



Blakeley Bluffs Park Reserve Master Plan

Scott County Parks and Trails



The mission for Scott County parks and trails is to enhance the health and spirit of our residents and guests by creating a sustainable system that connects people to the natural world.

Scott County is a regional park implementing agency of the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area. Funding for Scott County's regional parks and trails master planning has been provided through a grant received under the Minnesota Clean Water, Land, & Legacy Amendment, in which 14.25% of the funds generated from the 3/8% increase in the state sales tax will provide funding for regional and state parks and trails.

December 13, 2011

Acknowledgements

This master plan was completed as part of a comprehensive effort to prepare five master plans (three parks and two trails) within a thoughtful and broad analysis of system-wide recreational needs. Special thanks to the Citizen Design Team members for guiding the development of this master plan to meet the needs of current and future Scott County residents.

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Introduction and Background

Overview

Blakeley Bluffs Regional Park Reserve is a unique and extensive natural resource and recreational asset in the southwest Metro. Located along the Minnesota River in the bluff lands of Scott County, the park reserve is characterized by large areas of continuous forest, stunning viewsheds with western sunsets, dramatic topographic changes, and high quality habitats of note on a regional scale. Given its location overlooking the Minnesota River and of the presence of numerous cultural resource sites, the park reserve also represents an important link to the indigenous populations living in the area before settlement. The site's extensive ecological value, rich Native American history, and potential for unique recreational opportunities set it apart as a special place to preserve for future generations to enjoy.



Figure 1. Blakeley Bluffs Location Map



Local and regional efforts to conserve the area as a park reserve date back to the early 1960's. While early preservation efforts waned, interest in the park reserve concept renewed as rapid development occurred in the County in the late 1990's and early 2000's. This renewed interest culminated in 2004 with the identification of a 6,000 acre 'Blakeley Bluffs Park Reserve Search Area' (Figure 2) in the Interim Scott County Parks, Trails and Opens Space System Policy Plan. In 2005, the Blakeley Bluffs Park Reserve Search Area became a component of the Regional Recreation Open Space System that serves the seven county Minneapolis – St. Paul metropolitan area. At that time it was identified as a park reserve search area to be planned, acquired and developed to fill a recreational service area gap in the southwest Metro and to preserve an exemplary example of historic Minnesota River Valley landscape.

This document, the **Blakeley Bluffs Acquisition Master Plan** refines the 6,000 acre ‘Blakeley Bluffs Park Reserve Search Area’ to an approximately 2,440 acre park reserve within an identifiable planned boundary (Figure 3 and Maps 1-5). Eight acres of land within the boundary are County-owned and the remaining 2,432 are privately held. This document details the findings of a year-long master planning process through which the park reserve boundary was refined and serves as the guide or ‘master plan’ to acquire lands for the park reserve over the next several decades. It reports on the governing, operations and management framework that will be used for implementation of the plan and identifies estimated costs. The Plan is intended to satisfy the master planning requirements established by the Metropolitan Council’s Regional Recreation and Open Space Commission.

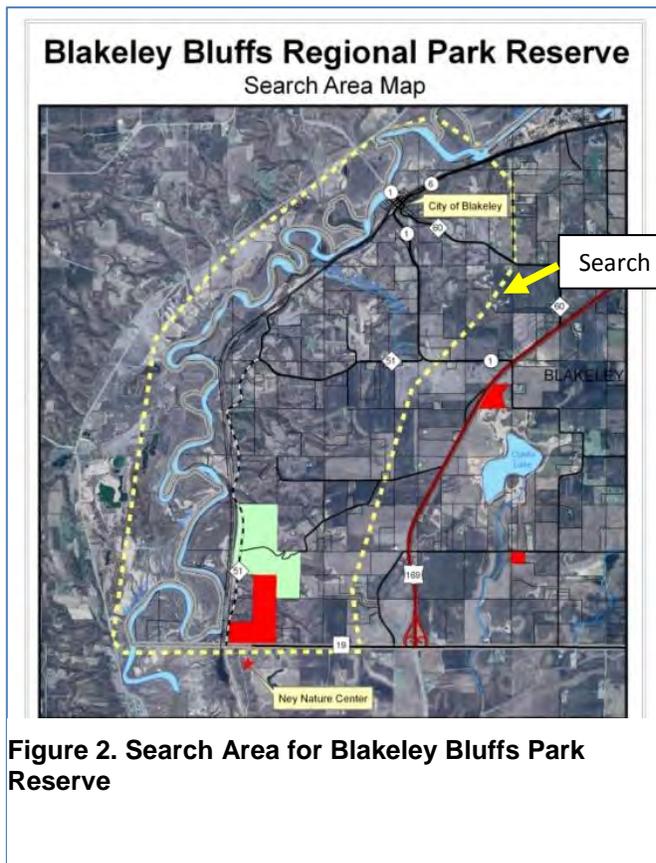


Figure 2. Search Area for Blakeley Bluffs Park Reserve

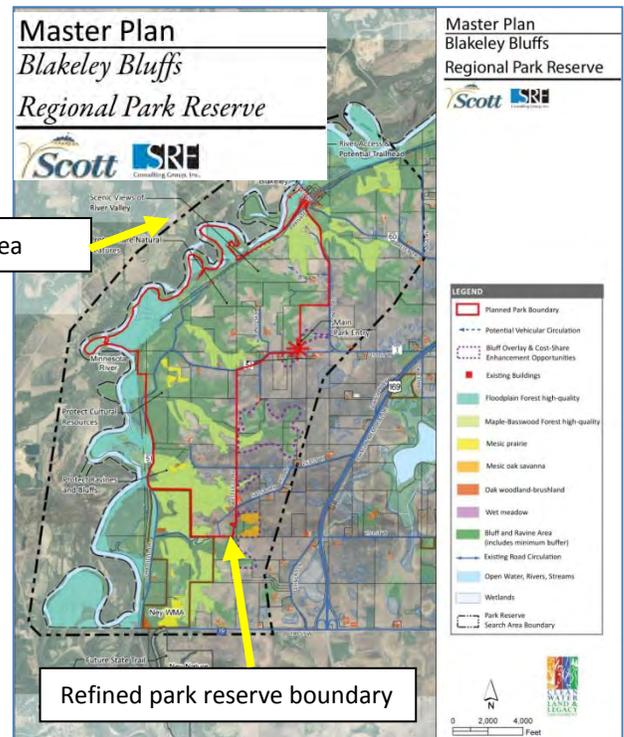


Figure 3. Blakeley Bluffs Park Reserve Master Plan with Refined Boundary

An *acquisition master plan* is distinct from a *development master plan* which determines the theme, type, location and extent of recreation and programming amenities and infrastructure and estimated costs. The Blakeley Bluffs Acquisition Master Plan does not specify detailed programming or recreation amenities, but suggests a theme and types of recreation that emerged from public feedback and that appear to be suitable for the site, to fill anticipated recreational needs and to be consistent with park reserve activities. Over the coming years, as land for the park reserve is acquired, and needs or expectations change, updates may be made

to this acquisition master plan or it may be updated to a development master plan to guide investments related to park development.

Overview of Master Planning Outcomes

Goals and a Vision

Based on early community feedback and technical findings a set of goals and a vision for the master plan emerged. (A future development master plan process will confirm a vision and goals and determine specific recreational amenities, their location and needed infrastructure for the park.)

