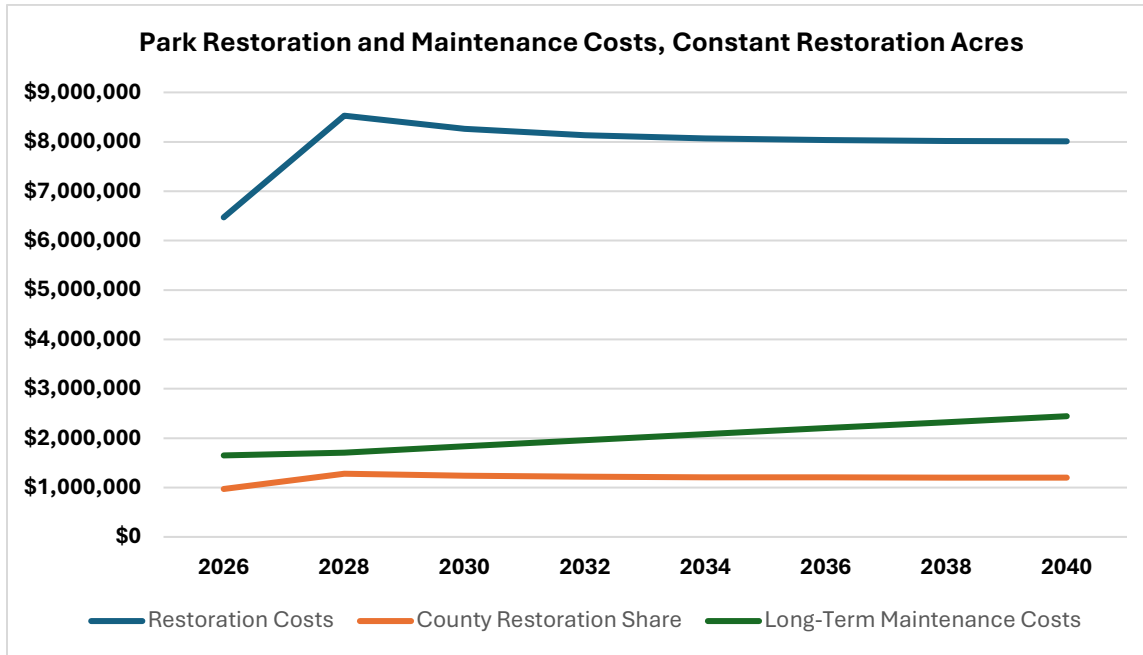
At a system level, different approaches could be used to project workload related to anticipated funding and staffing levels. The following example graph demonstrates a management approach based on holding the number of acres in active restoration relatively constant over time, at 400 to 500 acres. In this example, about 200 acres of unmanaged lands enter active restoration every two years and a similar number of the acres in restoration “graduate” into a long-term management regime. Over a ten-year period, nearly 40 percent of the lands currently not being managed would be either in active restoration or in long-term adaptive management. All unmanaged park lands would have entered restoration by 2046, twenty years from now.

Note that the following graphic model does not reflect new lands being added to the system. It includes only park acres – not greenways, easements, or city-county collaborative lands.



The following chart shows example costs associated with a model that holds the number of park acres in restoration relatively constant over time. For illustration purposes only, maintenance costs of \$600/acre/biennium and restoration costs of \$20,000/acre/biennium were used. The graph shows the full restoration cost, and the share that the County typically pays (currently 10-25 percent of restoration costs). Park restoration work would end in about 2046, with all lands restored and transitioning into long-term adaptive management.

Note: No inflationary increases were applied, although they can be considerable over time. Because more of the readily accessible and more easily restorable lands within parks already have been restored, costs also will increase for the more challenging new projects that remain.



This approach can be varied to change the pace of restoration, based on projected opportunities or constraints, including staff capacity, availability of external funding, and overall costs.

2. Prioritization

Prioritization can be key to effective plan implementation, and can be established in several ways, such as:

- selecting the highest priorities from individual park, greenway, and easement NRMPs
- prioritizing the individual objectives and actions in this plan
- prioritizing a list of near-term projects.

A combined approach would use some or all these methods.

Prioritization criteria were explored for this plan, for evaluating restoration projects on ecological merit and recognizing the public benefits of restored landscapes. Restoration and management can be a balancing act that weighs protecting sensitive natural resources with the societal benefits of drawing people into nature. The 2050 Vision Plan speaks to connecting people with nature and reinforcing this reciprocal relationship. Parks play a vital role in providing for public enjoyment and recreation, and they also represent a “last great chance” to save and restore larger high quality natural areas that would have otherwise been lost to development. The art of managing large public natural landscapes lies in

satisfying both sets of public services in a way that immerses visitors in nature while protecting the most sensitive natural areas.

It is also important to recognize the value of ecosystem services that accrue to everyone from protected and managed lands, whether they are parks, greenways, or private easements. Ecosystem services (ES) are often defined as: *the benefits people receive from nature. They encompass nature's contributions to the production of food and timber; life-support processes, such as water purification...; and life fulfilling benefits, such as places to recreate or to be inspired by nature's diversity.*¹

ES are often categorized according to the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment,² created by an international scientific assessment. The four overlapping categories are:

- *Regulating services* - benefits obtained from the regulation of ecosystem processes
- *Supporting services* - services necessary for the production of all other services
- *Provisioning services* - the products obtained from ecosystems
- *Cultural services* - nonmaterial benefits obtained from ecosystems

The following criteria adapted from the 2020 Land Conservation Plan speak to a combined prioritization approach that can be applied across a spectrum of lands, from heavily developed public spaces to almost pristine natural environments, and for public lands and protected private lands. They can be used as a general guide or further developed into a scoring system for evaluating future projects.

Land Protection Criteria

Land Protection Within CFAs

- Areas with surface water
- Areas with a combination of uplands and wetlands
- Upland forest and grassland

Land Protection of Natural Areas outside of CFAs

- Includes ecologically significant features
- Provides important wildlife habitat
- Is adjacent to a river, lake, or stream
- Is adjacent to existing protected property with natural habitat
- Is located within a designated greenway corridor
- Provides other environmental benefits (e.g., surface or groundwater quality protection, aquifer recharge, flood control, connectivity)
- Is considered locally significant open space
- Drinking Water Supply Management Area outside of a CFA
- Woodlot outside of a CFA
- Wetland outside of a CFA

¹ Olander, L. P., D. Urban, R. J. Johnston, G. Van Houtven, and J. Kagan. 2016. "Proposal for Increasing Consistency When Incorporating Ecosystem Services into Decision Making." National Ecosystem Services Partnership Policy Brief 16-01. Durham, NC: Duke University, www.nicholasinstitute.duke.edu/publications.

² Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, 2005. "Ecosystems and Human Well-being: Synthesis". Island Press, Washington, DC.

- Other undeveloped land in cities
- Native seed source site

Land Protection within Approved Park Boundaries

Because acquisition opportunities for park inholdings are relatively infrequent, each situation should be addressed based on landowner interests, significance of the inholding for park purposes, and funding availability.

Natural Resource Management Criteria

Water Quality

- Improves water retention and infiltration
- Retains water in stream headwaters
- Installs stream channel and shoreline stabilization projects
- Promotes functional vegetative buffers along water resources where not already required by regulations and/or restores buffers that currently consist of non-desirable species
- Promotes perennial vegetation on critical recharge areas
- Implements erosion control practices
- Promotes soil health
- Restores natural hydrologic conditions
- Improves aquatic habitat

Ecological

- Existing high-quality natural communities
- Size
- Edge conditions, condition of adjacent lands
- Existing high biodiversity
- Presence of rare or unique species
- Improves pollinator habitat
- Adjacency and connectivity to existing natural areas or restorable areas, promotes connection of habitat links into bigger, functional whole
- Improves Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) habitat
- Ends threats from over-utilization
- Eliminates and controls invasive species and promotes desirable species
- Reinstates structural layers, food webs, and spatial diversity
- Ease of restoration

Social

- Includes areas of public use or visibility
- Provides potential education opportunities
- Improves aesthetic values
- Promotes landowner involvement on non-County lands
- Promotes City-County Conservation Collaborative on ecologically significant land
- Expands strategic partnerships with other entities

- Promotes information sharing with other entities
- Provides public participation and volunteerism opportunities
- Expands nearby nature experiences for under-represented audiences

Economic

- Restoration cost
- Leveraged non-County funding resources
- Long-term maintenance costs
- Level of landowner commitment (easements)
- Level of partner(s) commitment
- Opportunities for volunteer assistance

Project Alignment

- Distributes projects among Commissioner districts, offering something to residents in every district
- Demonstrates alignment between promoted grants and natural resources work priorities
- Helps expand capacity for partners (assists local governments in natural resources work)

The following table is provided as an example only to show that the individual sets of natural resource management criteria could have differing degrees of relevance based on 1) the type of management unit being considered for restoration and 2) the type of restoration being done and its goals, which can range from improving core habitat per ecological principles to adding more native plants for landscaping demonstration projects. For example, ecological criteria would likely have greater weight in prioritizing among projects in a park reserve than prioritizing among projects at county facilities. The criteria in this example are focused on the restoration phase – initiating the intensive process to restore ecological health. The long-term adaptive management phase is assumed to be essential for any lands that have undergone restoration.

Potential Restoration Project Criteria Weightings (1-5 scale): Example Only

Project/Unit Type	Ecological	Water Quality	Social	Economic	Project Alignment
Park Reserve Restoration	5	5	4	3	2
Regional Park Restoration	4	4	5	3	3
CPCA Restoration	5	5	3	3	2
Greenway Restoration	3	3	4	4	5
Easement Restoration (willing landowner)	3	4	4	4	4
County Facility Native Landscape Planting	2	3	5	3	4

3. Desired Outcomes within Five Years

The following table summarizes projects committed to over the next five years, whether through past prioritization efforts or secured grants with established timelines. It also reflects projected new projects, such as private natural area easements based on historic program participation over time. Because this work is largely committed and underway, prioritization will be applied to the next five-year horizon.

Current Workplan Initiatives: Five Years	Projects	Acres	Budget	Estimated Completion
City-County Conservation Collaborative Implementation	7	277.3	\$1.29 M	2027-2028
4C Planning and Strategic Planning	5	TBD	TBD	2027
Capital Improvements Project Advisor	7	TBD	TBD	2027
Greenway Planning, Design, Construction Advisor	33	N/A	TBD	2027-2031
Greenway NRMP Implementation	10	TBD	TBD	2028-2031
General System Planning	8	N/A		2026
Parks Planning	9	TBD	TBD	2026-2029
Parks NRMP Implementation	25	3,000+	\$6.8 M	2026-2031
Park Conservation Area Planning	1	37	TBD	2026-2027
Park Conservation Area NR Implementation	3	177	TBD	2026-2028
Private Landowner Outreach (park inholding and potential conservation area and easement owners in CFAs)	2	TBD	TBD	ongoing
Private Easement Acquisition and NRMP (estimated)	20	TBD	TBD	2026-2027
Private Easement NR Implementation	17	580+	\$0.5 M+	2026-2028
Wildlife and Vegetation Surveys/Monitoring	9	N/A	N/A	ongoing
Wildlife Projects	7	N/A	TBD	ongoing
Water Quality Projects	3	TBD	TBD	2027-2031
Volunteer Program	5	N/A	N/A	ongoing
Transportation Redevelopment	1	TBD	TBD	2026
Capital Facilities (County Buildings, Service Centers, Libraries, Park capital improvements)	14	TBD	TBD	2026-2031
Administration/Communication	4	N/A	N/A	ongoing

Specific restoration initiatives within the above five-year summary include some of the following park projects. Long-term management of previously restored areas is also included.

