



*ThreeRivers*  
PARK DISTRICT

# Policy Statement

*January 2007*

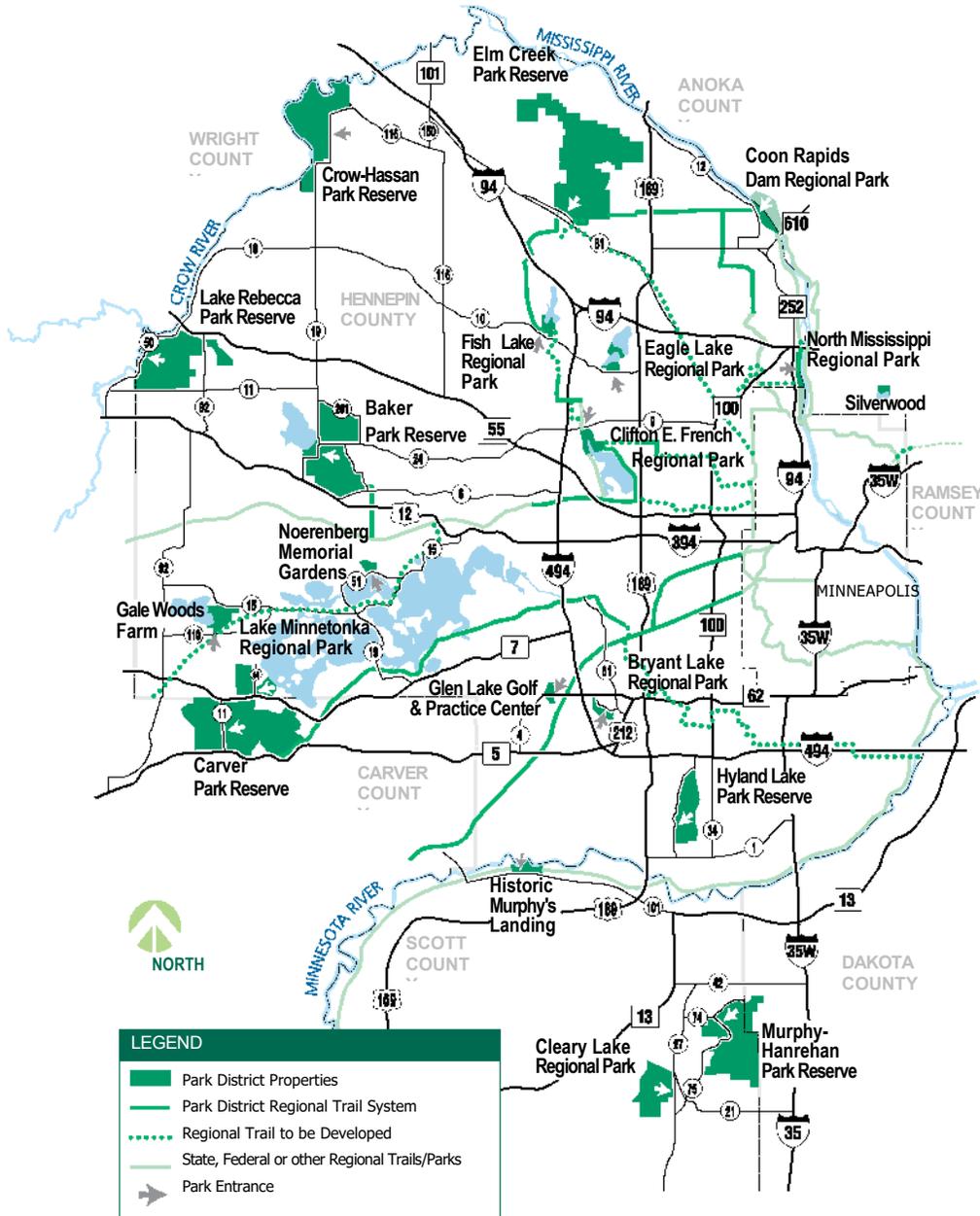


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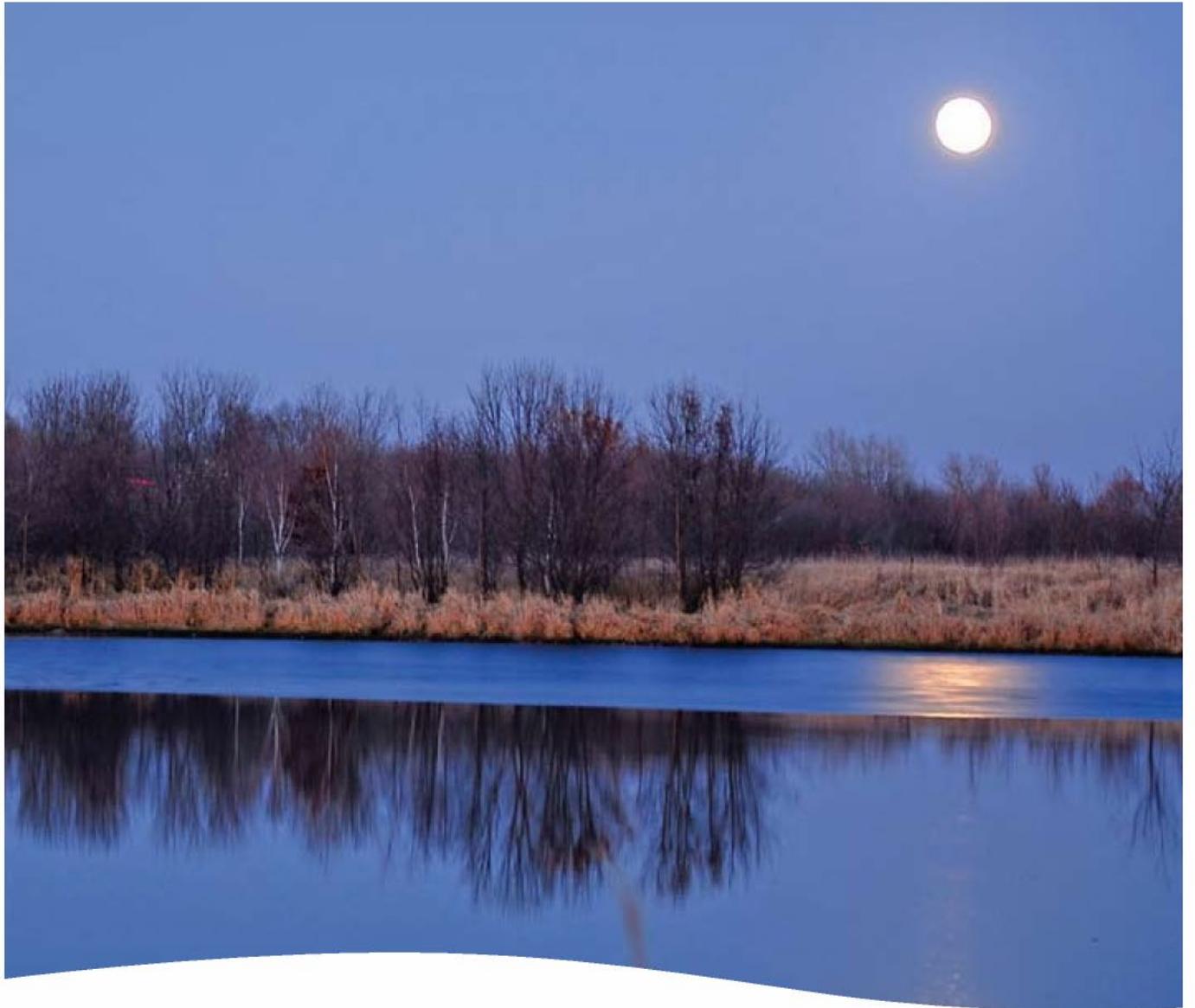


# Three Rivers

## PARK DISTRICT



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## PREFACE

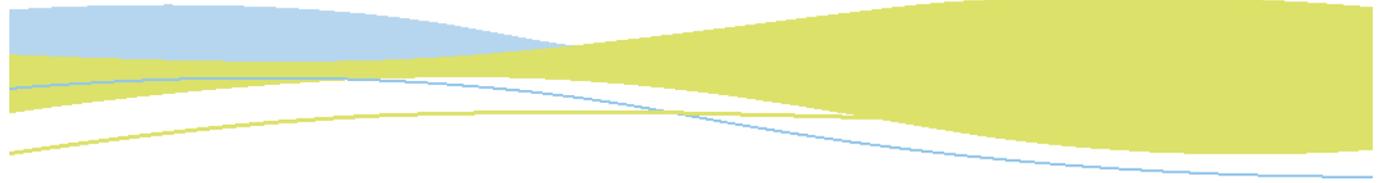
Three Rivers Park District was established by the State Legislature in 1957 and is the only special park district in Minnesota. The legal name was changed in 1986 to Suburban Hennepin Regional Park District with a common name of Hennepin Parks. In 2004, the Park District again changed its common name to Three Rivers Park District to reflect that all park properties are located in watersheds that flow into one of three rivers: the Mississippi, Minnesota or Crow river. In 2006, the legal name of the Park District was also changed from Suburban Hennepin Regional Park District to Three Rivers Park District. The Park District has grown from a county park system of 210 acres to a nationally renowned park system comprised of over 27,000 acres of park reserves, regional parks, regional trail corridors, and special recreation features. By 1993, use of the Park District grew to over 2 million visits. In 2007, at the time of this update, the Park District is projected to serve nearly 6 million park guests.