Goals

- Preserve scenic character, historic landscapes and offer scenic viewing of river valley.
- Enhance native plant communities and expand core wildlife habitat areas.
- Protect opportunity for destination hiking trails, river access, canoeing and kayaking, and bike trail connections.
- Protect cultural resources and Native American history of site.
- Protect and enhance opportunities for nature and culture exploration.
- Partnership with Ney Environmental Learning Center in Le Sueur County.
- Create opportunity to improve water quality of Minnesota River.
- Create possibilities for economic growth in Blakeley – “Little Lanesboro” concept.

Vision

This vision looks ahead after decades of acquisition and stewardship efforts have set the stage for a new master plan and development of the site.

Blakeley Bluffs is a regional destination for river-bluff hiking, canoeing and kayaking. The park reserve is known for its high quality scenery and habitat, and trail network that forms a unique water and bluff grand-round adventure trail through the Minnesota River Valley landscape. Restoration of the park reserves' landscape to a corridor of forests, woodlands, prairies and wetlands has created a quality natural environment where natural and cultural resource exploration, camping and biking opportunities compliment the grand-round trail offering the best outdoor recreation setting in the region.

Planning Inputs

Inputs that informed the preparation of the Blakeley Bluffs Park Reserve Acquisition Master Plan and the final concept included:

- Cultural resources research and assessment
- Natural resources inventory and assessment
- Park facility and amenity inventory
- Demographics
- Recreation trends
- Public health trends
- Regional and local plans and policies
- Public feedback
- Technical meetings with staff (Scott County, City, Township, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, US Fish and Wildlife, Scott County Historical Society)

Public Process Components

Paramount to the planning process was an intense public involvement strategy that included several components listed below. A full account of the public process and findings is provided in the 'Citizen Participation Findings' section. A detailed meeting list can be found in Appendix A.

- Citizen Design Team (CDT)
- Park and trail site planning workshops
- Field trips
- Public policy initiative workshops
- Open houses for preferred master plan concepts
- Outreach – press releases, master planning website, resident mailings, etc
- Parks Advisory Commission (workshops and meetings)
- Scott County Board of Commissioners (workshops and meetings)
- Local government review

Local Government Review

Feedback was sought directly from each municipality at least once during the initial concept stage through presentations to their councils, boards and/or parks commissions, with staff making more than 15 such visits. Each municipality was invited to participate in the field trips, workshops and open houses. The bulk of local government input was received during November 2010 through early February 2011, when the preferred park and trail concepts were shared with local parks commissions and township boards. Input was given based on consistency with local plans, current and projected needs, and coordination with other projects. Overall, the input received at these meetings was consistent with comments heard through other parts of the process.

List of affected municipalities – (areas specific to Blakeley Bluffs in bold)

- **Blakeley Township (Blakeley Bluffs Acquisition Master Plan)**
- Cedar Lake Township
- Helena Township
- City of New Prague
- City of Elko New Market
- City of Prior Lake
- City of Shakopee

Parks Advisory Commission

The Parks Advisory Commission played an active role throughout the planning process, participating in all public meetings and tours and assigning liaisons to the CDT. The Commission met in workshops to discuss and provide guidance on the process and plans. Staff made presentations to the Parks Advisory Commission seeking input and guidance and offering an opportunity for a broader county audience to learn about and comment on the process and plans.

Scott County Board of Commissioners

The County Board participated actively in the public process, providing direction on the process and plans. County Board members participated in each of the open houses and workshops, met in workshop setting twice to consider the plans and provide direction. Staff made presentations on the planning process and plans at three County Board meetings.

Guiding Plans and Policy

Several plans and policy documents informed and guided the establishment of the planning approach as well as decisions made throughout the planning effort. The process and individual master plans were prepared consistent with the goals and policies of the recently adopted Scott County 2030 Comprehensive Plan Update and the 2030 Parks and Trails Plan (Chapter VII) and the policies and framework of the Metropolitan Council’s 2030 Regional Parks Policy Plan.

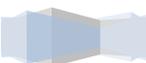
The following policy documents and previous master plans have helped shape the outcomes of this planning study:

Policy Documents

- 2030 Regional Parks Policy Plan (Metropolitan Council, 2005, updated in 2010)
- Scott County 2030 Comprehensive Plan Update – Chapter VII, 2030 Parks and Trails Plan (2009)
- Scott County Rural Residential Detailed Area Plan (DAP) – Rural Trail Analysis (2009)
- Scott County Rural Regional Trail Development & Design Guidelines (2009)

Previous Master Plans

- Suburban Hennepin Regional Park District Master Plan for a System of Parks – Scott County West Regional Trail, Cleary Lake Regional Park, and Murphy-Hanrehan Regional Park Reserve (Three Rivers Park District, 1998)
- Doyle-Kennefick Regional Park Acquisition Master Plan (2003)
- Spring Lake Regional Park Development Master Plan (2006)
- Cedar Lake Farm Regional Park Acquisition Master Plan (2007)



- Murphy-Hanrehan Park Reserve Development Master Plan (Three Rivers Park District, 2007)

Parks and Trails Legacy Plan

The Blakeley Bluffs Acquisition Master Plan is consistent with the strategic directions identified in the recently adopted statewide *Parks and Trails Legacy Plan (Figure 4)*. The Minnesota State Legislature mandated that the Department of Natural Resources develop the 25-year, long-range plan to help guide how the Legacy Funds, as well as other traditional sources of funding, should be spent for parks and trails of state and regional significance. The plan will also serve as a valuable reference during site design and construction processes and development of specific programming and marketing projects.

Figure 4:

Minnesota Parks and Trails Legacy Plan – Four Strategic Directions:

- **Connect People and the Outdoors:** develop Minnesota’s stewards of tomorrow through efforts to increase life-long participation in parks and trails.
- **Acquire Land, Create Opportunities:** create new and expanded park and trail opportunities to satisfy current customers as well as to reach out to new ones.
- **Take Care of What We Have:** provide safe, high-quality park and trail experiences by regular re-investment in infrastructure and natural resource management.
- **Coordinate Among Partners:** enhance coordination across the large and complex network of public, private, and non-profit partners that support Minnesota’s parks and trails to ensure seamless, enjoyable park and trail experiences for Minnesotans.



Source: Parks and Trails Legacy Plan, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, 2011.

Setting and Role

Metropolitan Regional Park System

Scott County’s Parks and Trails system is part of the Regional Recreation Open Space System. This system (now commonly referred to as the Metropolitan Regional Park System or simply the Regional Park System) was created by the State Legislature in 1975 by State Statute 473.147. This statute identifies Metropolitan Council’s role in establishing and updating a policy plan for a metropolitan park system, and working in partnership with the local city and county jurisdictions (the “Implementing Agencies”) that own and operate the system. As one of the ten Implementing agencies Scott County is eligible for funding and assistance through the Metropolitan Council for projects that are a part of an approved master plan.

Blakeley Bluffs Park Reserve became a component of the Metropolitan Regional System in 2005, when as part of the Metropolitan Council’s update to the 2030 Regional Parks Policy Plan the future park reserve was identified to fill a recreational service area gap in the southwest Metro and to preserve the rare natural features that make up the Blakeley Bluffs site. As a park reserve, Blakeley Bluffs will provide future generations with recreational enjoyment of an outstanding example of the Minnesota River valley landscape.