LAKE BYLLESBY REGIONAL PARK

Restoration: 145+ acres

- ML19, ML22: 145 acres
- LCCMR Restoration and Recreation Grant

LEBANON HILLS REGIONAL PARK

Restoration: 281 acres

- West section restoration with sustainable trails work (W-1, W-2, W-3): 206 acres
- Discovery Loop: 75 acres

Beyond Five Years:

- Middle Park restoration with sustainable trails
- Jensen Gully Erosion Repair
- GRE Pollinator habitat (East Park on Cliff between Holland and entry road)

MIESVILLE RAVINE PARK RESERVE

Restoration: TBD

- Phase 1 Restoration (2000236), acres TBD
- Trout Brook Restoration, Phase III, acres TBD

Beyond Five Years:

Restoration of additional management units identified in the NRMP

SPRING LAKE PARK RESERVE

Restoration: 278 Acres

- Multiple NRMP units and Church's Woods, 278 acres
- Regal Fritillary Reintroduction
- Ravine Stabilization Project (contingent on funding), \$700,000

Beyond Five Years:

Restoration of additional NRMP Units

THOMPSON COUNTY PARK

Restoration:

- Savanna re-establishment, 3.24 acres
- Food Forest, acres TBD
- Shoreline, acres, funding, and timeframes TBD

WHITETAIL WOODS REGIONAL PARK

Restoration:

Empire Wetland restoration, 15 acres

The following tables include new initiatives identified by objectives and strategies in the 2050 Vision Plan and in this Natural Systems Plan, with anticipated timelines

2050 Vision Plan Initiatives for Ten Years	Status	Start
Develop NRMPs for County Park Conservation Areas and a naming strategy.	new	2026-2031
Employ Indigenous experts using Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK)	New-ongoing	2026-2031
Seek legislative authority to own land for conservation purposes	new	2026-2031
Develop process and criteria to designate resource-sensitive areas where special management or limited access may be needed. (in ordinance)	new	2026-2031

Priority New NSP Initiatives Related to Natural Systems	Status	Start
A.1.b. To protect the ecological and financial investment in the acres restored, secure stable funding for long-term adaptive management.	New	2026-2031
A.1.e. Explore options for using a private funding entity to secure and disburse private funds for natural resource restoration and maintenance on protected private lands.	New	2028-2031
A.2.b. Designate selected areas within the park system that have higher natural resource quality, unique habitat value, restored areas, or areas with sensitive cultural resources as places where the priority use and management will be to protect, improve, and maintain resource integrity. Limit recreational use and access in areas with the most sensitive resources on a temporary or permanent basis.	New	2026-2031
B.2. Use adaptive, science-based practices to prepare for future conditions. a. When supported by science, explore the use of assisted migration methods to carefully introduce selected species that are native to warmer climate zones. b. Apply emerging research to anticipate and manage ecological changes linked to climate trends.	New	2026-2031
E.2. Enhance habitat connectivity and wildlife movement across the landscape. a. Enhance wildlife movement corridors in greenways, parks, and adjacent lands to maintain population genetic diversity and resilience. b. Seek partnerships with the MN DNR, adjacent jurisdictions, and others on regional wildlife habitat and connectivity. c. Identify and remove <u>hazards</u> and barriers to safe wildlife movement, prioritizing locations with high ecological or connectivity value.	New and ongoing	2026-2031
F.1. Build enduring partnerships to share expertise and resources. a. Create and foster long-term partnerships with County departments, cities, tribes, state and federal agencies, and organizations to manage natural systems using a coordinated, systems-based approach. b. Engage and learn from Indigenous partners and experts in Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) to inform management practices. c. Strengthen and expand collaborative initiatives such as the City-County Conservation Collaborative and the Greenway Collaborative. d. Partner with transportation agencies and utilities to improve pollinator habitat within right-of-way and corridors.	New and ongoing	2026-2031

<p>F.3. Promote stewardship through outreach and education.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Promote County parks as living classrooms and demonstration sites for restoration and stewardship best practices. b. Share knowledge and lessons learned from County projects to inspire and inform partner and community stewardship efforts. 	New	TBD
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4. Metrics and Reporting

To be developed. Section will include qualitative and quantitative tracking measures

5. Budget and CIP

To be developed, based on five- and ten-year priorities and updated cost estimates

6. Potential Funding Sources

To be developed.

7. Program Operations and Partnerships

To be developed. Section may include a staffing model.

8. Public Information and Engagement

To be developed.



Update on the Dakota County Land Protection and Natural Systems Plan

Tom Lewanski - Dakota County Parks
Mary Jackson - Office of Planning

Dakota County Planning Commission
March 26, 2026

Presentation Overview



- Updated draft objectives and strategies (in packet)
- Presentation and discussion of draft implementation items
 - Management approach
 - Project prioritization
 - Desired outcomes for five and ten years

Combine the 2017 Parks Natural Resources Management System Plan (NRMSP) with the 2020 Dakota County Land Conservation Plan (LCP) into a comprehensive Natural Systems Plan:

- Build from the 2050 Parks Vision Plan
- Update objectives, strategies, priorities, targets, and timeframes
- Streamline content

Land Protection Chapter

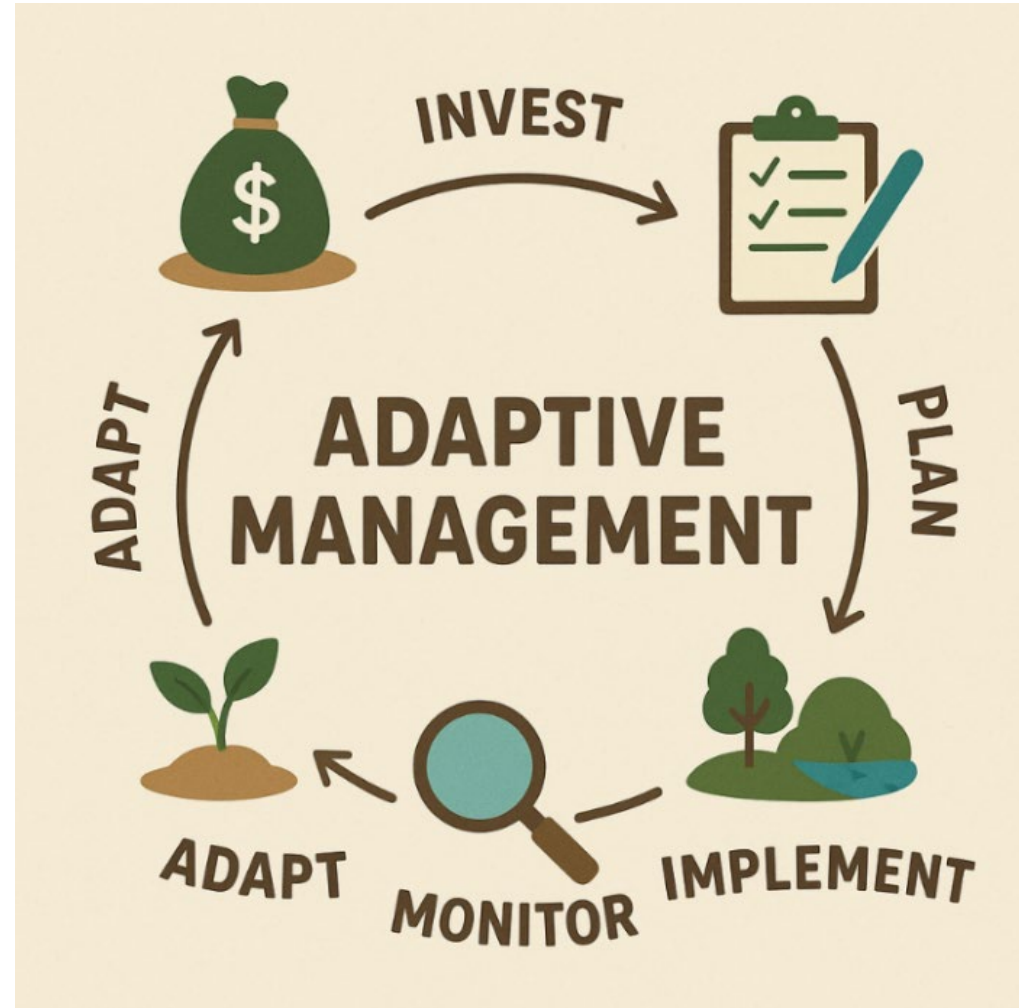
LCP Goals become objectives (mostly unchanged)