In 1967, the Board of Commissioners adopted its first Policy Statement as a guide for the future. Its major purpose is to provide Board interpretation of Minnesota State Statutes, Chapter 398, the Park District's enabling legislation, and establish those principles which the Park District should follow in the orderly continuation of governance, finance, planning, acquisition, development, and operations of the Park District. This Statement provides invaluable assistance to Park District Commissioners, District staff, and the general public in the acquisition, development and operation of the system.

The Policy Statement was revised in 1982 to reflect the Park District's change in primary focus from acquisition to development and operation and updated again in 1993 to reflect changes in the environmental, social, intergovernmental, and legal contexts within which the Board operated. The underlying principles and concepts of these Policy Statements are generally as appropriate today as they were years ago and have been utilized as a foundation on which to develop a revised Policy Statement that will serve now and into the future. Some of the major areas of policy that have been updated or addressed more fully within this Policy Statement are: The identification and description of components of the system of parks; master plan components and the planning process; current intergovernmental relationships; continued commitment to protecting and preserving parkland and stewardship of natural resources; and updating legal and administrative terms and requirements.

This Policy Statement, after intensive review and thoughtful deliberation, has been approved by the Park District's Board of Commissioners. It reaffirms the Park District's purpose under Minnesota Statutes, Chapter 398, and is built upon concepts of the previous Policy Statements. A statement of policy is, of course, not an immutable law, but it does establish Board guidelines for planning and operating the Park District and provides direction for decision making now and in the future.

the **mission** of  
the Park District  
is to promote  
environmental  
stewardship through  
recreation and education  
in a **natural**  
resources-based  
park system.



## THREE RIVERS PARK DISTRICT

WHEREAS, the Three Rivers Park District Board of Commissioners is charged under Minnesota Statutes, Chapter 398, with the responsibilities of acquisition, development, and maintenance of large parks, wildlife sanctuaries, historical sites, forests and other reserves, and means for public access to lakes, rivers, and streams and to other natural phenomena for the benefit and the use of the citizens of suburban Hennepin County and the metropolitan area; and

WHEREAS, the Policy Statement has been created by the Board of Commissioners to interpret this enabling legislation and the Park District's Mission and Goals, setting forth the manner in which the Park System is to be acquired, developed, operated and managed, and providing Board and staff direction and guidance in dealing with issues affecting the Park District; and

WHEREAS, the Policy Statement, although designed to provide long-standing policy direction having been originally adopted in 1967 and amended in 1982 and 1993, has at this time been identified by the Board of Commissioners as needing amendment to better reflect the Park District's system of parks and master planning processes, current intergovernmental relationships; continued commitment to protecting and preserving parkland and stewardship of natural resources; and updating legal and administrative terms and requirements; and

WHEREAS, the Board of Commissioners of the Three Rivers Park District, after careful review and study, including solicitation and consideration of public comment, has compiled a revised Policy Statement for the guidance of this Board, future Boards, and staff;

NOW, THEREFORE, LET IT BE RESOLVED, THAT THIS POLICY STATEMENT AS AMENDED IS HEREBY ADOPTED BY THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF THE THREE RIVERS PARK DISTRICT, AND THAT SUCH AMENDED POLICY STATEMENT CONSTITUTES THE GENERAL POLICY FRAMEWORK UNDER WHICH THE BOARD WILL EXERCISE ITS AUTHORITY AND RESPONSIBILITY AND LET IT BE FURTHER RESOLVED, THAT THIS BOARD HEREBY REQUESTS FUTURE BOARDS TO ALTER, AMEND, CHANGE, DELETE, OR ADD TO SAID POLICY STATEMENT ONLY AFTER CAREFUL CONSIDERATION AND STUDY BY ALL MEMBERS OF SAID BOARD.

Adopted this fourth day of January, 2007.

Joan Peters  
Marilynn Corcoran  
Rosemary Franzese  
Mark Haggerty  
Dale Woodbeck  
Sara Wyatt

# POLICY I – PURPOSE OF THE PARK DISTRICT

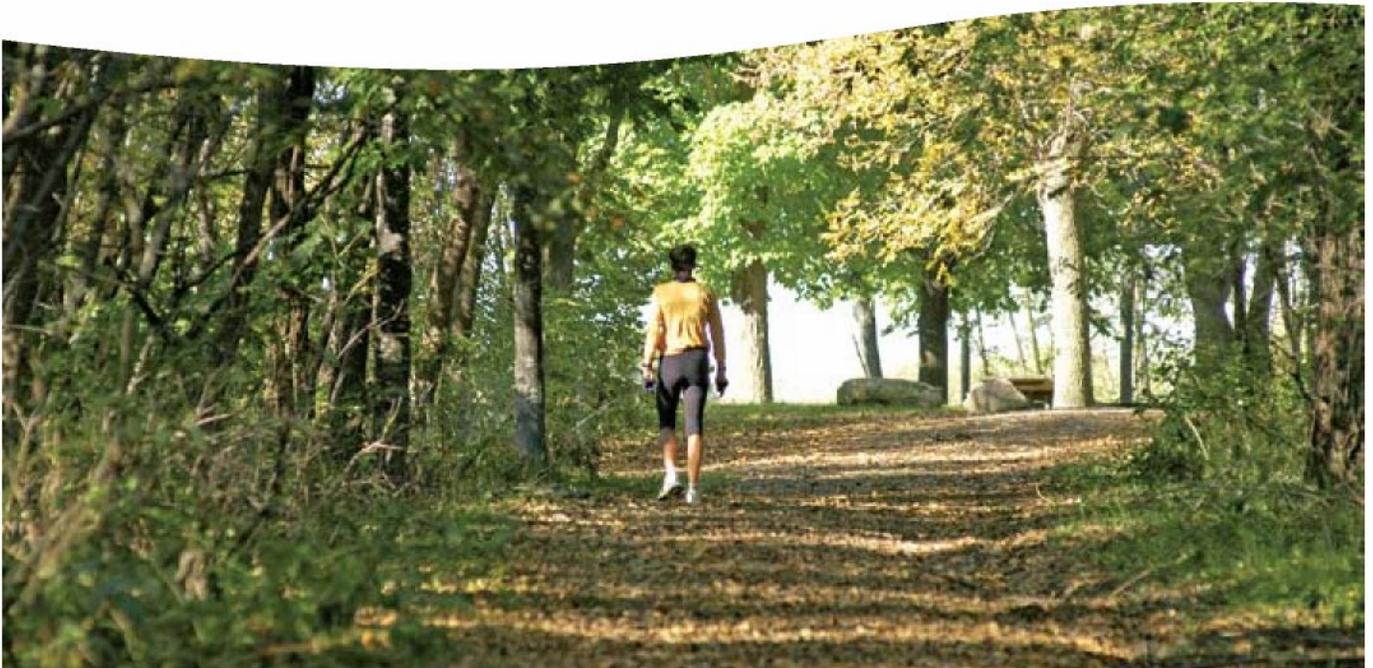
## DISCUSSION

Three Rivers Park District was created in 1957, pursuant to Minnesota Statutes, Chapter 398, legislation enabling the creation of single and multi-county park districts. The primary duty of park district boards, pursuant to Minnesota Statutes, Chapter 398, is “not the establishment of parks and playgrounds of a local or neighborhood type but rather the acquisition, development and maintenance of large parks, wildlife sanctuaries, forest and other reservations, and means for public access to historic sites and to lakes, rivers, streams, and to other natural phenomena.”

The Park District’s tax base is Suburban Hennepin County; as such, the Park District has a primary responsibility to these constituents. The Park District also receives supplementary funds for operations and maintenance, and capital improvements from the state as support to the Metropolitan Area regional park system; therefore, the Park District also recognizes its obligations to serve citizens of the region.