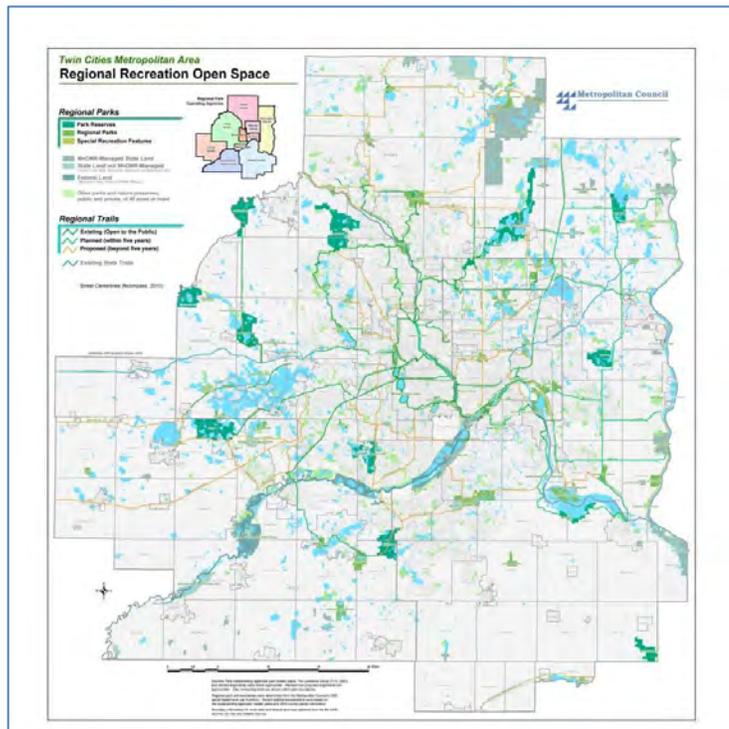


Figure 5: Regional Parks and Open Space System

Park Reserves

The Metropolitan Regional Parks System focuses primarily on facilitating the provision of recreational facilities that require substantial areas of land and/or water and on the protection of high-quality natural resources for public benefit. This is distinct from the standard role of city and county parks. There are four main types of regional facilities including

regional parks, park reserves, regional trails and special recreation features. Blakeley Bluffs is designated as a park reserve. Both regional parks and park reserves are expected to provide a

Within a park reserve the rare natural character that defines the site and its recreational experience is protected and enhanced.

diversity of nature-based outdoor recreational activities, with park reserves focusing more specifically on the conservation of vast acreages of historic landscapes and quality outdoor recreation experiences available because of the presence of these resources.

The Metropolitan Council's 2030 Regional Parks Policy Plan describes the following basis for and policies specific to park reserves:

- "Intended to provide, protect and manage representative areas of the original major landscape types in the metropolitan area to permit appreciation and enjoyment of the natural resources that influenced the region's development." (Metropolitan Council 2030 Parks Policy Plan).
- A minimum of 1,000 acres in size, but larger is desirable if needed to meet the identified protection and recreational need.
- Conform to the 80/20 Policy related to a development footprint. "To establish and maintain an uncompromised sense of nature and protect high quality natural resources, at least 80 percent of each park reserve should be managed as wild lands that protect the ecological function of the native landscape." (Metropolitan Council 2030 Parks Policy Plan). Under the 80/20 Policy up to 20 percent of a park reserve may developed for compatible recreational activities.

Scott County as a Regional Park and Trail Provider

Scott County's Parks and Trails system is a burgeoning part of the Metropolitan Regional Park System and one still in the very early stages of operation and development, a factor that shaped the approach to the master planning process. The County has owned the undeveloped 300-acre Spring Lake Regional Park, located in Prior Lake, since it purchased the site in the 1960's, but it was 2004 before the County began taking a more active role as a regional park implementing agency as rapid population growth in the previous two decades had increased demand for park and trail amenities. Since taking a more active park and trails role, the County has identified three additional regional park and park reserve sites, acquired 760 acres of park land and in 2009 began limited park operations at a Cedar Lake Farm Regional Park. Offering formal public use and park amenities at Cedar Lake Farm marked the first time in the County's history that it was directly providing a park operation. In 2011, Scott County established a new partnership agreement, the "Partnership", with Three Rivers Park District to gain efficiencies in the operation and maintenance of all regional park and trail facilities in the county, including Cleary Lake and Murphy-Hanrehan which are owned by Three Rivers Park District. Efficiencies gained are expected to result in further ramping up of new services and enhancements to existing park services, in all of the regional facilities within Scott County.

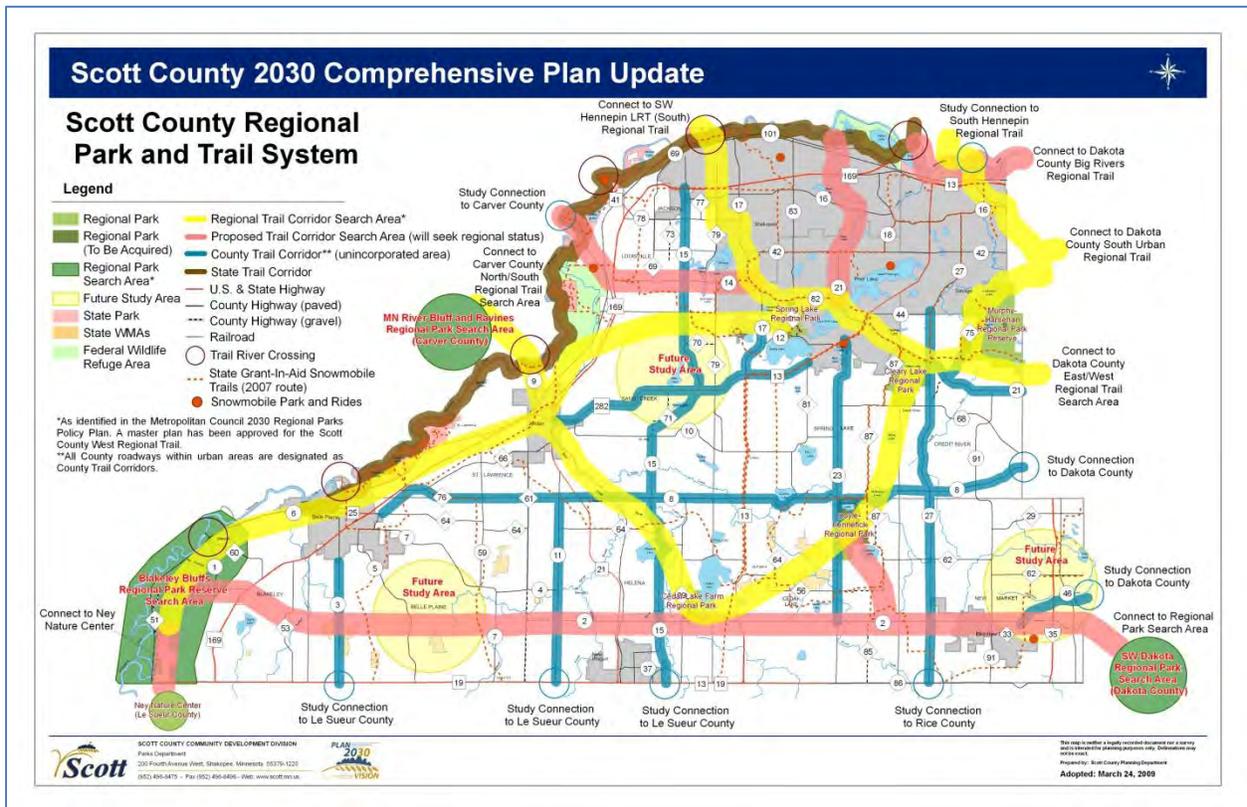


Figure 6: Scott County Park and Trail System Map

Regional Facilities within Scott County

Blakeley Bluffs interrelates with a number of other regional facilities in Scott County (Figure 6. Scott County Parks and Trails System Map).