1. Prioritize ecologically important areas for protection.
2. Protect and enhance water quality and quantity.
3. *Natural resource quality is improved and sustained.*
(moved to stewardship section)
4. Use CFAs as a framework for restoring and sustaining biodiversity.
5. Inform and engage the public in natural resource protection and management.
6. Enhance nature-based recreational access to conservation lands.

Draft Objectives

Natural Systems Stewardship Chapter

1. Manage natural systems on protected lands in a comprehensive and sustainable manner
2. Manage systems to improve resilience to the impacts of a changing climate.



Natural Systems Stewardship Chapter

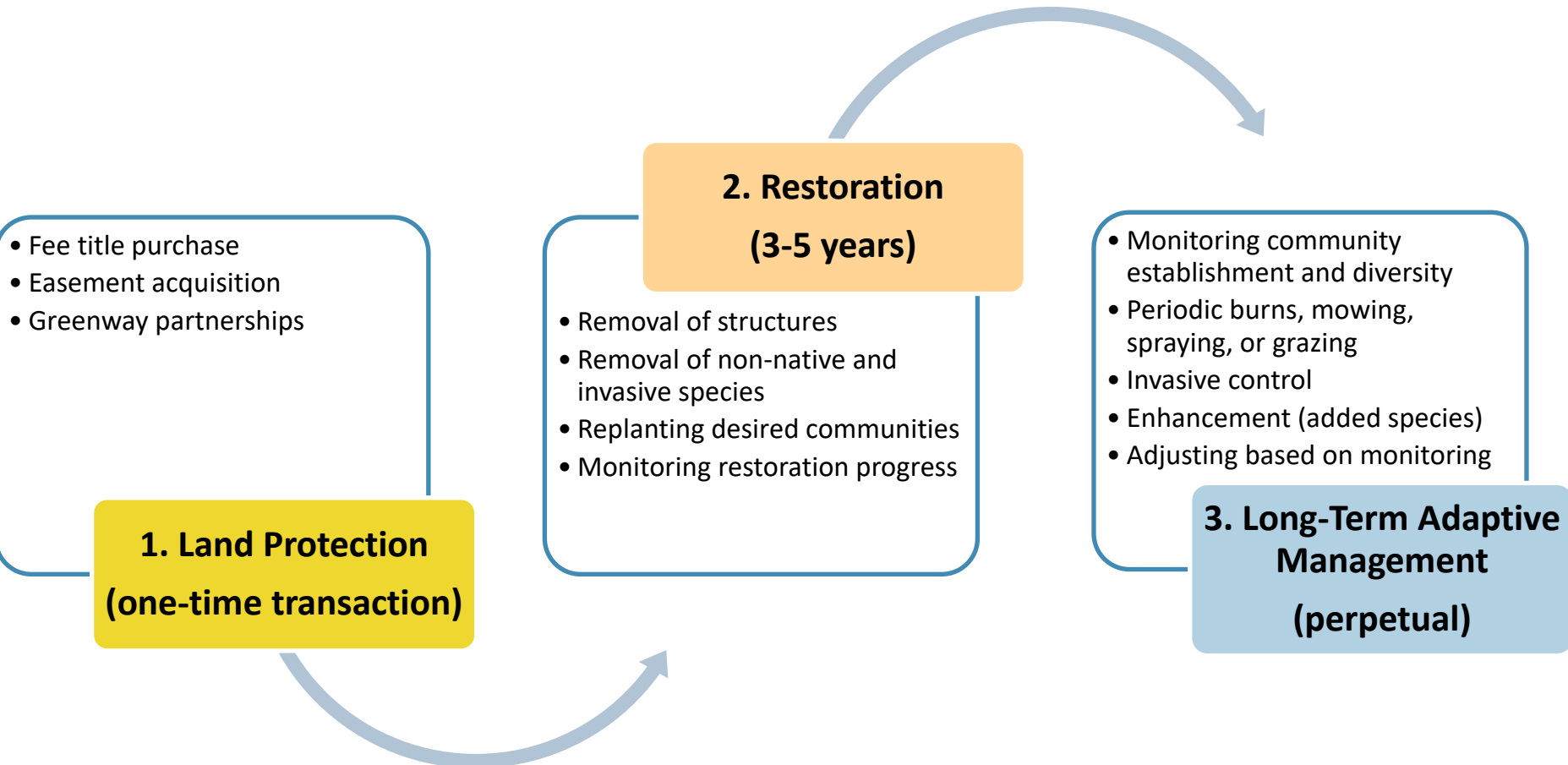
3. Improve ecological quality in County Parks, on other public lands and permanently protected private lands.
4. Manage permanently protected land to improve surface and groundwater quality.
5. Manage habitat to sustain native and rare species, increase biodiversity, and enhance ecosystem health on permanently protected lands
6. Expand capacity for natural systems management by building and sustaining effective partnerships and supporting the efforts of others.

Draft Objectives



Comments and questions from the Commission on the draft objectives and strategies?