## POLICY

The mission of the Park District is to promote environmental stewardship through recreation and education in a natural resources-based park system.



# POLICY II – FORM OF GOVERNMENT

## DISCUSSION

Since it was created, pursuant to Minnesota Statutes, Chapter 398, Three Rivers Park District has operated as a special park district, having the powers of a municipal corporation at common law. This form of governance has proved to be an effective, efficient, responsive, and publicly accountable means of achieving the Park District’s purpose.

## POLICY

The Board advocates the maintenance of, and continuous strengthening of, the form of governing structure for the Park District which permits autonomous action in the affairs of providing park and recreation services and the governing of the properties necessary to provide that service.

## POLICY III – ROLE IN INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

### DISCUSSION

The Legislature has granted the Board of Commissioners full power and authority to acquire and establish parks and to operate, maintain, protect, improve, and preserve the park system. Three Rivers Park District is governed by other laws, passed subsequent to Minnesota Statutes, Chapter 398, pertaining to its responsibilities in relation to other governmental units. Legislation adopted in 1985 provides that two of the seven Park District commissioners are appointed by the Hennepin County Board. In addition, legislation requires that the Park District submit its annual operating budget to the Hennepin County Board and provides the Hennepin County Board with the authority to modify the budget on a line-item basis. The Park District Board may, however, override any such modification by at least five votes.

In 1974, the Legislature passed the Metropolitan Parks Act which mandated the Metropolitan Council the responsibility for adopting a system plan for regional recreation open space and for funding, acquisition, development and redevelopment of the system through bond sales authorized by the Legislature. In 1985, additional legislation was passed authorizing the state's participation in operations and maintenance funding for the regional park system. Three Rivers Park District, the counties other than Hennepin in the Metropolitan Area, and the cities of Minneapolis, St. Paul, and Bloomington are designated as implementing agencies under the law and, as such, are to prepare master plans for regional recreation open space under their jurisdiction and to acquire, develop, and operate these parklands. The Park District has assumed its role as an implementing agency in the regional system along with fulfilling its responsibility under Chapter 398.

The Park District has entered into cooperative agreements with various other units of government for the purpose of working together to achieve common objectives. In addition to these legally mandated and formally agreed upon intergovernmental relationships, the Park District is also cognizant of the importance of its relationships with other governmental units as related to the Park District's responsibilities. While always keeping the Park District's interests in the forefront, and responsibly protecting the public's investment in District parkland, the Board seeks to cooperate with other governmental units in the accomplishment of common goals.

### POLICIES

#### A. Relationship with the Hennepin County Board of Commissioners

The Park District will work cooperatively with the Hennepin County Board of Commissioners to ensure quality county and regional parks and recreation services for the citizens of Suburban Hennepin County.

#### B. Role in the Regional Recreation Open Space System

The Park District recognizes the value of a Regional Recreation Open Space System in the metropolitan area as a means of acquiring, preserving, protecting, and developing a comprehensive system of parks for public use by metropolitan area residents. This regional system in many ways serves needs for the metropolitan area as does the state park system for out-state residents. The Park District will support a regional park system in a manner that insures that the Park District's tax-paying constituency receives fair consideration in the distribution of state and regional financial resources available to the regional park system.



### **C. Intergovernmental Relations**

The Park District will develop relationships with local, regional, federal, and special units of government for the governance, planning, acquisition, development, financing, and operations of the Park District. Where advisable, the Park District may contract with or enter joint powers agreements with other local governments.

The Park District will maintain communications with these governmental units on matters of local significance, and encourage reciprocal action with regard to matters which have the potential for affecting the Park District. The Park District will also guard the powers granted to it by the Legislature to carry out its mission and duties. The Park District's powers are not subject to revocation or veto by other units of local government.

### **D. Legislative and State Agency Relationships**

Three Rivers Park District was created by the Legislature and is affected by its decisions. As such it is in the best interest of the Park District and its constituents to keep legislative representatives informed of significant Park District matters and seek support for initiatives affected by the Legislature.

The Park District shares common goals with and/or is affected by the decisions of various state agencies. The Park District will communicate and coordinate with state agencies, as appropriate, to further the mission of the Park District and ensure that operations are consistent with requirements.



# POLICY IV – ESTABLISHMENT OF THE SYSTEM

## DISCUSSION

In planning for a system of parks, policies are necessary to ensure that the purpose of the system is kept in the forefront and that the acquisition, development, and operation of elements of the system are accomplished in an orderly and uniform manner. The attempt will be made to balance both recreational opportunities and environmental concerns within the Park District's system of parks. To accomplish this, it has been recognized by the Board that a diversified and comprehensive system of parks, outdoor recreation facilities, and services is necessary.

The Park District's parkland classification system includes regional park reserves, regional parks, regional trails, and regional special recreation features. The regional park reserve is the primary element in the system; these areas ensure the preservation of natural resources for the enjoyment of present and future generations. The other elements of the system serve to protect the regional park reserves by providing area for intensive and special recreation uses.

Regional trails serve dual recreation and transportation functions, while fulfilling their purpose of connecting and providing access to regional recreation facilities. In addition, these corridors provide linkages with local trail systems and the opportunity for safely accommodating non-motorized modes of transportation within and between communities. Accordingly, the Park District will endeavor to work with other recreation and transportation agencies to coordinate efforts.

Pursuant to its enabling legislation, the Park District has the authority to acquire lands both within and outside of Hennepin County where suitable natural resources exist to fulfill the mission of the Park District. Depending on the location and method of acquisition, certain local approvals may be required.

## POLICIES

### A. Balanced System

The Park District will endeavor to create an equitable distribution of park resources and facilities designed to serve the outdoor recreation needs and interests of its constituents, taking into consideration existing and planned local, regional, state and privately-owned park resources and facilities within and impacting on its jurisdiction so as not to unnecessarily duplicate the efforts of other agencies.

### B. Needs and Interests

The planning, acquisition, development, and operations of the Park District will reflect the changing outdoor recreation needs and interests of the people balanced with the need to protect and preserve natural resources.

### C. Parkland Classification

All parklands which are, or become, a part of the system, will be classified as follows:

- Regional Park Reserves

Regional Park Reserves provide, protect and manage representative areas of the original major landscape types in the metropolitan area for the purposes of conservation, outdoor recreation, and to perpetuate appreciation and enjoyment by the public. The minimum size is 1,000 acres with a desirable size being 2,000 acres or more. As a legacy to future generations and to establish and maintain an uncompromising sense of nature, 80 percent of each regional park reserve will be restored to and retained in a natural state as a viable entity, permitting up to 20 percent to be developed for compatible active recreational use.

- **Regional Parks**

Regional parks provide a diversity of nature-based resources that can accommodate a wide variety of compatible outdoor recreation uses. Access to water bodies suitable for recreation is particularly important. The minimum park size is 100 acres of land, with a preferable site size of 200 or more acres of land. Regional parks are not subject to the 80/20 percent development policies as established for park reserves; however, active recreation areas in regional parks should be developed in a manner that maintains sufficient natural areas to ensure quality outdoor recreation experiences.

- **Regional Trails**

Regional trails provide for recreational travel along linear pathways. Trails may be located along either natural or built features, and should be of sufficient width to enhance the enjoyment and safety of users. When possible, regional trails should link Park District facilities. Non-linking regional trails that pass through outstanding natural resource areas serve as recreation destinations and are acceptable and desirable. Regional trails should also serve as an important component of the multi-modal transportation network. Adjacent land with significant features may be acquired as a means of protecting the natural environment.

- **Regional Special Recreation Features**

Regional special recreation features provide unique regional recreation opportunities that are not generally found in regional parks, regional park reserves, or regional trails. Sites may also provide for the preservation, authentic presentation, and interpretation of elements of historical, cultural, archeological, or paleontological significance. The factors of public demand, public support, financial feasibility (capital and operating), county-wide or regional significance, and the inherent recreational or cultural aspects of the project will be investigated prior to the designation as a special recreation feature. They may occur within existing Park District facilities or separately.



# POLICY V – DISTRICT FINANCE

## DISCUSSION

The citizens of suburban Hennepin County have assumed primary financial responsibility for the acquisition, development, and operations of the Park District. Pursuant to the Park District's enabling legislation, taxes levied on property within suburban Hennepin County have been the Park District's main source of operating funds. Operating funds have been supplemented by revenue derived from fees and charges, grants, and gifts.

