


**Recommendation to Adopt the
Spring Lake Park Master Plan and
Natural Resources Management
Plan**


Dakota County Planning Commission
April 27, 2021
Joe Walton, Senior Ecologist and Lil Leatham, Senior Planner
Physical Development Division

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Land Acknowledgement 




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Overview 

- Project Purpose and Process
- Plan Highlights
- Public Review Process
- Public Review Comments and Plan Changes
- Questions and Discussion
- Planning Commission Action



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Project Purpose & Process 

Update 2003 Master Plan	Process
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long Term and 10 Year Plans 	Summer – Fall 2019: <i>Research, Findings, and Vision</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interpretive Framework 	Winter - Spring 2020: Concept Alternatives
Natural Resources Management Plan	Summer – Winter 2020: <i>Plan Development</i>
	Winter – Summer 2021: <i>Approvals</i>

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NRMP Highlights

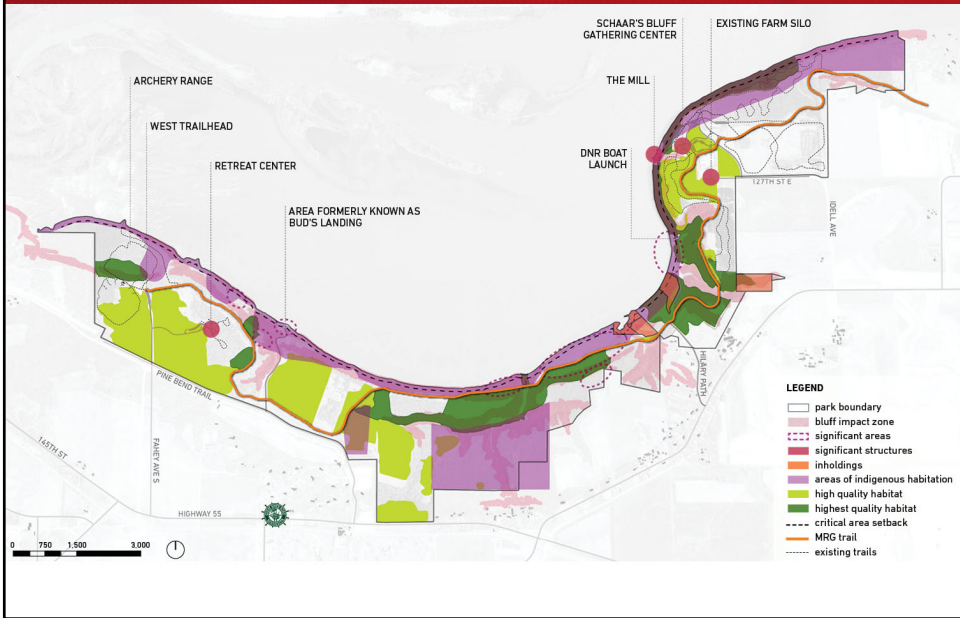


- Restore the entire park in 20 years
- Maintain all restored areas into the future
- Allow people to experience the natural heritage of the park
- Provide a diverse and rich habitat for native wildlife
- Foster a resilient ecosystem
- Collaborate and partner with adjacent landowners
- Achieve regionally outstanding ecological quality

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Integration of Stewardship and Recreation





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Interpretive Themes & Guidelines

THE CHANGING RIVER

- *Importance of place*
- *Gifts of the land*
- *Kinship and connections*



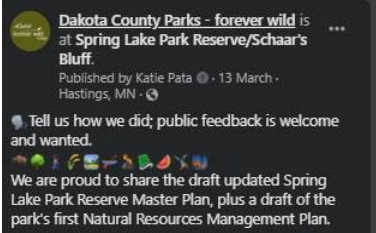
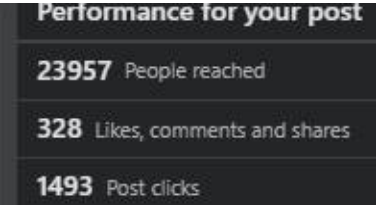
1. This is a Dakota place
2. Ecological and human history are tied
3. The site and its stories are continually evolving
4. Connected sites and stories
5. This is a place for gathering

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Public Review Process

February 17– April 19

- Community open house
- Stakeholder outreach
- On-line review and comment
- Digital scavenger hunt
- Social media

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Public Review - NRMP

Overall Support

What is your level of support for the Draft Natural Resources Management Plan for Spring Lake Park Reserve?