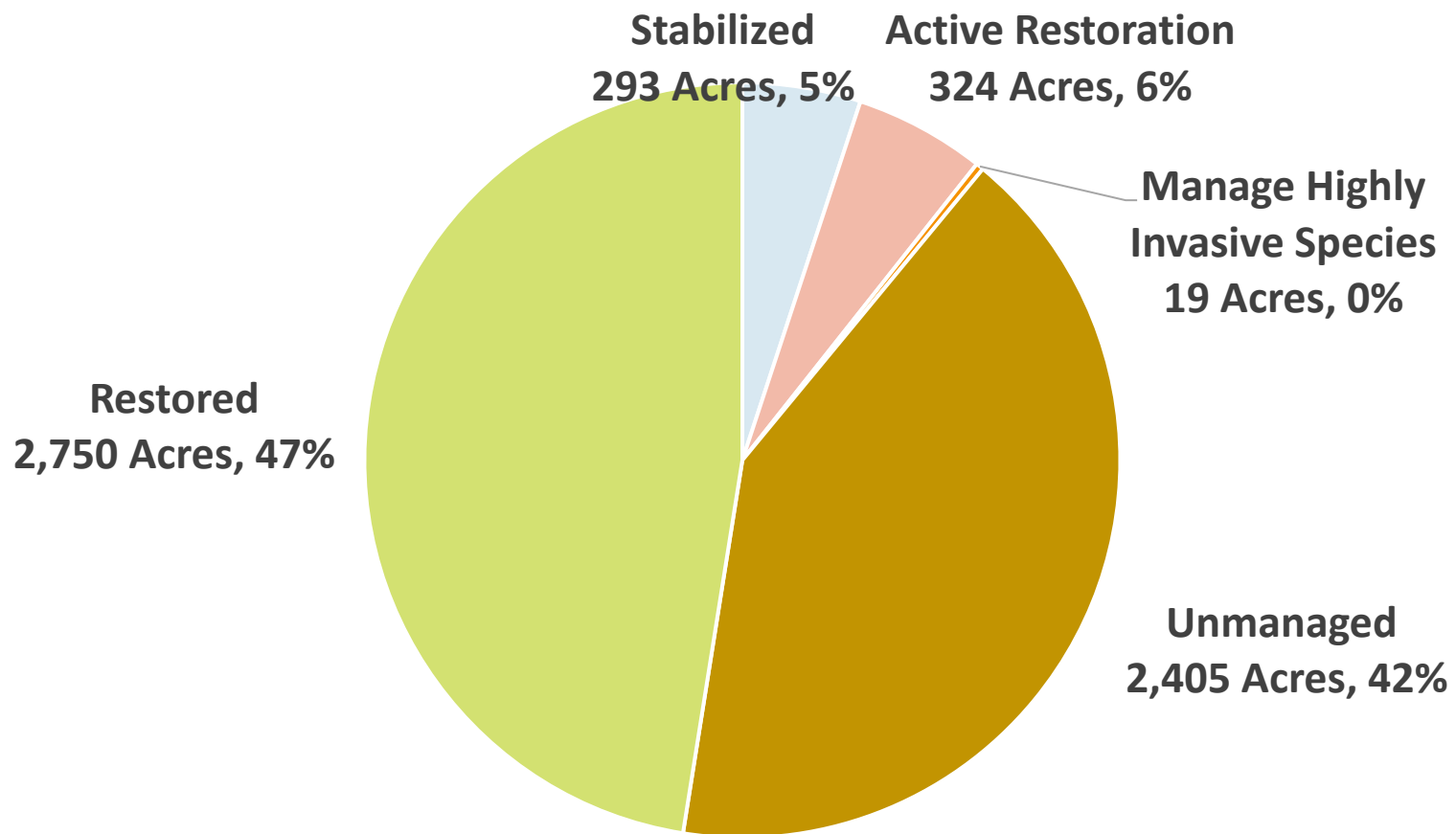
Protection and Long-Term Management Phases



Implementation



Current Status: Parks, Greenways, Natural Area Easements, and Selected Service Centers and Libraries

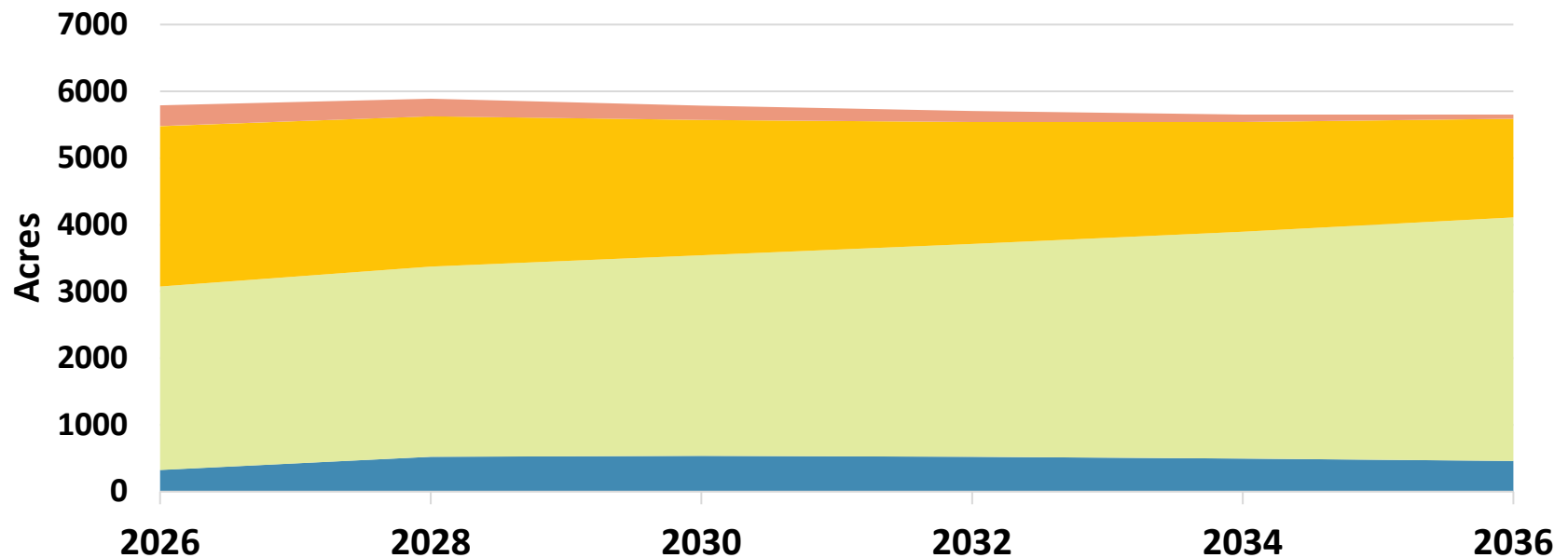


Setting the Pace of Restoration

- Park land historically has not been restored or managed upon protection. Easements require NRMPs.
- Roughly half of the park system is not yet managed, mostly land retired from long-term farming over the past 50-plus years, and inaccessible areas.
- Once restored, lands transition into perpetual long-term adaptive management. Long-term management is required to protect the investment made in restoration.