With regard to capital funds, the Park District originally relied on its own bonding authority with some federal and state assistance. With the creation of the Metropolitan Regional Park System in 1974, the Metropolitan Council, through State authorized bonding programs, became the primary source of capital funds. In the late 1980s, funding available through the Metropolitan Council diminished substantially; thus the Park District began to revert to a greater level of self-sufficiency for acquisition and development funds. In addition, private support, such as donation of land and money, has contributed significantly to the growth and development of the Park District.

Over the past 50 years, the Park District has evolved from an agency primarily dedicated to the acquisition and preservation of parklands to one that focuses on recreational development and operations, while standing firm on its environmental stewardship mission. Also over this time, the Park District's growing infrastructure is aging and there is a recognized need for thoughtful and methodical rehabilitation and in some cases redevelopment of facilities to serve expanded or changed functions. The Park District faces an ongoing challenge to ensure the adequacy of funding to meet these needs. Increased emphasis must be placed on fees and charges and other innovative means of generating revenue. Evaluation of the Park District's expenditures with regard to effectiveness, efficiency, and public accountability should continue to be of high priority.

The Board recognizes the value of formal financial planning as a sound policy directive to guide the administration of Park District financial resources. The Financial Management Plan is designed to protect and optimize the use of financial resources in the best interest of the public and to maintain a high standard of financial integrity for the Park District.

## POLICIES

### A. Financial Management Plan

The Park District Board of Commissioners will adopt and maintain a Financial Management Plan. The Plan will establish programs and procedures that will enable the Park District to continue to operate according to sound fiscal practice.

### B. Tax Supported Financing

The Park District will rely largely upon taxation for operating revenue commensurate with responsibilities for providing quality recreation opportunities and stewardship of park resources.

### C. Fees and Charges

As a publicly financed park system, the Park District will provide a basic level of service free to the public. However, fees and charges and other methods of recovering costs are considered to be a responsible and necessary means to supplement tax revenue and regulate park use where appropriate.

In establishing fees and charges, the Park District will determine the direct costs of providing services and establish goals to recover those costs. The appropriate level of cost recovery will be based on an assessment of who is benefiting from the service provided. If the benefit is accruing to the community as a whole, it is appropriate to use taxpayer dollars to wholly or primarily fund the service. Examples of services that primarily provide community benefits are hiking and biking trails, play areas, general picnic areas, and large natural areas.

As the benefit is increasingly accruing to an individual or select group of individuals, it is appropriate to charge fees for the service at an increasing rate of cost recovery. Leader-led programs, facilities and equipment that visitors can exclusively use, and products and services that may be purchased provide examples where user fees are appropriate.

The Park District will also consider available resources, public need, public acceptance, and the community economic climate when establishing fees and charges. In cases where certain programs and facilities are highly specialized by activity and design and appeal to a select user group, the Park District will additionally consider fees charged by competitive services. Fees and charges can be set to recover costs in excess of direct and indirect costs, where appropriate, as a method of funding other service subsidies.

The Park District may subsidize the cost recovery objective of services for persons with economic need or for other targeted populations, as determined by the Board, through tax-supported fee reductions, scholarships, grants, or other methods. The Board may also approve exceptional fees or fee waivers upon determinations that such fee arrangements will benefit the public interest.

#### **D. Special Revenue Facilities**

Certain facilities, as determined by the Board, will be operated as special revenue facilities. Sites operated in this manner are intended to generate revenue to meet a portion of all operating costs, or revenue in excess of operating costs, as designated by the Board.

#### **E. Funding Acquisition, Improvements and Rehabilitation**

The Park District will utilize a variety of sources for funding acquisition, improvement, and rehabilitation of parkland and park facilities. The Park District will seek local, regional, state, and federal grants for these purposes where available. The Park District will seek private grants, where deemed appropriate. The Park District will also issue its own general obligation and/or revenue bonds to accomplish these objectives.

#### **F. Supplemental Funding**

The Park District will seek local, regional, state, federal, and private grants and other funding sources to supplement funding for the operating and natural resources management activities of the Park District. The Park District will also issue bonds to fund capital equipment and technology improvements.

#### **G. Gifts**

Gifts of personal and real property will be encouraged and accepted if consistent with the overall plans and in the interest of the Park District. Where applicable, the Park District will make available the opportunity for donors to include a stipend creating a perpetual trust for the continued care and maintenance of the gift. Monetary contributions will also be encouraged. Gifts, which are not consistent with the overall plans of the Park District, may be accepted by the Board if they benefit the Park District by production of income or, in the case of land, may be used for trade or sale.

#### **H. Foundations for Parks**

The Board recognizes the value and encourages the development of park foundations and other philanthropic efforts to advance the purposes of the Park District and the regional recreation open space system.

# POLICY VI – SYSTEM/MASTER/PROJECT PLANNING

## DISCUSSION

The Board of Commissioners is committed to the comprehensive planning of all Park District areas and facilities through a multi-level planning process that includes a District-wide System Plan, individual master plans, and specific project plans.

All three levels of planning will reflect consideration of the Park District’s commitment to the preservation of natural resources by serving as a highly visible-living example of respect for the environment.

## POLICIES

### A. System Plan

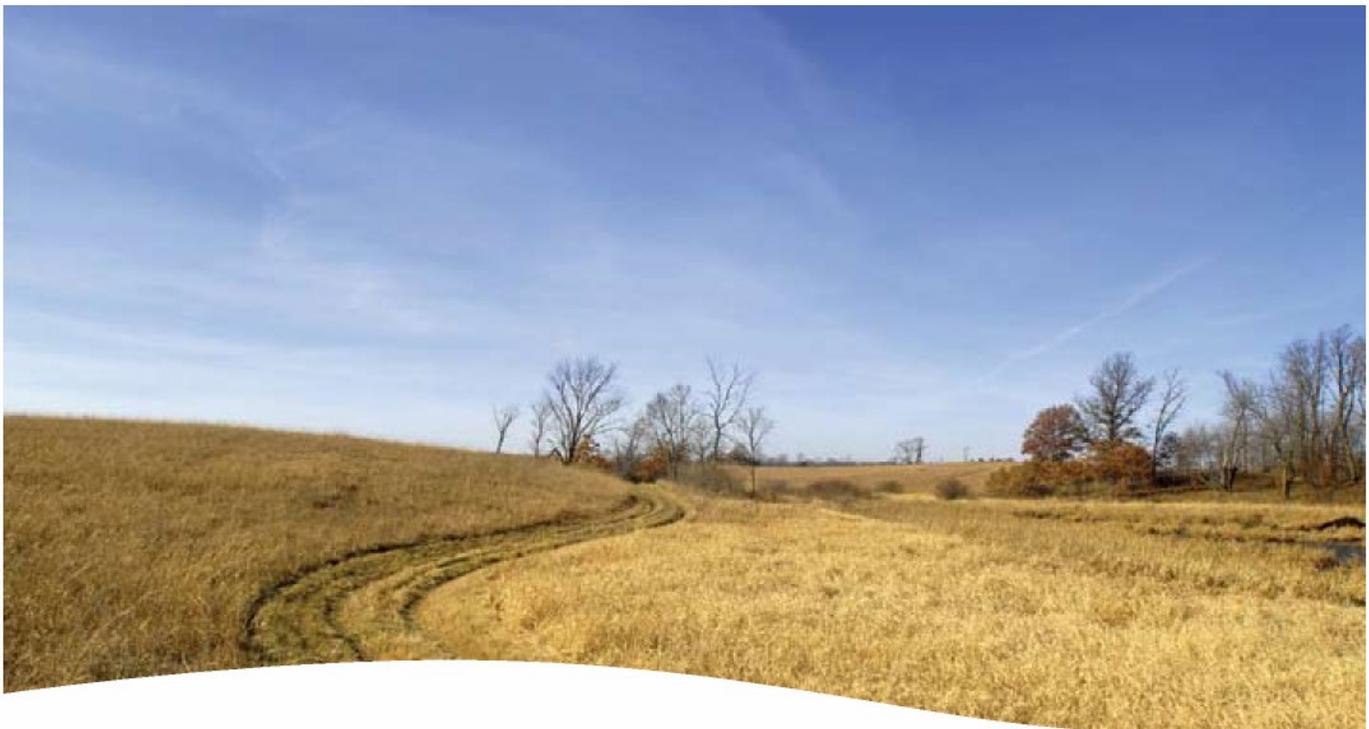
The Park District will develop and maintain a System Plan that identifies the number, type, size and distribution of parks, trails, and facilities across the geographic boundaries of the Park District. The System Plan will make assessments, set goals and objectives and broad implementation strategies comprehending current and potential needs. The System Plan will be updated every five years.