Parks and Park Reserves

Cedar Lake Farm Regional Park was master planned along with Blakeley Bluffs and Doyle-Kenenfick. The concept for this 248 acre park emphasizes family picnicking and active recreation focused on a large recreational lake, and a ‘Market Learning Center’ for programming based on rebuilding connections to food and learning to grow, prepare, and purchase it for healthy eating and a sustainable environment and community.

Cleary Lake Regional Park is a 1,045 acre park owned and operated by Three Rivers Park District, offering a visitors center/clubhouse with concessions, room rentals and recreation equipment. A 9-hole golf course and driving range hosts extensive youth-centered golf programming. Additional amenities include beach swimming, boating, fishing, picnic shelters, group campsites, paved bike/hike trail, turf hiking trails, a 30-acre dog off-leash area, and creative play area. Winter activities include extensive cross-country skiing on groomed trails lit for evening use.

Doyle-Kennefick Regional Park was master planned along with Blakeley Bluffs Park Reserve and Cedar Lake Farm Regional Park. The concept for this park includes programming based on the scenic and ecologically significant natural landscapes of the site and a link to the past via an 1860's farmstead site. Amenities called for in the plan include a nature center/outdoors discovery center, 13 miles of hiking and nature trails, 8 miles of bike trails, a picnic shelter, trail head and room rental, and renovation and re-use of farmstead structures.

Murphy-Hanrehan Park Reserve is a 2,482 acre park (planned to be 2,614) owned and operated by Three Rivers Park District. The master plan was recently updated in June, 2008, and calls for the development of backpacking and canoe campsites, improving fishing opportunities, and trailhead improvements. The plan also calls for ecological enhancements to woodland and prairie/wetland areas, low quality forests, reforestation of old field and regeneration of existing high-quality Oak forests.

Spring Lake Regional Park is a 372-acre park, planned to be 392 acres and to contain a mix of general and specialized recreation opportunities. Development amenities planned include a four-season lakeside pavilion with complimentary lakeshore related amenities; 3.5 mile paved trail loop; 3 miles of nature trails; group camp; adventure ropes course; archery practice area, and an outdoor classroom/performance area. A large patch of high quality maple-basswood forest, wetlands and proximity of Spring and Prior Lakes, define the park's sense of place.

Trails

Scott County has one partially developed regional trail that will ultimately connect Cleary Lake Regional Park with Prior Lake, Shakopee, and the Minnesota River. Roughly 130 miles of regional trail corridors have been proposed in the County's 2030 Comprehensive Plan traversing through both urban and rural settings. A regional trail search corridor has been identified to connect to the Blakeley Bluffs Park Reserve with a future extension of the Spring Lake Regional Trail intended to connect the cities of Jordan and Belle Plaine along the river and bluffs through the park reserve.

Ney Environmental Learning Center

This facility – a partnership between Le Sueur County Parks and the private Ney Environmental Learning Center Foundation – provides year-round environmental programming and recreation. Scott County and the Ney facility staff and board have a shared interest in a future partnership between our programs and facilities. The Ney facility is located just to the south of the park reserve.

Demand Forecast and Trends

As of 2010, Scott County's population is roughly 130,000 residents. This is a 45 percent increase in population since 2000. Population forecasts produced by the Metropolitan Council anticipate nearly 100,000 more individuals by 2030. While these forecasts were developed before the recent economic recession occurred, the overall trend of population expansion is expected to continue in Scott County over several decades. Southwest Scott County was identified by the Metropolitan Council as an area underserved by the regional recreation open space system during the Metropolitan Council's update in 2005 to the 2030 Regional Parks Policy Plan (Figure 7). Blakeley Bluffs Park Reserve was added to the Regional Recreation Open Space System in 2005 to address this gap.

To better understand recreation needs and barriers to outdoor recreation participation and to gain insights into the potential role of Blakeley Bluffs Regional Park Reserve in meeting these needs and overcoming barriers, the master planning process included a review of recent demographics, resident and outdoor participant surveys, a park facility inventory and gap analysis and trends. A summary of findings and consideration is provided below.

Demographics

Demographic information is an important consideration in the planning of regional park and trail facilities to guide both decisions for today and the future. In 2010, Scott County's population approached 130,000 residents. This is an increase of about 40,000 residents (45 percent) since 2000. The growth in Scott County resulted from the completion of the Bloomington Ferry Bridge in the late 1990s, providing an efficient transportation connection south of the Minnesota River to the rest of the metropolitan area. The latest population forecasts produced by the Metropolitan Council anticipate 220,000 residents in Scott County by 2030, an increase of nearly 90,000 more individuals over the next twenty years. Most of the growth is expected in the urbanizing areas, with a projected 85 percent of the population residing in the cities and 15 percent in the townships. While these forecasts were developed before the recent economic recession occurred, the overall trend of population expansion is expected to continue in Scott County over several decades.

Scott County's 65 and older population is forecasted to grow from six percent to fourteen percent by 2030. This age group increase follows statewide trends. According to the Minnesota Department of Human Services, the state will have 1.5 million baby boomers over the age of 65 by the year 2030, meaning one out of four Minnesotans will be over the age of 65. While the percentage of 65 and older residents will continue to increase, Scott County still has a relatively young population. In 2008, Scott County's median age of 32.7 years was the youngest of all metropolitan counties and well below the state median (37.1). Scott County also has the highest average household size (2.86) in the metro due to a number of young families moving to the county because of affordable housing choices and quality school districts. The anticipated population growth will also result in an increase in the toddler (0-4),



school-age children (5-19), and adult (20-64) age groups, albeit at a slower pace than the 65 and older group. Blakeley Bluffs potentially could help meet the recreational demands of the 65 and older age group which tend to include walking, biking, modern and RV camping.

While diversity percentages in Scott County are lower than the rest of the metropolitan area, the county is expected to encounter many changes to its non-white population based on the Minnesota State Demographic Center forecast from 2000 to 2030. The non-white population is expected to increase 243.5 percent between 2000 and 2030. The county has begun experiencing significant increases in Asian, Eastern European and Hispanic populations over the past decade.

According to 2007-2009 American Community Survey data, of the county's population age 25 and older, 94 percent attained a high school level education. Approximately 35 percent of this same age group in the county had attained a college level education (bachelor's degree or higher). The number of college level graduates is slightly below the metropolitan area's average, but the percentage within Scott County has grown significantly since the US Census 2000 estimate of 23.1 percent.

As a whole, the high education rates reflect higher income levels. According to the 2006-2008 American Communities Survey, the county's median household income was \$81,393 in 2008. For comparison, the median household income was \$71,920 for the Twin Cities metropolitan area and \$57,795 for the state. Scott County residents maintained the highest median income of all the metropolitan counties over the past decade. However, the county's median household income is unevenly distributed with the eastern communities generally having households with higher incomes than those in the western part of the county.

Recreation and Open Space Survey Findings

Scott County Resident Findings

Past Scott County resident surveys have included questions related to parks, trails and recreation. The findings show residents value parks and trails for recreational opportunities, but they also recognize the value parks and trails provides for open space preservation and environmental, wildlife and habitat protection. Residents have also been generally satisfied with existing recreational services the County provides, however residents are mixed on how to pay for additional services as the system expands.

Metro Area Survey Findings

The Metropolitan Council coordinates annual surveys and user counts at all regional facilities. The following are the primary activities that attract users to the regional system. Similar to state statistics, the primary uses are trails activities (hiking/biking), water uses, and picnicking. Their popularity is also related to their availability, as these are generally the most common activities provided at regional and state parks.