A Strongly supportive	63% (116)	79%
B Somewhat supportive	16% (29)	
C Neutral or don't know	13% (23)	
D Somewhat unsupportive	2% (4)	9%
E Strongly unsupportive	7% (12)	

The following comments resulted in changes to the plan of which are highlighted in the document and listed in your packets

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Public Review and Updates- NRMP



Conservation Organizations

- Support strongly and urge approval of the NRMP
- Strengthen the level of urgency regarding wildlife population declines and the need for habitat protection and restoration
- Place greater emphasis on research as part of the land restoration process
- Emphasize the linear shape of the park site and describe inherent issues because of it

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Public Review and Updates - NRMP



Conservation Organizations (cont'd.)

- Recommended adding language calling for a biological assessment (Natural Resource Review) for all proposed visitor services improvements
- Revise language in Habitat Fragmentation section

Minnesota DNR and Vermillion JPO

- Changes to Water Resources section (Vermillion JPO)
- Liked the overall plan but had concern that the Landing River Use Area is large enough (DNR)

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Dakota
Public Review and Updates

Dakota County Staff

- Add JPO as a potential funding source
- Add more information on plant community succession
- Better describe the proposed methods for allowing animals to move through bison fence: 6” off ground near high use areas and 12” elsewhere
- Better describe the factors that cause woodland and forest degradation

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Dakota
Public Review – Master Plan

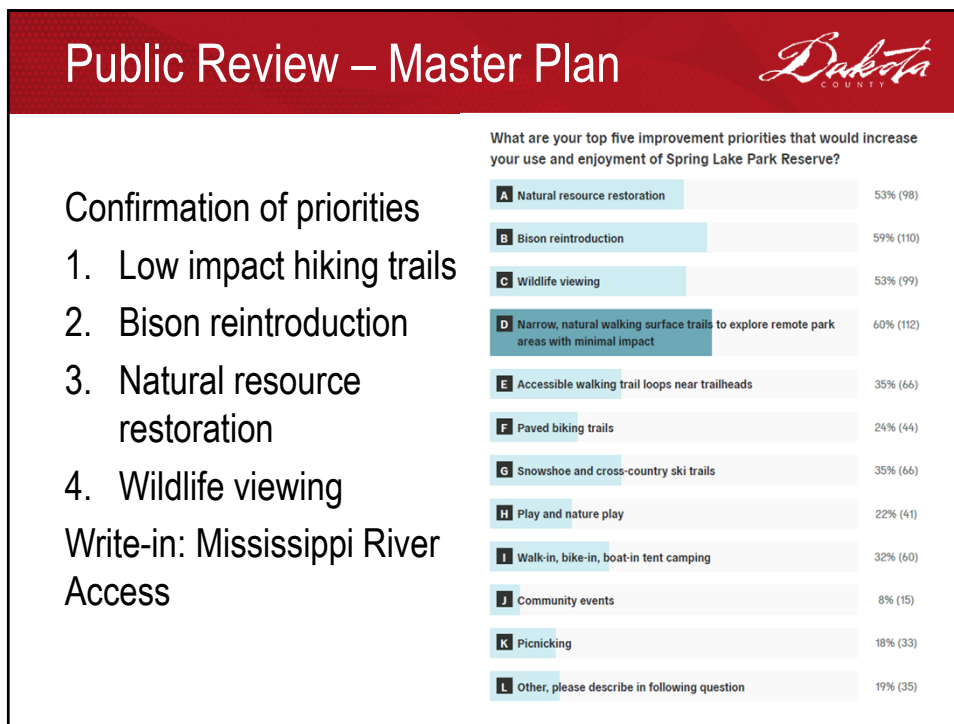
Overall Support

What is your level of support for the Draft Master Plan for Spring Lake Park Reserve?

A Strongly supportive	<div style="background-color: #008080; width: 64%; height: 15px;"></div>	64% (121)	
B Somewhat supportive	<div style="background-color: #ADD8E6; width: 16%; height: 15px;"></div>	16% (31)	
C Neutral or don't know	<div style="background-color: #ADD8E6; width: 7%; height: 15px;"></div>	7% (14)	
D Somewhat unsupportive	<div style="background-color: #ADD8E6; width: 6%; height: 15px;"></div>	6% (12)	
E Strongly unsupportive	<div style="background-color: #ADD8E6; width: 6%; height: 15px;"></div>	6% (12)	

80%
12%

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Public Review – Master Plan *Dakota* COUNTY

Conservation Organizations

Concern about overdevelopment and Natural Resource Impact.