### B. Master Plans

Every regional park reserve, regional park, regional trail, and regional special recreation feature will have a Board approved master plan. Each Park District unit’s master plan will establish the appropriate parkland classification, natural resources management zones and objectives, and outdoor recreation development and operation concepts. All changes to an existing master plan will be reviewed and approved by the Board. Pursuant to the Metropolitan Regional Parks Policy Plan, master plans, and subsequent changes will be submitted to the Metropolitan Council when required. Opportunity for review of master plans by affected political subdivisions or by other agencies as required by law will be provided. Master plans should be updated to reflect approved changes.

### C. Project Plans

Development and rehabilitation of facilities will be based on a project plan. Project plans are guided by the master plan and account for specific program needs and operations, natural resources, and technical considerations.



# POLICY VII – LAND ACQUISITION

## DISCUSSION

The Board of Commissioners will seek to acquire suitable resources to meet Three Rivers Park District’s purposes as outlined in the legislative direction provided in Minnesota Statutes, Chapter 398, and in accordance with the Park District System Plan and Park Master Plans. Also, pursuant to Chapter 398, the Park District will notify and obtain consent of an incorporated city to acquire by purchase or condemnation land that is located within its boundaries. When acquiring property, it is the preference of the Board to work with owners for the mutual benefit of both parties. The Park District will also endeavor to acquire land by donation, gift, or devise. Gifts of parkland are desirable when they are identified within or compatible with the Park District’s System Plan. If not, the property can be accepted or sold with the resulting revenues used to further the Park District’s mission.

## POLICIES

### A. Method of Acquisition

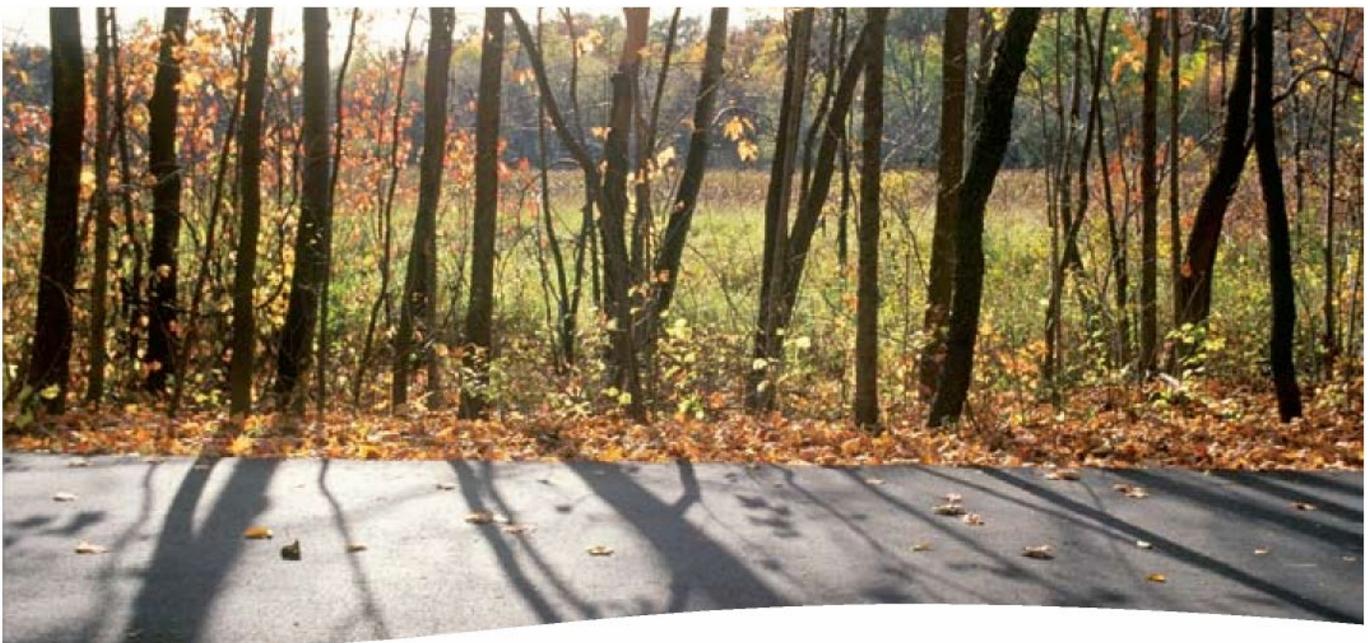
The Board will adopt an acquisition plan which will delineate the process for the acquisition of inholdings and other properties designated in the System Plan. The acquisition plan will establish criteria for evaluating and prioritizing potential acquisitions and recommended acquisition strategies. Negotiations for the acquisition of lands will be based upon appraisals by qualified appraisers. An attempt will be made to acquire land by direct negotiations. As deemed necessary by the Board, in cases to clear title or where negotiations have reached an impasse, the power of eminent domain may be utilized. Where consistent with master plans, various provisions of occupancy and/or other interim use provisions may be offered when acquiring property.

### B. Park Boundaries

To protect parkland from undesirable encroachments or negative environmental impacts, park boundaries, wherever possible, will coincide with natural or existing features such as roads, water bodies and/or delimiting topography or vegetation.

### C. Parkland Donation

Any land offered as a gift, devise, or otherwise may be accepted if it is in the best interest of the Park District and if it is devoid of limiting conditions except those consented to by the Park District. As required by law, the terms of any trust agreement shall be approved by the District Court before acceptance by the Board.



# POLICY VIII – NATURAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT

## DISCUSSION

The Park District's system of parks has been designed to protect and preserve natural settings while at the same time satisfying the public demand for outdoor recreation opportunity. In order to preserve natural areas in perpetuity, and yet make them accessible to the general public, an active program of natural resources management, rather than an attitude of passive protection, is necessary. Natural resources management practices may also be necessary as a means of protecting the health and safety of the public.

The primary goal of natural resources management efforts is to restore, preserve and protect natural resources and native wildlife populations, consistent with parkland classification.

## POLICIES

### A. Parkland Restoration and Management

The Park District will preserve parklands consistent with parkland classification. Appropriate management techniques will be utilized to create, restore and/or maintain natural and other desirable landscapes, including prairies, woods, and wetlands, using native species where practical. Exotic or invasive plants may be controlled to protect native habitats for the health and safety of the public.

### B. Wildlife Management

The Park District will provide for preservation of native wildlife within its holdings consistent with parkland classification. Appropriate management techniques will be utilized to restore, maintain or control selected wildlife populations.

### C. Water Resources Management

The Park District will preserve and protect the ecological and recreational quality of lakes, streams, wetlands, and surface and ground water resources within and contiguous to its holdings. Appropriate management techniques will be utilized in accordance with a Water Resources Management Plan.

### D. Resource Planning and Land Use Zones

The Park District plans and manages its land using a system of three land-use zones: lakes and wetlands, recreational development areas and natural areas. Each land-use zone has specific development guidelines and is defined as:

- **Lakes and Wetlands**

The Park District's lakes and wetlands will be classified according to their intended use and managed to support that use. Water quality criteria or standards are assigned to each classification category.

- **Recreational Development Areas**

Recreational development areas have high recreational potential and represent those areas where the most extensive and intensive recreational development and active use will occur. Natural resources within these areas are managed to provide a setting which is safe and attractive and can withstand intensive recreational use.

Within regional park reserves, up to 20 percent of the upland base (excluding lakes and most wetlands) can be zoned as recreational development areas. Regional parks and trail corridors have no restrictions on the percentage of land base that is allowed for recreational development. However, the Park District recognizes the importance of maintaining high-quality natural resources within regional parks and trails. Regional special recreation features will have specialized zoning plans consistent with the site master plan.

- **Natural Areas**

All areas within regional park reserves not zoned as lakes, wetlands or recreational development areas are zoned as natural areas. At least 80 percent of the upland acreage of a park reserve must be zoned as natural area. Natural processes and desirable ecological change should be allowed to take place, except where management techniques must be used to mitigate human influence or to maintain desired successional stages. Dispersed recreational facilities such as turf or paved trails may pass through the natural areas as long as they do not compromise significant natural resources. Significant natural resources occur within the natural areas and are managed as three sub-zones:

- **Key Environmental Components**

Key environmental components are specific natural features of the metropolitan area and are primary factors in the identification and designation of regional park reserves. Natural features include prime examples of historic regional landscapes, endangered or rare species, aquatic systems, plant communities, other unique features, or combinations of these features. Designated areas include existing natural resources and may include areas undergoing restoration of a significant natural feature. The designation of key environmental components is intended to protect significant natural resources from degradation.