**Figure 8:
Top Activities in the Regional Park System, 2010**

Activity	Percent of Park Activity Occasion	Percent of Trail Activity Occasion	Percent of Total Visits
Walking/hiking	21%	30%	23%
Biking	10%	45%	18%
Swimming	16%	2%	13%
Picnicking	10%	0%	8%
Relaxing	9%	2%	7%
Jogging/running	5%	10%	6%
Playground use	7%	1%	6%
Dog-walking	5%	7%	5%
Sunbathing	6%	1%	5%
Fishing	6%	1%	5%
Boating	4%	0%	3%
Zoo visits (Como)	4%	0%	3%
In-line skating	2%	4%	2%
Camping	2%	0%	2%

Source: Annual Use Estimate of the Metropolitan Regional Parks System for 2010, Metropolitan Council

State Survey Findings

At the state level, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MNDNR) continues to survey state park users to understand current and future needs. The top ten recreational activities for Minnesota adults are listed in the following table. According to the 2008-2012 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP), “a majority of residents—57 percent—believe outdoor recreation is a ‘very important’ part of their life and another 25 percent believe it is ‘moderately important.’ Outdoor recreation is at least moderately important to the vast majority of Minnesotans, but they often don’t feel they have enough time to participate as often as they’d like. Expense, effort, outdoor pests and lack of companions all keep people from taking part in outdoor activities.” The planned regional system may help address this concern of limited time availability for Scott County residents. Providing recreational opportunities close to home will increase the availability of outdoor recreation and reduce the amount of travel time required to access these facilities.

Trends in Outdoor Recreation and Community Health

A number of recent studies have shown a decline in nature-based recreation at the state and national level. In Minnesota, declines have been recorded in fishing, hunting, state park



visitation, and state bicycle trail use. The 2007 Minnesota State Parks Research Summary Report found participation declines are most prevalent in age groups 45 and younger. The trend in declining outdoor recreation use can have lasting impacts, as this study found the strongest association with adult park use is the direct experience with parks as a child. Thus, the decline in childhood visitation today may lead to reduced adult visitation decades later.

Studies at the national level stress this same concern for declining use in outdoor recreation. The 2009 Outdoor Recreation Participation Report (Outdoor Foundation) found declines in youth participants, women aged 21-25 (who prefer to recreate indoors), and minority groups. Increased technology, less free time, costs, and accessibility all factored into the reduction of participation. However, the survey also found more Americans participating in outdoor activities in 2008, likely due to the changing economy where many people are choosing to take shorter vacations closer to home and a return to a simpler lifestyle. Activities like camping, hiking and mountain-biking saw increases in participation by youth. The study found gateway activities such as fishing, bicycling, running/jogging, camping, and hiking tend to lead to participation in other outdoor activities. In general, these activities appear to be appropriate at Blakeley Bluffs and potentially could help address the trend of youth declines, by focusing on activities shown to be of interest by youth. The proximity of the park reserve to major population centers may help address the lack of time barrier for some participants. Options should be explored to remove cost barriers for participation. Common methods include using sliding scale fees based on income, scholarships, and partnerships with community groups and schools.

Improving the health of community residents is a major concern as obesity rates and health care costs related to preventable diseases continue to climb. Sixty-five percent of Minnesota adults do not perform the recommended amount of physical activity (30 minutes/day). A more sedentary lifestyle can be attributed to a variety of factors, including people driving more and walking less, work habits and activities limiting the need for physical activity, and a change in designing communities around the automobile. Research shows a connection between the built environment and health conditions associated with physical activity, such as obesity, diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure, and high cholesterol. The addition of a more connected trail system and parks designed for accessibility will help provide safer access for residents to improve their health.

People with access to walking or jogging trails are 55% more likely to be physically active.

Source: Brownson, Ross et al., Environmental Determinants of Physical Activity in the United States. American Journal of Public Health (2001), Vol. 91, No. 12

Other non-recreational trends may also impact the regional park and trail system. Nationwide, concerns for climate change, energy independence, active living, and sustainability have led many to explore ways of driving less and incorporating healthy activities into their daily lives. The aging society is also having a significant impact on changing needs for recreation. The Baby Boomer generation is currently using the regional park system at rates that are higher than their actual proportion of the metropolitan area population; visitation by people over the age of 60 is expected to increase as this generation ages. Facilities will need to be kept up to

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) standards, and more opportunities for low-impact and educational learning opportunities will need to be provided to meet the needs of this growing user base.

Facility Inventory and Gap Analysis

An inventory of existing and planned park facilities was done to identify recreational gaps and the potential role of Scott County’s regional parks in addressing those gaps. Where gaps were found to exist, the planning process evaluated whether Cedar Lake Farm, Doyle-Kennefick, and on a more cursory level, Blakeley Bluffs may offer opportunities to fill that gap. The extent of the inventory was Scott County and its adjacent counties (Dakota, Rice, Le Sueur, Sibley, Carver, and southern Hennepin County). This also represents a generalized service area for park facilities within a 20-30 minute travel time from Scott County’s boundary. The inventory included facilities commonly found in regional, state, or natural-resource based parks (i.e. hiking trails, camping, picnic shelters, nature centers) and those that are less common (i.e. disc golf, pavilions, swimming features). A broader inventory of all metro regional parks was conducted for specific facilities and amenities as they were being explored in the preliminary concept development stages.

Findings Summary

Blakeley Bluffs Park Reserve may have a role in filling the following identified gaps: destination birding, hiking trails, hike-in camping, river access for canoeing and kayaking, and river-access camping, primitive group and tent camping, modern RV camping, biking trails, and cultural resources interpretation.

A list of the trends and findings that will continue to be monitored and considered in making land acquisition and interim use decisions follow.

- As a whole, in the coming decades Scott County park users are going to be older and ethnically and racially more diverse. There is an opportunity to explore partnerships with schools, faith organizations, and community groups to enhance the County’s capacity to deliver quality recreation opportunities for baby-boomers and the 65 and older age group, diverse populations and youth.
- The most common forms of recreation in the Regional Park System continue to be centered on trails (biking, walking, hiking), water (swimming, boating, fishing) and picnicking. These are also among the most common recreation pursuits statewide, along with pleasure

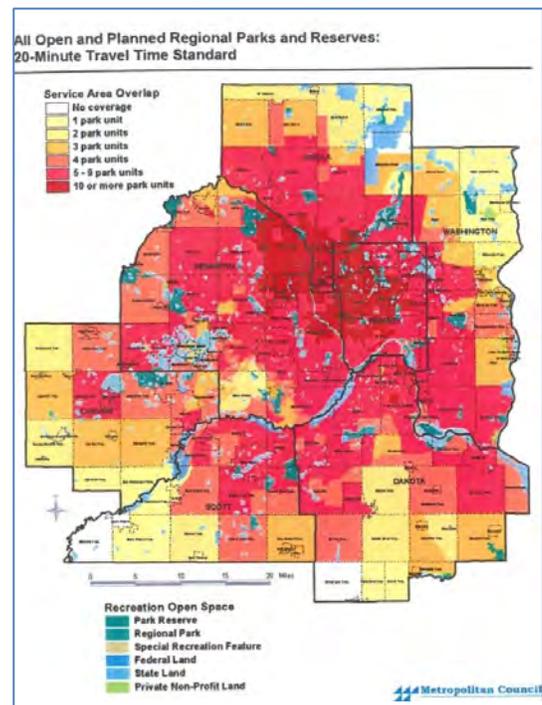


Figure 7. Open and Planned Regional Park/Park Reserve Coverage

driving, camping and visiting nature centers and outdoor zoos. A strategy of focusing on removing barriers to these most common activities and/or ensuring barriers are not unintentionally introduced could have the widest benefit.