Hypothetical Approach

Steady Park Land Restoration Rate over Time



■ Unrestored Management (50 acres moved to restoration every two years)

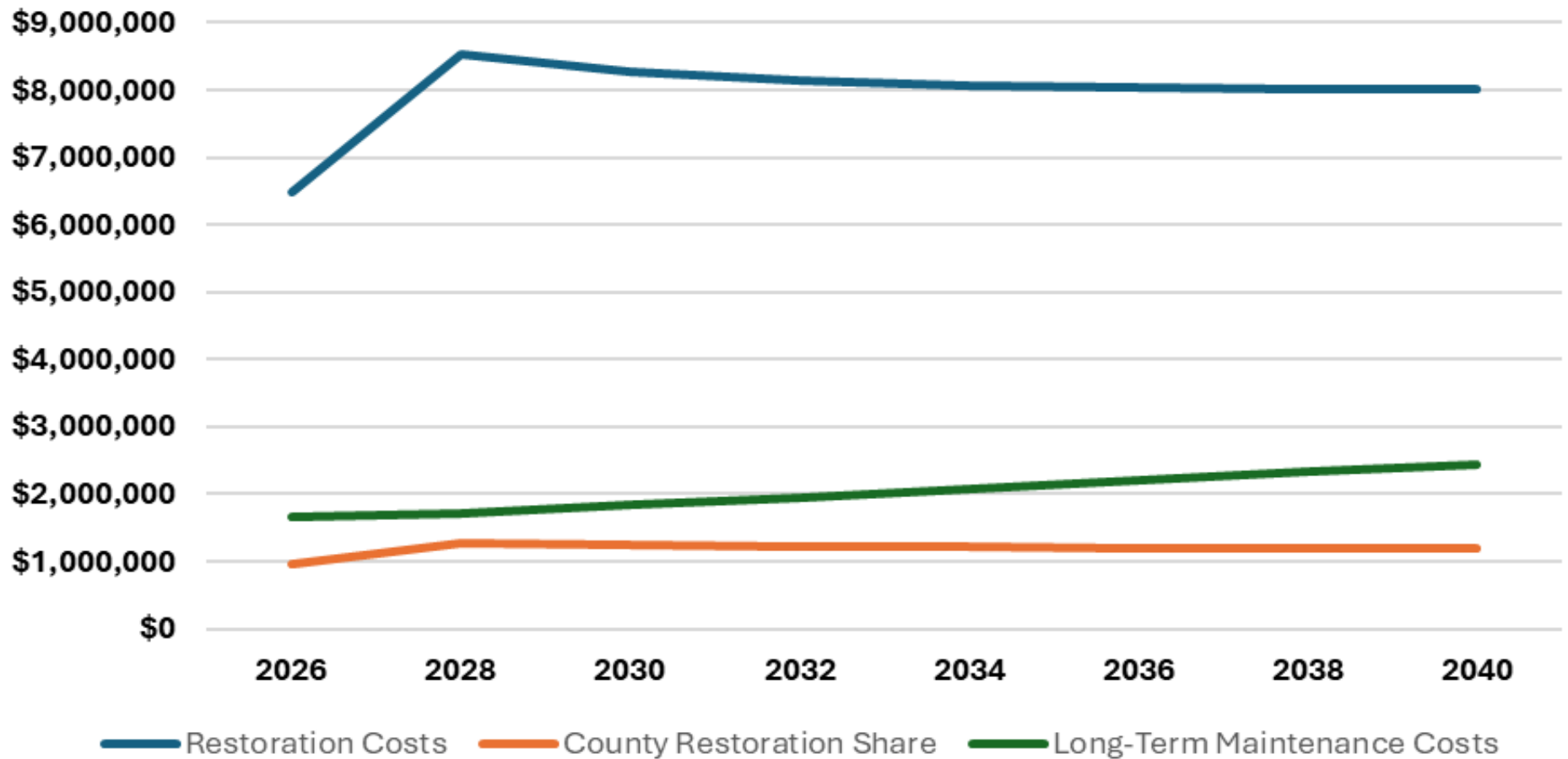
■ Acres Unmanaged (150 acres moved to restoration every two years)

■ Restored Acres to Maintain (base plus 30% of restoration acres)

■ Acres in Restoration (base plus unmanaged acres going into restoration, minus acres "graduating" to long-term management)

Hypothetical Approach: Costs

Park Restoration and Maintenance Costs, Constant Restoration Acres



Restoration Pacing Considerations:

Cost Differences:

- High restoration cost per acre (\$4,500 to \$25,000+ per acre)
- Lower long-term adaptive management costs (~\$300 to \$1,000 per acre)

Finite funding availability for each phase:

- Restoration usually has outside funding with 10-25% County match
- Long-term adaptive management is generally County-funded

Staff Capacity:

- Staff project management (includes in-house projects and contracted projects)
- Staff-coordinated partnership projects
- Staff-coordinated volunteer efforts
- Staff participation in non-NRMP plans (adding natural resources perspective)
- New management projects (via NRMPs, projects at non-park County buildings, restorations added with major park developments)



Commission comments
and thoughts on the
park restoration
approach?

Note: Does not include
wildlife and water quality

Prioritization: integrating into system-wide priorities

- selecting the highest priorities from individual park, greenway, and easement NRMPs
- prioritizing the individual objectives and actions in this plan
- prioritizing a list of near-term projects

Or a combination of all three methods.