- **Wildlife Preservation Areas**

Wildlife preservation areas are sensitive ecological areas which are closed to the public during certain times of the year (primarily spring and summer) to assure that habitats for sensitive wildlife species are protected from disturbance during critical times in their life cycles (mating, nesting, rearing of young). While trails may be allowed in wildlife preservation areas, they may be closed seasonally to use. Year-round recreational activities and facilities are not allowed in areas under this classification.

- **sanctuaries**

Sanctuaries are areas designed to protect significant plant communities and associated wildlife from the impacts of human activity. Development is not permitted and natural resource management is specialized to address specific plant community and/or wildlife needs. Visitation by people is permitted only on a very limited basis for scientific investigation, educational instruction, or management requirements.

## **E. Temporary Protection Zones**

Temporary Protection Zones are other areas that may have to be closed temporarily to protect bird species of concern or special interest that nest outside of the Environmental Preservations Areas and Sanctuaries but still within the Natural Areas. Maintaining this flexibility to cope with the unexpected is critical to preserving wildlife as the Park District seeks to increase recreational development.



# POLICY IX – RECREATION USE

## DISCUSSION

The parklands of Three Rivers Park District have been set aside for the recreational and educational enjoyment of the citizens of suburban Hennepin County and the State of Minnesota and for the preservation and protection of natural resources. It is the intent of the Park District to meet both county and regional outdoor recreation interests and needs within its system of parks.

Policy B in this section establishes those general-interest outdoor recreation activities that are considered basic system activities. They are outdoor recreation activities that attract a large number of people, are enhanced by the natural resource environment, and are consistent with general-public regional park activities as identified in the Metropolitan Regional Park System Development Guide/Policy Plan. These are the system activities that are considered primary in the master planning process. Special uses may be accommodated within parklands if determined by the Board to be appropriate based on the evaluation criteria delineated in Policy C. Board approved special-use or special-interest recreational activities may be located at only one park unit, or geographically dispersed among regional parkland in a manner that reflects demand, the suitability of natural resources to support the activity, and consideration of operational efficiency and economy.

## POLICIES

### A. Park District's Role in the Provision of Recreational Activity

The Park District will provide areas and facilities that enable the public to participate in recreational activities that take place in or emphasize the natural setting and are suitably provided for within Park District resources. Emphasis will be placed on activities that have broad general recreational appeal and are participant-oriented. The Park District will stress the provision of opportunities for recreational uses that occur on a self-directed basis. Such areas, facilities, and programs provided by the Park District are intended to serve a regional user base and should complement activities provided by other outdoor recreation areas, and not unnecessarily duplicate those offered by local recreation agencies. Recreational uses will add to an individual's physical and mental health and well-being.

### B. General-Interest Recreational Activities

The following activities will be planned for throughout the system, consistent with parkland classification as follows:

- **Regional Park Reserve**

Regional park reserves are intended to provide areas for natural resources, open space, and wildlife observation and appreciation. Access to the 80 percent natural area is limited to those designated uses that have minimal impact on natural resources and wildlife. Activities for which major developments or facilities may be provided within the 20 percent active-use area may include, but not be limited to: picnicking, swimming, camping, boating, fishing, trail uses, nature interpretation, creative play, off-leash dog exercise, archery, and low-organized field games. Specialized activities such as downhill skiing, ski jumping, and golf may also be supported by facilities within regional park reserves.

- **Regional Park**

Activities for which major developments or facilities may be provided include: picnicking, golf, swimming, camping, boating, fishing, trail uses, creative play, off-leash dog exercise, archery, and low-organized field games. Regional parks may also provide areas for a diversity of other active outdoor recreation uses.

- **R e g i o n a l T r a i l C o r r i d o r** A variety of compatible trail uses may occur. Multiple use and multi-season use should be considered.

- **Regional Special Recreation Features**

Regional special recreation features support recreational activities that have a limited and specific purpose. The primary use is that for which the site is established or acquired and may include, but is not limited to, historical and cultural interpretation, gardens, and agricultural education. Other activities may be permitted if they are compatible with the major use intent of the facility and management objectives such as revenue generation, multi-season use and facility promotion.

- **System Planned Special Uses**

Activities other than those listed as system activities are permitted if consistent with management objectives and not prohibited under the Park District's Ordinances as determined by the process delineated in Policy C.

### **C. Special Interest Recreation Activities**

The Park District will endeavor to provide for activities that have limited public participation, require special rules for using parkland, and are not planned for as a system activity. Appropriateness will be determined based on the Park District's parkland classification system, Park District Ordinances, and through an analysis of the following criteria: demand and need, exclusiveness, facility availability, natural resources availability and limitations, need for exclusive permanent support structures, cost to the Park District, revenue potential, impact on other park users, risk to participants and other park users, wellness promotion, and emphasis of the natural setting.

### **D. Outdoor Education**

The Park District will provide a program of environmental education to teach school children and others, and impart to the public, the need to preserve and protect parklands, as well as the natural environment. In addition, the Park District is committed to providing recreational and educational experiences aimed at increasing the public's understanding, awareness and appreciation of the natural environment and encouraging the public to develop outdoor recreation skills. Appropriate areas of program services to accomplish these goals include: natural and cultural history interpretation, natural resources management, agricultural education, energy conservation, outdoor skills, individual outdoor pursuits, arts, crafts, and program-related entertainment.

### **E. Cooperation in Recreation Uses**

The Park District will encourage and provide opportunity for other agencies and organizations to use existing parklands and facilities of the Park District for appropriate recreational programs. The Park District will also, where appropriate and feasible, cooperate with other agencies and organizations in programming efforts.



# POLICY X – GENERAL OPERATIONS

## DISCUSSION

The Park District offers a wide variety of public services providing for full public use and enjoyment of Park District parklands. The preservation and protection of the environment is an overriding principle in determining how the Park District approaches its operation of the Park System. The Park District operates its parkland consistent with state and federal law, and in a manner that is considerate of the enjoyment and safety of park users. The Park District provides an internal public safety program to ensure these objectives, as well as to enrich visitor experiences through assistance, information and education. The following policies outline and clarify the Park District’s approach to certain priority programs.

## POLICIES

### A. Park District Ordinances

The Park District shall establish and enforce an Ordinance proclaiming rules and regulations necessary to govern the proper and safe use of all Park District properties and to preserve, protect, and enhance their scenic beauty, natural resources and wildlife.

### B. Marketing/Communications

The Park District will promote to all constituents the mission of the Park District and encourage the use of parklands, services, and facilities. The Park District is committed to using effective communications strategies to keep its constituents informed on a timely basis.

### C. Equal Opportunity

The outdoor recreational needs of all segments of the population will be considered in the planning of parks, facilities and programs. The Park District will not discriminate nor permit discrimination on the basis of race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, or status with regard to public assistance.

### D. Volunteers

The Park District recognizes the value of volunteers as a resource to enrich the services and programs of the Park District and, also, for the goodwill generated through citizen participation in the parks. Volunteerism is also recognized as an educational and recreational program because of the intrinsic benefits individuals gain from volunteering. The Park District will encourage and provide opportunities for the participation of volunteers.

### E. Public Safety

To ensure a safe, quality experience by park users, the Park District will provide for the protection of life and property of park users, Park District property, and natural resources.

### F. Environmental Stewardship

The Park District is committed to environmental stewardship and shall strive to be a role model of care and respect for the environment. In all aspects of planning and operations, the Park District will demonstrate this commitment by maximizing energy conservation, maintaining an aggressive recycling program, employing environmentally responsible operational practices, and promoting environmental stewardship through programs, services and facilities.

### G. Design Standards

All new capital projects shall be designed and constructed in accordance with local, state, federal, and other guidelines, rules or standards that prevail.

## H. Energy Generation

The Park District may make available the use of potential energy-producing resources for energy generation upon satisfactory determination of feasibility and need, taking into consideration the impact of the proposed energy-generating facility on park resources. The development and operation of the energy-generating facility will not significantly alter recreation or natural resources management objectives in the area the facility is located. If possible, the energy-generation operation will be interpreted for the educational benefit of park users. Any capital and/or operating costs resulting from an energy-generating facility should be recovered from the sale of the energy produced.

## I. Naming of Parks and Facilities

Parks or areas and facilities within parks will be named for a geographic, natural, or historic feature of that park, local folk usage, historic events, to commemorate people who have made outstanding contributions to the Park District, or persons of local historic or outstanding civic service.