- Minnesota has seen a significant decline in outdoor recreation participation by people under the age of 45 years. Nationally, declines have been most prominent in youth, women aged 21-25 and minority groups. Barriers to participation commonly cited include less free time, costs, and accessibility (state-wide surveys); and increased technology, costs and accessibility (national surveys). In national surveys, diverse youth participants cite school work as the top reason they don't get out more often – a barrier they cite more prominently than Caucasian youth. A creative mix of programming may help to remove barriers. For instance, offering outdoor recreation opportunities integrated with homework time may help remove the lack of time barrier for youth, particularly in minority populations. To address cost barriers, common methods include using sliding scale fees based on income, scholarships, and partnerships with community groups and schools, all of which will be explored by Scott County.
- From a Scott County system and nearby county scale, the facility inventory indicates very few planned or existing paved bike trails. Given the high bike trail usage reported in metro and state surveys, this appears to be a large gap that both Cedar Lake Farm and Doyle-Kennefick Regional Parks, the Spring Lake Regional Trail and potentially Blakeley Bluffs can help fill. There also are very few mountain biking facilities existing or planned in the study area. While mountain biking is more of a niche recreation with usage numbers far lower than the most common regional park and state park recreation pursuits, outdoor use surveys indicate an increased participation in mountain biking by youth, an age group showing overall decline in outdoor recreation participation. More accessible mountain biking opportunities could attract members of this group and provide a “gateway” experience for them to other outdoor recreation activities. Mountain biking opportunities should be considered in the Scott County system where the landscape will support that type of use.
- Hiking is among the top recreational pursuits both in the Regional Park System and statewide and appears to be an activity increasing nationally in youth (ages 6-17). While the inventory indicated a number of hiking opportunities in the study area, there are fewer in the central and southern area of the study area. Given the popularity of hiking in general and particularly the increase in hiking participation by youth, this may be a recreation area gap that Doyle-Kennefick can help address. Blakeley Bluffs has potential as a hiking destination in a unique river bluff landscape, something not offered in the study area and potentially an opportunity that would be unique in the region.
- Feedback from the MNDNR indicates a potential gap in public motor boat access to the Minnesota River between the cities of Henderson and Belle Plaine, as well as a future need for a formal large-group canoe landing site associated with programmed canoe activities and adventures.

Citizen Participation

The master planning process for Blakeley Bluffs, Cedar Lake Farm, and Doyle-Kennefick parks, and the Scott West and Spring Lake trails was designed to facilitate extensive opportunity for substantive public dialog and resident feedback. To achieve this several types of input sessions were held and consistent outreach was done throughout the process. While individual input sessions and meetings typically focused on one of the five facilities being planned each session covered an overview of the other facilities, presenting an opportunity for further input. A summary of the citizen participation components and resident input follows.

Citizen Participation Components

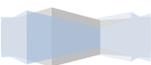
Citizen Design Team (CDT)

This 40-member, volunteer, citizen planning team was formed expressly for the master planning effort. The CDT participated actively in all aspects of the planning process. Their role was to:

- Enhance the project's ability to hear citizen input and bring feedback into the planning process.
- Think creatively about current and future recreational needs.
- Give thoughtful consideration to financial implications of the master plans.
- Remember the long-view and future generations, beyond today and current users.
- Identify collaboration and leveraging opportunities as well as redundancies.
- Consider providing natural resource based recreation for the next 100 years.
- Facilitate conservation of important natural and cultural resources for the next 100 years.
- Challenge the County to create a park and trail system that is a good neighbor.

The CDT was divided into two groups, one focused on the park master plans (Blakeley Bluffs, Cedar Lake Farm, and Doyle-Kennefick) and the other focused on the trail master plans (Spring Lake and Scott West). The groups met for monthly work sessions from July 2010 to March 2011, to evaluate park and trail system needs, identify unique features of each site, and refine the design concepts. In addition to the seven CDT work sessions the members participated in eight public open houses and workshops (two specific to Blakeley Bluffs), four team and public field trips (one specific to Blakeley Bluffs), and many members made independent field trips. Several members attended Parks Advisory Commission, County Board and Township Board meetings where the Blakeley Bluffs plan was discussed and considered.

The CDT members helped to facilitate small group discussion at the workshops and focused on listening and having dialog with participants. In addition to collecting feedback at the formal planning sessions, members assisted in outreach efforts by informing neighbors and community members about the sessions and made themselves available to listen and provide information on the plans.



County hired the Citizens League - a non-profit 501©(3) organized for the purpose of providing solutions to public policy questions and improving citizen participation in public policy - to design and implement an outreach process focused on these higher level considerations. The Citizens League facilitated the workshops and conversations with residents utilizing interactive response devices to collect data from residents, but more importantly, serve as a starting point for a more robust conversation about their values and priorities. Questions and conversation sought to engage participants at a high level about their parks and trails system as a whole. What level of quality did they want? How quickly should work be completed? What should the priorities be? How should funding gaps be addressed? This workshop style was more like a focus group, with the heart of the learning coming from the discussion and conversation. Approximately 150 residents participated in the four workshops.

Open Houses for Preferred Master Plan Concepts

The final resident input process came through a series of four open houses in February 2011 at which the preferred park and trail site concepts were presented, with the Blakeley Bluffs open house on February 23, 2011. A total of approximately 186 residents attended the four open houses with 50 attending the session on Blakeley Bluffs.

Outreach

Each open house, workshop and site tour was announced through a press release, the Scott County SCENE, County website, and direct mailings to landowners within the general vicinity of the proposed park boundaries. Additional outreach was done via the county's email list serve and posting of fliers at key community gathering location.

Parks Advisory Commission

The Parks Advisory Commission played an active role throughout the planning process, participating in all public meetings and tours and assigning liaisons to the CDT. The Commission met in workshop four times to discuss and provide guidance on the process and plans. Staff made five presentations to the Parks Advisory Commission seeking input and guidance and offering an opportunity for a broader county audience to learn about and comment on the process and plans.

Scott County Board of Commissioners

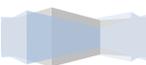
The County Board participated actively in the public process, providing direction on the process and plans. County Board members participated in each of the open houses and workshops, met in workshop setting twice to consider the plans and provide direction. Staff made presentations on the planning process and plans at three County Board meetings.

Summary of Findings

Initial community feedback

Opportunities with Blakeley Bluffs Park Reserve:

- Historic landscape preservation and interpretation
- Scenic views, overlooks, observation towers
- Trails and trail connectivity - preserve opportunities and partner with DNR and local groups
- Regional hiking destination; water and bluff loop



- River access for canoeing, kayaking, wildlife observation
- Camping
- Picnicking
- Habitat conservation
- Restoration of drained wetlands
- History of early Blakeley (during settlement period)
- Indigenous peoples use of area; concerns about cultural resource protection.
- Little Lanesboro concept for hamlet of Blakeley a possible local economic benefit
- Maximize adjacency to other public lands for partnerships and land conservation

Concerns or Challenges associated with Blakeley Bluffs Park Reserve:

- Road maintenance and ownership
- Hunting on adjacent public lands (trespass, noise, recreation disruption)
- Hunting in park reserve (noise, recreation disruption)
- Dedication to natural lands stewardship (for historic landscapes)
- County land acquisition policy
- Timeline for acquisition
- Security and stewardship of park lands after acquisition in the interim (before park is developed)
- Recreational types and amenities appropriate for setting and site

This direct resident feedback was discussed at length by the CDT and Parks Advisory Commission and shared with the County Board and along with the other planning inputs was re-visited at different points along the planning process and was a major element guiding the preparation of the preliminary master plan concept and implementation plan.