2017 Parks NRMSP did not have criteria.

2020 Land Conservation Plan had project criteria, later weighted into scoring, and prioritized strategies.

Proposed Prioritization Criteria for Land Protection:

Inholdings Within Approved Park Boundaries:

Less frequent, work with willing sellers as they come forward

Easements Within CFAs:

Surface water, upland/wetland mix, upland forest and grassland

Easements Outside of CFAs:

Significant natural resources, groundwater protection, location by waterbody, greenway, or a protected property

Proposed Prioritization Criteria for Natural Resource Management Projects:

- Maximizes ecological benefits, increases successful outcomes
- Improves water quality
- Provides social benefits through education and increased stewardship
- Has favorable economics
- Has favorable alignment (geographic, funding, partners)

Natural Resource Management Criteria:

Could be weighted according to different project types and locations:

- Higher weight on ecological criteria in parks and reserves
- Higher weight on social benefit criteria in greenways, County facilities

Implementation



Commission comments
and questions on
prioritization and
weighting?



Desired Five-Year Outcomes assembled from:

- Current five-year workplan, committed projects
- New Vision Plan initiatives for natural systems
- New Natural Systems Plan initiatives

Implementation



Current Workplan Initiatives: Five Years	Projects	Acres	Budget
City-County Conservation Collaborative Planning and Implementation	12	277.3	\$1.29 M
Capital Improvements Project Advisor	7	TBD	TBD
Greenway Planning, Design, Construction Advisor	33	N/A	TBD
Greenway NRMP Implementation	10	TBD	TBD
General System Planning, Parks Planning, and Administration	21	N/A	
Parks NRMP Implementation	25	3,000+	\$6.8+ M
Park Conservation Area Planning	1	37	TBD
Park Conservation Area NR Implementation	3	177	TBD
Landowner Outreach (inholdings, conservation area and easement in CFAs)	2	TBD	TBD
Private Easement Acquisition (estimated), NRMP, NRMP Implementation	37	580+	\$0.5+ M
Wildlife and Vegetation Surveys/Monitoring	9	N/A	N/A
Wildlife and Water Quality Projects	10	N/A	TBD
Volunteer Program	5	N/A	N/A
Transportation and Capital Facilities Projects	15	TBD	TBD

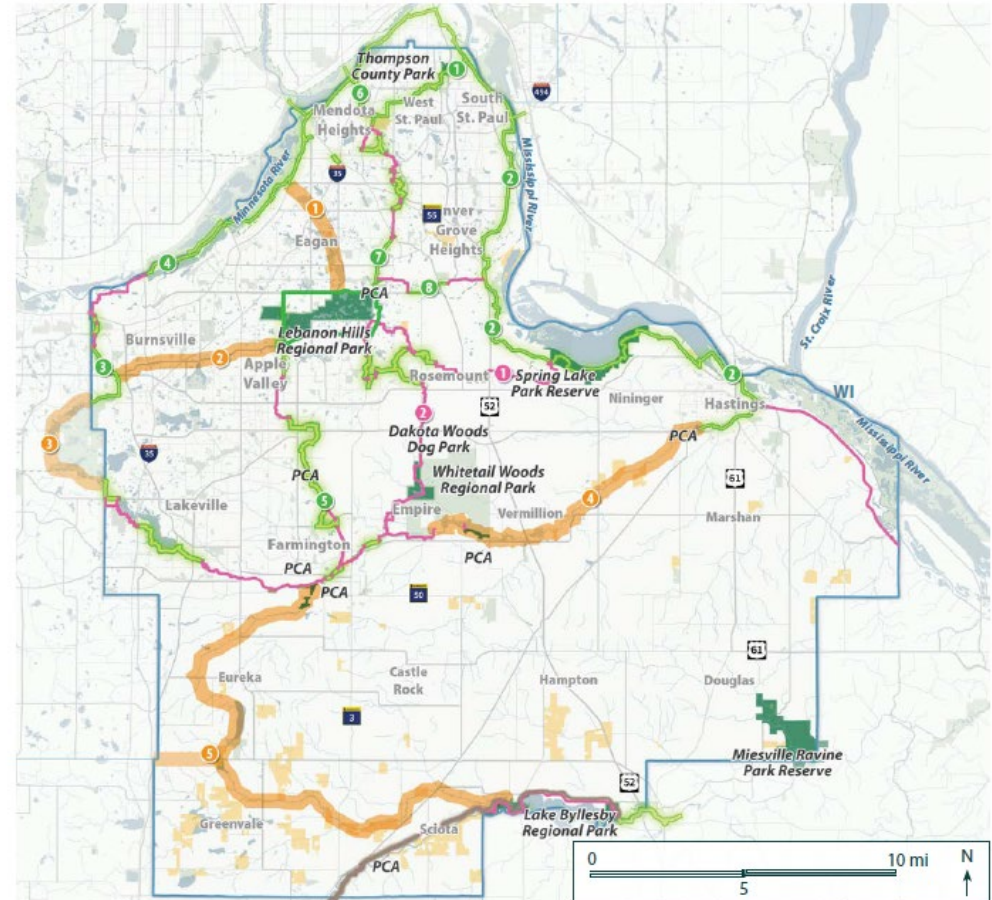
Implementation



2050 Vision Plan Initiatives for Ten Years	Status	Start
Develop NRMPs for County Park Conservation Areas and a naming strategy.	new	2026-2031
Employ Indigenous experts using Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK)	New-ongoing	2026-2031
Seek legislative authority to own land for conservation purposes	new	2026-2031
Develop process and criteria to designate resource-sensitive areas where special management or limited access may be needed.	new	2026-2031