## J. Sale of Concessions and Merchandise

The sale of concessions and merchandise will be permitted where consistent with the relative purpose and character of the park. The sale of concessions and merchandise will: contribute to management objectives, including service to park users; generate sufficient revenue to cover expenses for equipment, products, and supplies directly related to sales; and, where possible, generate revenue in excess of these direct costs.

## K. Privately-Sponsored Recreational Events

The Park District may facilitate privately-sponsored recreational events for community service purposes only if such events are independently planned and publicized, do not solicit participation by other park users, do not reflect endorsement by the Park District, and follow all park ordinances and special-use requirements. The sponsoring organization will be required to pay all normal service and special-use fees.

## L. Programming and Promotional Co-Sponsorship

The Park District recognizes the benefits of expanding its recreational/educational opportunities, special events programming and advertising, and promotional initiatives through cooperative programs with public agencies and private entities. The Park District may co-sponsor activities when the program is determined to substantially contribute to the Park District's program objectives and does not involve fundraising for purposes not directly related to the event. Reasonable fees may be charged for the event and shared with the co-sponsoring entity to cover operational and promotional costs. Businesses, agencies and individuals with whom the Park District co-sponsors events should not promote any political or social issues that are in conflict with the Park District's efforts to provide outdoor recreation activities that add to an individual's physical and mental health and well-being or its mission of sound natural resources management and stewardship.



## **M. Non-Recreational Commercial Use**

The Park District may permit non-recreational commercial use of park areas and facilities where such uses do not significantly affect normal park use, do not negatively impact park resources, and where not in conflict with other management objectives. Projects and advertising resulting from this use may not reflect any unapproved endorsement by the Park District. The sponsoring organization will be required to meet permit requirements and pay special-use fees.

## **N. Accessibility**

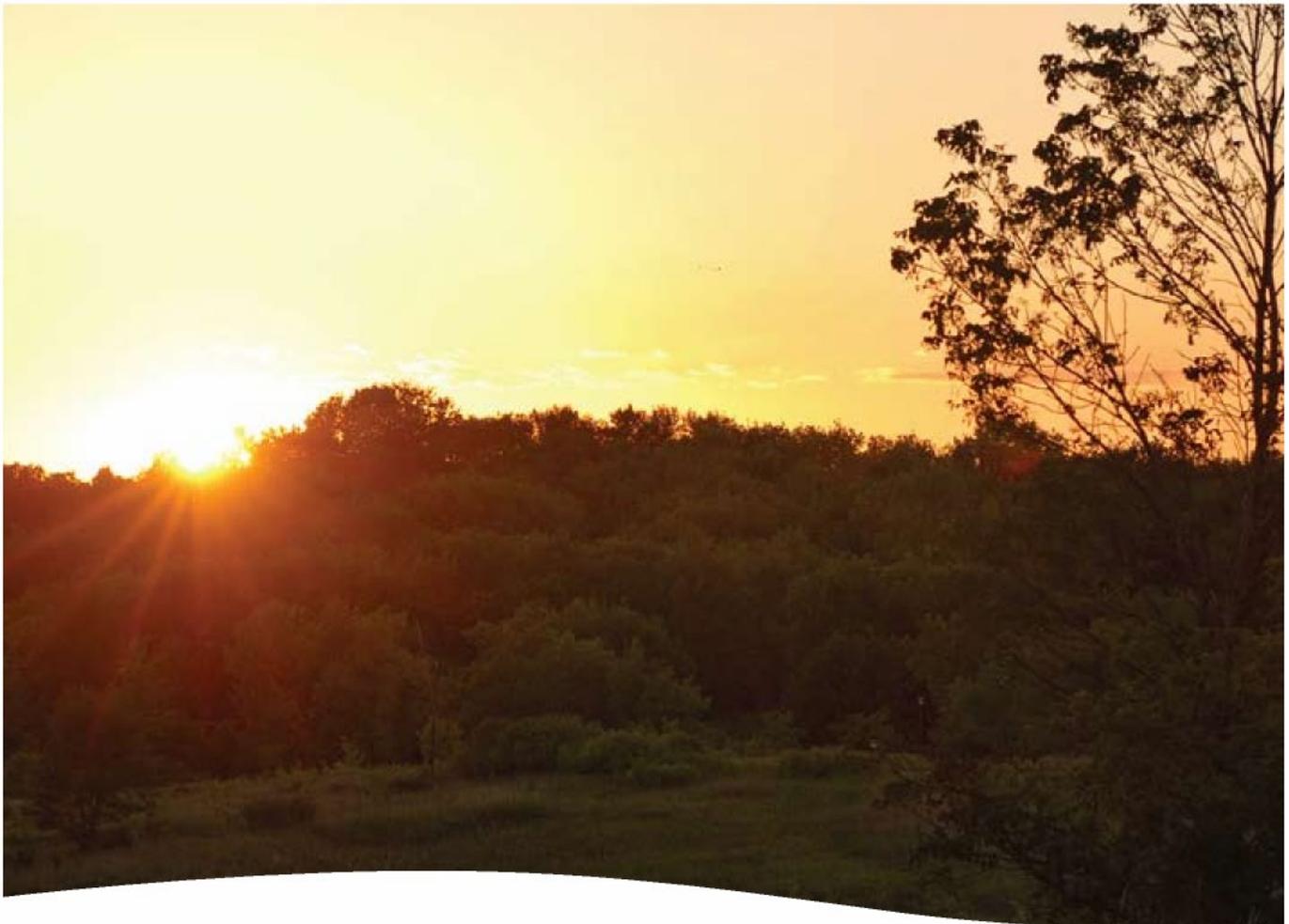
The Park District is committed to full application of the Americans with Disabilities Act to the services, programs and activities of the Park District. The Park District will inform the public of the accessibility levels of programs and facilities when appropriate, and will apply the concepts of universal design, wherever feasible, in development and redevelopment of areas and facilities.

## **O. Memorials**

The Park District will provide appropriate donor recognition for all gifts; however, it will not permit outdoor plaques or other public displays recognizing donations or memorials within park property unless approved by the Board.

## **P. Human Resources**

The Park District will enlist only non-discriminatory employment practices and provide a work environment free from all forms of protected-class discrimination and/or harassment. The Park District will implement its Human Resources program through the Human Resources Policies as adopted by the Board of Commissioners.



# POLICY XI – CONCESSIONAIRE OPERATIONS

## DISCUSSION

Discretion should be used in making decisions for concessionaire operations because the profit motive of a concessionaire-operator may in some cases conflict with Park District management purposes. The Park District's and park users' benefit from any concessionaire operation must be paramount.

## POLICY

Concessionaires may be considered an acceptable means of providing specified services in cases where the Board determines that this would be in the public interest. Concessionaire operations will be considered by the Board only if the following conditions are met:

- The Park District has determined that the proposed operation is a needed and desirable service to park users.
- The concessionaire operations are consistent with the relative purpose and character of the park in scope, mode of operation, and appearance. In no case shall an operation be permitted within the 80 percent natural area of a park reserve, or where it negatively impacts natural resources management objectives.
- The concessionaire agrees to abide by all requirements established by contract with the Park District including adequate supervision of the concessionaire operation, particularly with regard to pricing, quality, and objectives. The Park District will require fair compensation from concessionaire operations.
- Any major capital investments in or new construction of concessionaire-operated facilities will be permitted only in cases where a marketing study has shown the proposed operation to be economically feasible. In such cases, the Park District may permit concessionaires to make such investments on parklands with the stipulation that the investment will be amortized over a fixed period of time and any facilities and improvements shall become the sole property of the Park District at the end of the fixed time period. The concessionaire shall be subject to other stipulations as determined by the Board.



# POLICY XII - DIVERSIONS/ADJACENT LAND USE/INTERIM USES/DIVESTMENT

## DISCUSSION

As charged by its enabling legislation, Three Rivers Park District has as its primary duty the acquisition, development, and maintenance of large parks, wildlife sanctuaries, forest and other reservations, and means for public access to historic sites and to lakes, rivers and streams and to other natural phenomena. Also as charged by its enabling legislation, the Park District has acquired public lands to be held in perpetuity to carry out this mission and to conduct an outdoor recreation program for the enjoyment of present and future generations.

On occasion, individuals, institutions, and organizations, both public and private, have expressed interest in obtaining or diverting Park District lands for other purposes including: roadways, power transmission lines, waste disposal, sewers, signs, billboards, and buildings. The Board anticipates that similar requests for such non-park uses of the Park District parklands will increase as competition for lands surrounding and abutting Park District property will have greater effects on park resources including water quality, air quality, and general biotic conditions. Also, the impacts of noise, odor, and other disruptions will increase. The Park District will need to be proactive and work with a variety of public agencies and private interests to avoid, or at minimum mitigate, development impact on the Park District land and water resources.