Cultural Resources

Preservation of unique historical and archaeological features within the Scott County Parks System is a goal identified in the County’s 2030 Comprehensive Plan. The location of Blakeley Bluffs along a major river and its distinct bluff landscape together hint at its potential to reveal rich Native American and early Euro-American history. As a part of the master planning process the 106 Group, a firm specializing in cultural resources, was hired to conduct a cultural resources assessment and the Minnesota State Archaeologist was consulted. This section summarizes the report findings which will serve as the cultural resources guide related to land acquisitions, operations and potential future interpretive themes.

The purpose of the cultural resources assessment was to:

- Identify known archaeological sites and historic structures within the search area;
- Identify legislative requirements for cultural resources preservation and/or treatment;
- Suggest cultural resources management and planning recommendations related to future stages of park development; and
- Suggest interpretive messages to guide the development of interpretive elements at the future park.

Two important terms used in this section are “pre-contact archaeological remnants” and “historic archaeological remnants”. Pre-contact refers to the time before European settlement. Historic refers to the time since European settlement.

Background Research

Background research was conducted at the Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) to identify known archaeological sites and previously inventoried architectural history properties within the park reserve search area. Previous cultural resources surveys were also reviewed to determine what sections of the search area have been previously documented as well as what portions have not been previously surveyed but may require survey in the future. Three previous cultural resources surveys have been conducted within the Blakeley Bluffs Park Reserve. Research was also conducted at the Scott County Historical Society to aid in the development of a brief history of the park.

Cultural Resources Assessment Results

Ten previously identified archeological sites are located within the Blakeley Bluffs Park Reserve. A previously National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) listed arch bridge from 1878 was delisted in 2007. The bridge was replaced by Scott County who worked with the SHPO office in preparing an Environmental Assessment Worksheet and on mitigation of the structure.



History of the Blakeley Bluffs Park Reserve Area

The Blakeley Bluffs Park Preserve is located in Blakeley Township. The township is located in southwestern Scott County along the Minnesota River. As discussed above, 20 archaeological sites have been previously identified within the search area. A majority of the sites consist of precontact burial mounds and earthworks as well as precontact artifact scatters representing debris produced during stone tool manufacture. These sites demonstrate the area's rich Native American history. The Minnesota River and its associated valley would have provided an abundance of natural resources as well as a mode of transportation for precontact indigenous populations living in the area. The numerous burial mounds and earthworks along the Minnesota River and its tributaries indicate an intensive occupation of the area by indigenous people during the Ceramic/Mound Stage (ca. 3,000 BP – A.D. 1750), though the area was most likely occupied for thousands of years prior to that period as well.

As the name implies, the Ceramic/Mound Stage corresponds to a period of time when Native Americans in the Midwest began making pottery and building earthen mounds (Dobbs 1989). Arzigian (2008) characterizes this period in the state of Minnesota as including components that have pottery but lack intensive maize agriculture, which distinguishes this period from the preceding Archaic and the later Mississippian cultures. Although no sites containing pottery have been identified within the reserve, additional investigations should be expected to produce several sites containing ceramic artifacts. To date, only a small portion of the search area has been surveyed for cultural resources. As a result, it can be expected that a plethora of precontact sites, yet to be discovered, lie within the search area and possibly within the future boundaries of the park reserve.

In addition to the numerous precontact sites, several archaeological sites representing early Euro-American river landings and farmsteads have also been documented. Blakeley Township was first settled by Europeans in 1853 by Frenchman A. Brayere (Blakeley Township Bicentennial Committee 1976:9). Blakeley was established as a township by a legislative act on March 9, 1874. The township was named in honor of Captain Russell Blakeley, a steamboat captain who navigated between Galena, Illinois and St. Paul, Minnesota. Blakeley settled in St. Paul in 1862 and was president of the Minnesota Historical Society in 1871 (Blakeley Township Bicentennial Committee 1976:1).

In 1854, Elias F. Drake and Isaac N. Dean founded the Village of Blakeley, located in Section 8 of Blakeley Township. The small village was located on the Minnesota River and became a thriving river town in the late nineteenth century (Blakeley Township Bicentennial Committee 1976:9). In 1868, the Chicago, St. Paul, Minneapolis & Omaha Railroad built a line through Blakeley Township, near the shores of the Minnesota River (Blakeley Township Bicentennial Committee 1976:9). The Village of Blakeley experienced a construction boom in the late 1860s due to the presence of the railroad. By 1870, the village had four general stores, a drug store, a shoe shop, a blacksmith, a meat market, three cane mills, two elevators and three salons (Blakeley Township Bicentennial Committee 1976:9). In the late nineteenth century, industry came to the Village of Blakeley in the form of brick yards. At one time Wiest and Dausgs, Meierbachtol, and

Ward all operated brick yards near the Village of Blakeley (Blakeley Township Bicentennial Committee 1976:10).

Besides the Village of Blakeley and Belle Plaine, Blakeley Township was primarily rural in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Farming was the leading industry with corn, wheat, oats, barley, rye, and soybeans being grown across the township. Dairy farms were also prevalent in the township; a creamery was located in the Village of Blakeley from 1917 through 1970 (Blakeley Township Bicentennial Committee 1976:10). Today, the township remains primarily rural.

Summary of Legislative Requirements

There are many federal laws that govern the treatment of historic, archaeological and cultural resources. However, the most relevant and meaningful for Scott County, if federal funds or permits are involved in park development, is the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966. In addition, there are three state laws that may pertain to the park.

National Historic Preservation Act of 1966

Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act requires Federal agencies to take into account the effects of their undertakings on historic properties and afford the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation a reasonable opportunity to comment on such undertakings. The SHPO acts on behalf of the Advisory Council in each state. The Section 106 process seeks to accommodate historic preservation concerns with the needs of Federal undertakings through consultation among the agency officials and other parties with an interest in the effects of the undertaking on historic properties, commencing at the early stages of project planning. The goal of consultation is to identify historic properties potentially affected by the undertaking, assess its effects and seek ways to avoid, minimize or mitigate any adverse effects on historic properties. A Federal undertaking includes such activities as transfer of funds, issuing of permits, and providing loans etc.

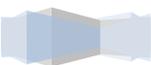
For further information see <http://www.achp.gov/regs.html>

Minnesota Historic Sites Act (M.S. 138.661 – 138.6691), 1965

This Act created a state register of properties “possessing historical, architectural, archaeological, and aesthetic values” and outlines a consultation process for projects that will affect historic sites.

Important Points:

- Historic sites are defined as properties named in the Act or listed on the NRHP.
- Similar to federal regulations, any undertaking receiving funding or licensing by any political subdivision is covered by the Act.
- If the undertaking affects historic sites, the agency must consult with the Minnesota Historical Society (MHS) to avoid or mitigate adverse effects.



- If the parties agree in writing to an appropriate course of action, the undertaking may proceed.

If the parties cannot reach agreement, any of the parties may request that the governor appoint a mediation task force.