Objections to:

- Upper Park walk in river use area
- Fischer Trailhead, parking and restrooms
- Interpretive Center
- Walk-in/bike-in tent camping and bunk houses
- Schaar’s Bluff to river trail connection

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Updates – Master Plan *Dakota* COUNTY

RUSTIC CAMPSITES*
81 To-hike-in campsites with ADA access
vault restrooms + water

EXISTING CAMP SPRING LAKE RETREAT CENTER AND GROUP CAMPING*

RIVER LANDING USE AREA*
realigned access road
fishing dock/water lab
small shaded outdoor classroom/picnic shelter
picnic tables
outdoor storage
boat launch (small watercraft)
pulk-through (boat trailer) and day use parking
vault toilet/restrooms

MISSISSIPPI RIVER AND BISON INTERPRETIVE CENTER*
PRAIRIE LAB
interactive / experimental restoration experience

TERRACE REST STOP
proposed interpretive node

CONTINUOUS TRAIL*
soft-surface trail
interpretive rest stop

FUTURE INTERPRETIVE CENTER*
long-term vision

LEGEND

park boundary	multi purpose field	amphitheater
current holdings	play area	camping
woodland area	interpretive node	bison range
prairie area	overlook	water access point
savanna area	play area	fishing pier
buildings	sand volleyball	parking
roads	archery	restrooms
accessible park trails	picnic shelter	
proposed soft-surface trails	sun shelter / rest stop	
MRO Trail		

*** NOTE: Park improvements to occur with further cultural and environmental study, Tribal consultation, and monitoring.**

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Updates – Master Plan



Visitor Facility Design

- Energy efficiency
- Sustainable design best practices

Capital Improvement Project Evaluation

- Natural Resource Review (biological assessment)
- Cultural Review
- Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Review
- Education/Interpretation Review

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Updates – Master Plan



Further discussion and clarification around future cultural landscape stewardship collaboration with THPOs

- Establish consultation protocols
- Communicate with THPOs on a quarterly basis and meet bi-annually
- Consult when developing scope of work
- Make efforts to include Indigenous community members on advisory committees, county staff, project team, and project advisory groups

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Master Plan - Updates


Other Updates

- Recognition of relationship to Great River Road
- Greater emphasis Mississippi River Flyway and Audubon Society Important Birding Area (IBA)
- Clarifications (for example: waterfowl hunting, wedding venue rentals, accessibility, inholding approach)
- Detail added (for example: playground features desired, equipment rentals)

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Next Steps

Final Edit
June 15 - PDC considers recommendation to County Board for adoption
June – Submit MP to Metropolitan Council for adoption



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Questions and Discussion



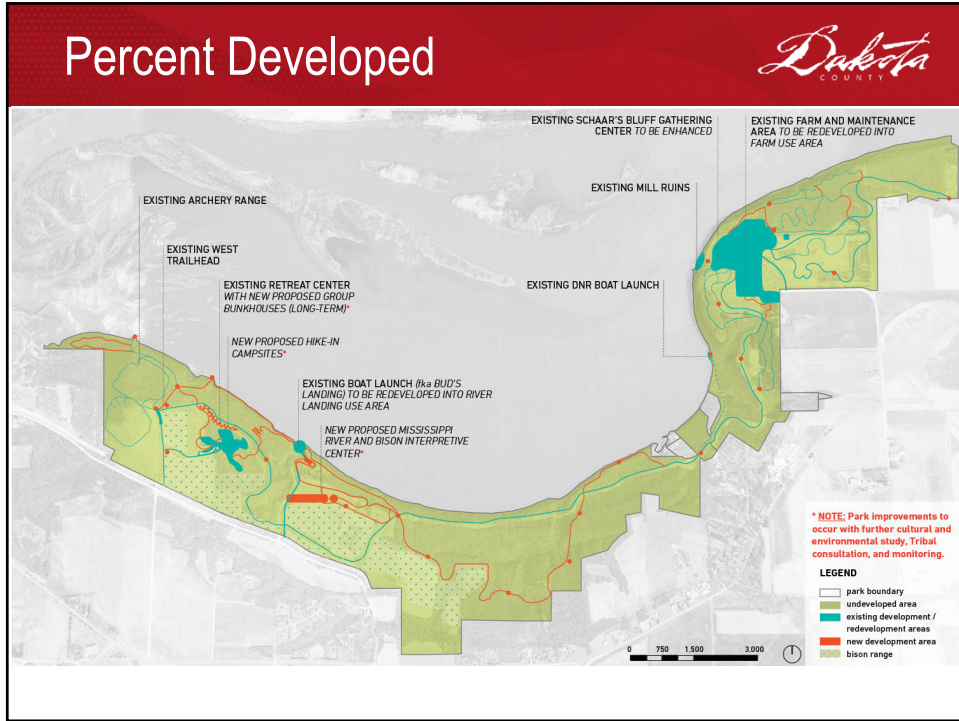
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Requested Action



Recommendation to the Physical Development Committee of the Whole to adopt the Spring Lake Park Reserve Master Plan and the Spring Lake Park Reserve Natural Resources Management Plan and authorization to submit the Spring Lake Park Reserve Master Plan to the Metropolitan Council for Approval.

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