## POLICIES

### A. Diversions of Parkland

The Board strongly opposes diversion of Park District property by any individual, institution or organization, public or private, for any purpose other than those for which the lands were acquired. Where proposed diversions of park property appear to be in the best interest of the Park District and where all other alternatives have been exhausted, and where the diversion poses no threat to the Park District's natural or recreational resources, and only under these conditions, requests will be taken under consideration by the Board on an individual basis.

In those instances where the Board determines that a proposed diversion upon Park District property may meet these conditions, easements, permits or conversions may be granted which include the following requirements:

- Restoration of any physical or natural property removed or damaged, or equivalent monetary compensation shall be provided.
- Compensation will reflect the impact of the intrusion on the aesthetic and recreational values of parkland as well as the market value of affected land measured by its highest and best use, and for associated administrative costs.
- In any case where conversion of Park District land to other uses is proposed, applicants must satisfy Metropolitan Council policies governing such conversions, including, but not limited to, the requirement that equally valuable land or facilities be exchanged.

### B. Encroachment Permit

The Park District will generally deny requests for temporary encroachment permits unless the project will result in a long-term benefit to the Park District. The Board will consider such applications only when the following conditions are met:

- All possible alternatives for the use of Park District land have been demonstrably exhausted;
- Only where the impact on the Park District is minimal and temporary;
- Restoration of Park District property is guaranteed;
- Satisfaction of all the conditions of the Park District's standard encroachment permit as well as any additional conditions.

# POLICY XIII – BOARD OPERATIONS

## DISCUSSION

The Board of Commissioners is the sole policy-making body for implementing Minnesota Statutes, Chapter 398, with regard to the operation of Three Rivers Park District. The Board determines Park District policy through Board actions adopted by a majority of the Board at public meetings. The following policies are designed to promote and protect the public interest and to facilitate public input.

## POLICIES

### A. Public Board Meetings

Meetings of the Board of Commissioners will be open to the public, with the exception of those held confidential under the terms of the Minnesota open meeting law, Minnesota Statutes 471.705.

### B. Public Participation

Public participation and input at all official Park District meetings will be encouraged and provided for in the development of the Park District System Plan, Master Plans, Policies, and Ordinances.

### C. Policy Revisions and Waivers

Revisions to these policies require the adoption of a resolution by majority vote of the entire Board of Commissioners only after two public hearings held upon sufficient published notice. Waivers to these policies require adoption of a resolution by a two-thirds vote of the entire Board of Commissioners. A resolution affecting a policy waiver may not be acted upon at the same regular Board meeting in which it is introduced, but may be acted upon at a subsequent regular meeting of the Board of Commissioners.

### D. Conflict of Interest

Park District Public Officials, who in the discharge of official duties, would be required to take an action or make a decision that would substantially affect the official's financial interests or those of an associated business, must disclose such interest to their immediate supervisor or, in the case of Commissioners, to the Chair of the Board of Commissioners, by filing a Potential Conflict of Interest Notice prior to such action or decision occurring. No public officials may be interested directly or indirectly in contracts entered into by the Park District. The official must abstain from influence over the action or decision in question.

For purposes of this policy, a Public Official is a person who holds an elected or appointed position on the Park District Board of Commissioners, or any employee.



### **C. Adjacent Land Use**

The Park District will continue to respect the property rights of owners of lands contiguous to Park District property. When specific uses are proposed regarding these lands, the Park District will analyze, comment on, and attempt to eliminate or minimize any negative impact of the proposed land use on adjacent parklands. The Park District seeks to work in cooperation with affected state and local units of government and governmental regulatory agencies in the development of land-use plans and regulations, which will protect park resources. The Park District will oppose any proposed land use that will result in the degradation of water quality in park water bodies below 1989 levels.

### **D. Interim Uses**

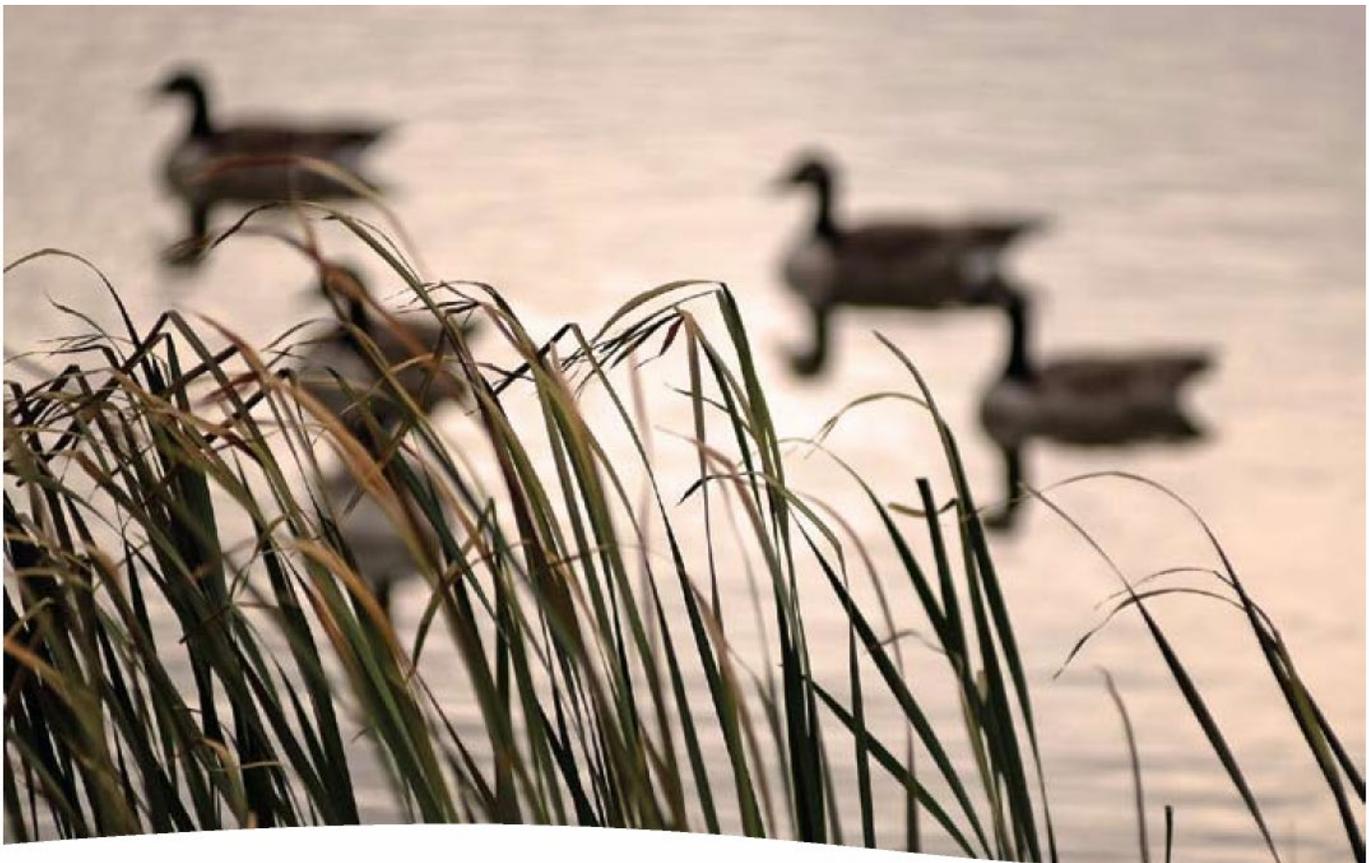
The Board will lease its land or permit its use only for purposes consistent with the purpose for which the land was acquired. Interim uses may be approved by the Board if it is determined that the use contributes substantially towards the Park District's short-term and long-range goals. The Park District will require compensation for land or facilities leased, and for any Park District services rendered.

### **E. Divestiture**

In cases where the Board determines that certain lands are no longer appropriate for inclusion in the Park System, they may, by resolution and with the concurrence of the District Court and other agencies as required, divest such land. The preferred method is by public sale; however, other methods such as land exchange or negotiated sale may be considered if they provide greater benefit to the Park District.

### **F. Disposal of Waste Materials**

The Park District will not allow the depositing or landfill/burying of any waste material, which in the opinion of the Board of Commissioners, would result in harm to the public health and safety, natural resources, or in any way be deemed deleterious to the Park System. The Park District Board of Commissioners shall adopt a Waste Disposal Administrative Procedure, which will define waste materials and identify acceptable uses of organic materials in Park District property.





*Three Rivers*  
PARK DISTRICT