Implementation

Growth in the System: 2050 Vision Plan Greenways and Search Corridors



LEGEND

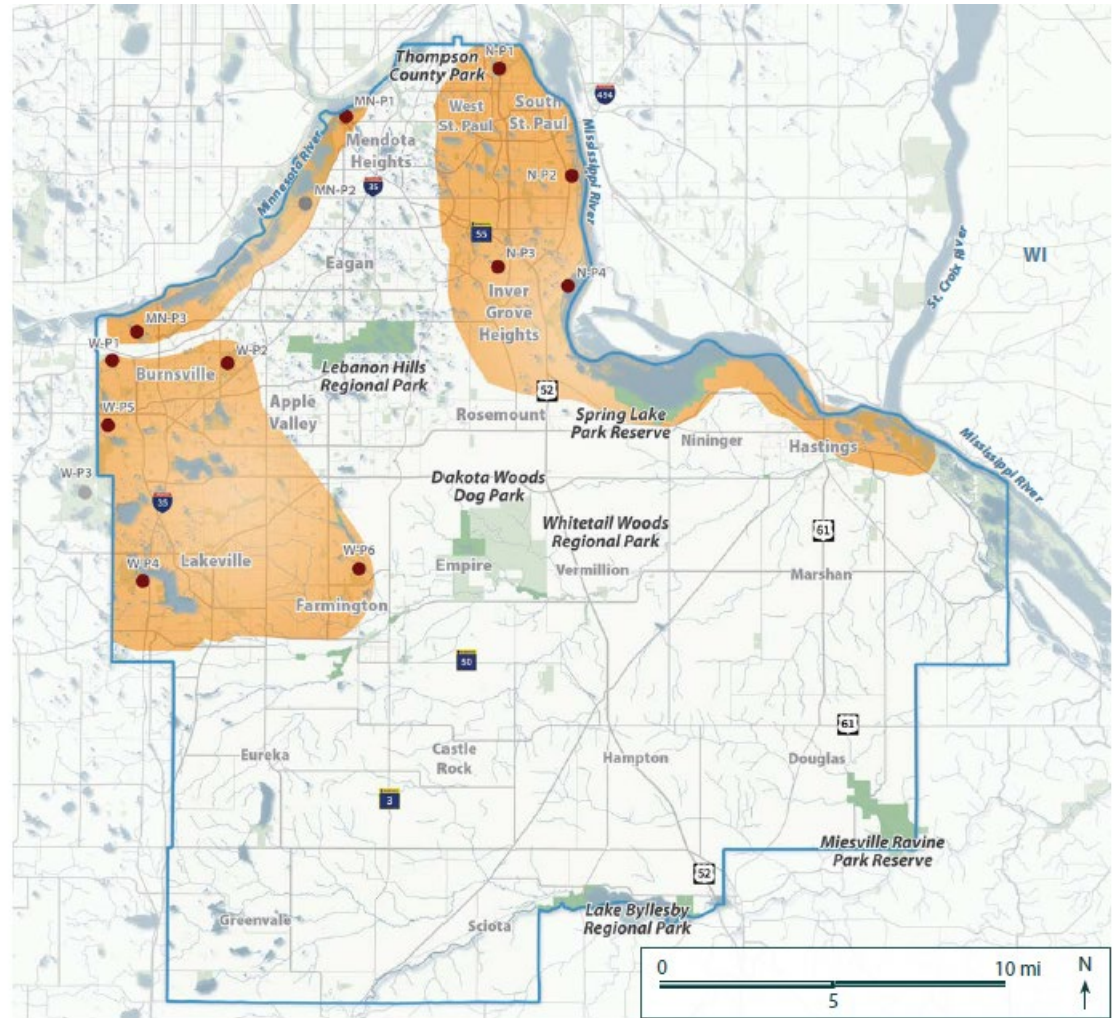
- Reserves, Regional Parks, and County Park
- PCA** Park Conservation Areas (PCA)
- Conservation Easements
- Non-County Public Lands
- Non-County Trails
- Planned Regional Greenways
 - Rosemount Greenway
 - Vermillion Highlands Greenway

- Existing Regional Greenways
 - River to River
 - Mississippi River
 - Lake Marion
 - Minnesota River
 - North Creek
 - Big Rivers Regional Trail
 - Lebanon Hills
 - Veterans Memorial Greenway
- Greenway Linking Route

- Regional Greenway and Trail Search Corridors
 - Lebanon Hills - Minnesota River Greenway Regional Trail
 - Lebanon Hills - Lake Marion Regional Trail
 - Lake Marion - Big Woods Regional Trail "Coordinate with Scott County"
 - Vermillion River Greenway Regional Trail
 - Elko New Market Blakely-Dayle Kennefick Regional Trail "Coordinate with Scott County"
- Mill Towns State Trail

Implementation

Growth in the System: 2050 Vision Plan Park Search Areas



LEGEND

- County Parks, Regional Parks, Park Reserves
- Potential New Park Candidate Sites
- Potential Partnership Candidate Sites
- New Park Search Areas

Implementation



Priority New NSP Initiatives	Status	Start
A.1.b. To protect the ecological and financial investment in the acres restored, secure stable funding for long-term adaptive management.	New	2026-2031
A.1.e. Explore options for using a private funding entity to secure and disburse private funds for natural resource restoration and maintenance on protected private lands.	New	2028-2031
A.2.b. Designate selected areas within the park system that have higher natural resource quality, unique habitat value, restored areas, or areas with sensitive cultural resources as places where the priority use and management will be to protect, improve, and maintain resource integrity. Limit recreational use and access in areas with the most sensitive resources on a temporary or permanent basis.	New	2026-2031

Implementation



Priority New NSP Initiatives	Status	Start
<p>B.2. Use adaptive, science-based practices to prepare for future conditions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. When supported by science, explore assisted migration methods to carefully introduce selected species that are native to warmer climate zones.b. Apply emerging research to anticipate and manage ecological changes linked to climate trends.	New	2026-2031
<p>E.2. Enhance habitat connectivity and wildlife movement across the landscape.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. Enhance wildlife movement corridors in greenways, parks, and adjacent lands to maintain population genetic diversity and resilience.b. Seek partnerships with the MN DNR, adjacent jurisdictions, and others on regional wildlife habitat and connectivity. Identify and remove <u>hazards</u> and barriers to safe wildlife movement, prioritizing locations with high ecological or connectivity value.	New and ongoing	2026-2031

Implementation



Priority New NSP Initiatives	Status	Start
<p>F.1. Build enduring partnerships to share expertise and resources.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. Create-foster long-term partnerships with County departments, cities, tribes, state and federal agencies, and others to manage natural systems using a coordinated, systems-based approach.b. Engage and learn from Indigenous partners and experts in Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) to inform management practices.c. Strengthen and expand collaborative initiatives such as the City-County Conservation Collaborative and the Greenway Collaborative.d. Partner with transportation agencies and utilities to improve pollinator habitat within right-of-way and corridors.	New and ongoing	2026-2031
<p>F.3. Promote stewardship through outreach and education.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. Promote County parks as living classrooms and demonstration sites.b. Share knowledge and lessons learned from County projects to inspire and inform partner and community stewardship efforts.	New	TBD



**Commission Comments
and Questions on the
Five-and Ten-Year
Initiatives?**

Stakeholder Engagement



Group Meetings:

- County Partner Departments
- State and Federal Agency Partners
- Cities and Local Government, TBD
- Non-Profit Groups
- Implementation Partners
- Tribal Experts, through other projects

Resident Intercepts and Easement Owner Contacts

Next Steps



Continued Engagement of Stakeholders

Draft Plan this summer



Questions?

Thank you!