Minnesota Field Archaeology Act (M.S. 138.31 – 138.42), 1963

- A “state archaeological site” is defined as any publicly owned or leased land or water area that contains material of archaeological interest.
- Only licensed archaeologists may undertake field archaeology on a state site.
- The Act created the Office of State Archaeologist (OSA), which, along with the MHS, oversees compliance with the Act.
- When a state archaeological site is known or suspected to exist, the controlling agency must submit development plans to MHS and OSA for review.
- The controlling agency, in consultation with MHS and OSA, is directed to preserve such sites (which may include data recovery) and is authorized to use its funds for such activities.
- If a site is related to American Indian history or religion, OSA must coordinate with the Minnesota Indian Affairs Council (MIAC) for review and comment.

Minnesota Private Cemeteries Act, 1975

This act provides protection for marked and unmarked human burials and remains. Highlights include:

- It is a crime to intentionally destroy or remove human skeletal remains or burials.
- The Act directs the state archaeologist to authenticate all burial sites. In particular it directs the state to retain the services of a professional archaeologist to authenticate burials on public lands or waters when requested by a scientific or Indian group.
- Only burials older than 50 years are covered by this Act.
- When human remains or burials are associated with Native Americans, the State Archaeologist and MIAC must attempt to identify their tribal identity.
- No authenticated Indian burial may be relocated without approval of the MIAC.
- When Indian burials are known or suspected to exist on public lands, the political subdivision controlling the land must submit development plans to the state archaeologist and the MIAC for review prior to advertising bids.

Summary Recommendations

This section summarizes the cultural resources assessment report recommendations. The full report will serve as a guide during implementation of the acquisition master plan, future planning projects and development.

Archaeology and Historic Structures

The Blakeley Bluffs Park Reserve consists of topographically prominent landforms overlooking the Minnesota River and associated aquatic habitat. Numerous archaeological sites have been documented within the reserve demonstrating both precontact and post-contact occupation of the land. A majority of the precontact archaeological sites consist of burial mounds or earthworks. These findings indicate that regardless of where the boundary of the park reserve is planned, it is likely to possess a high potential for containing additional precontact and post-contact archaeological resources including earthworks and burial mounds.

Although it is primarily rural, there is moderate potential for the park reserve to contain historic structures such as farmsteads that are related to the agricultural development of the state.

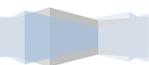
Therefore, it is recommended that future park reserve planning and management of cultural resources within the future Blakeley Bluffs Park Reserve include a Phase I archaeological survey. A staged Phase 1 archaeological survey is recommended in areas with high potential for containing archaeological sites in general, but burial mounds in particular. If the survey is conducted in advance of facility and trail design, designs can be informed by the results of the survey and impacts to vulnerable cultural resources can be avoided. The survey could be conducted in areas of proposed construction or ground disturbance once the park designs are complete; however, if archaeological resources are identified during the survey, redesigns to avoid impacting archaeological sites can be costly. A Phase I architectural survey should be considered to determine if there are any properties in areas along the alignment that have not been previously surveyed that are potentially eligible for the NRHP

Interpretation

Based on the general history of the search area, the park-wide interpretive theme could build on these topics:

Water of Life: The waters flowing through the Minnesota River have sustained communities since time immemorial. The confluence of the Minnesota and Mississippi Rivers is considered the point of origin and the center of the universe for the Dakota people. The Minnesota River, a tributary to the Mississippi, was an important place for the Dakota people both spiritually and practically. Dead were buried at high points along the river, camps were established along the river during dry seasons, and the river was a transportation route as well as a source of food. When Euro-Americans ventured to the area, the Minnesota River was also an important navigation route for explorers and commerce.

Fields of Plenty: The resource rich lands of Scott County provided European settlers all they needed to establish a home in the new world. Euro-Americans came to this area and encountered rich farmland. These hardy pioneers harvested timber to build homes and barns and plowed prairies into fields. Soon the farms that were established across Minnesota not only provided sustenance for the families that tended to them, but agricultural products to local and national markets. Blakeley Township remains mostly rural; what are modern farms producing and how have agricultural practices changed since the early days of Minnesota farming?



Conservation and Preservation: Human settlement has left its mark on the land; Scott County is working to preserve the historical legacy and conserve the natural spaces for future generations. Scott County is working to conserve open space and preserve the historical, cultural, and natural resources for the use and enjoyment of the community. The acquisition of Blakeley Bluffs Park Reserve is one more effort on behalf of the County to conserve open space and preserve historic, cultural, and natural resources. These efforts ensure that future generations visiting the park will have a better understanding of the natural and cultural heritage of Scott County.

Natural Resources Inventory and Assessment

Introduction

This section presents findings from a natural resources inventory and assessment (NRIA) for Blakeley Bluffs Park Reserve prepared by Applied Ecological Services, as a part of the master planning process. It identifies significant natural features, provides an overview of existing conditions, and discusses conservation priorities, issues and opportunities. These findings informed the selection of land areas to include in the park reserve boundary and the development of the recreation and an ecological stewardship vision for the site. This NRIA provides planning level guidance on restoring degraded resources and maintaining high-quality natural features of Blakeley Bluffs Park Reserve. (Full page map images of the figures appearing in this section can be found in the Maps section.)

Regional Context

Blakely Bluffs Park Reserve is located in Blakeley Township, Scott County, Minnesota. The park is located in Scott County's southwest blufflands and is dominated by forests and rural developments. Existing public natural areas in the vicinity of the Park Reserve include Scott County land near the city of Blakeley (at the northern end of the park), as well as the Blakeley State Wayside and the Ney Wildlife Management Area (located near the southern portion of the park). Additional public lands (e.g., U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service) exist along the Minnesota River. The Ney Nature Center (located adjacent to Blakely Bluffs, in Le Sueur County) has active education and conservation programs.

Within the 7-county metropolitan area, the MNDNR has conducted assessments of regionally significant ecological areas and related conservation corridors. These inventories and assessments indicate that the majority of the park contains regionally significant ecological areas located within regional conservation corridors. Figure 10 illustrates the park's regional ecological context with regard to mapped conservation areas.

Past and Current Ecological Conditions

Glacial History, Landforms and Soils

The Wisconsin Glaciation (which ended here about 10,000 years ago) and the erosive forces of the Minnesota River created the landforms visible at Blakeley Bluffs Park Reserve. The park

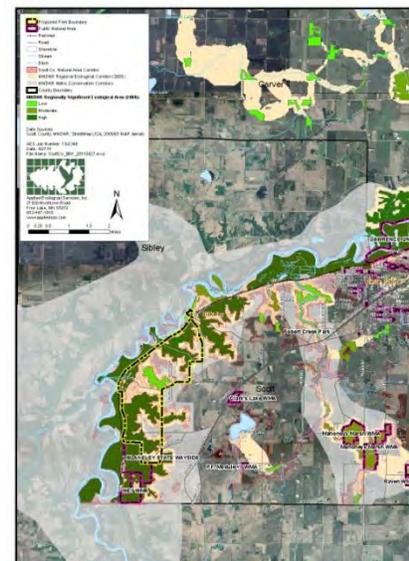
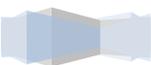


Figure 10: Regional Ecological Context



is characterized by relatively flat agricultural fields in the east portion, which are dissected by forested ravines and bluffs that lead down to the Minnesota River floodplain, located to the west. The park's ravines consist primarily of steep to very steep slopes, often exceeding 30% and sometimes exceeding 100% (Figure 11). These steeper areas will present limitations to park development, and trails through these areas will require environmentally sensitive design. Because of their steep gradients, these ravines and bluffs are

highly vulnerable to erosion and failure where there is an increase in runoff from agriculture or development. In addition, in recent years there have been a number of moderate to large rainfall events in the area, accelerating the rate of erosion in the ravines. This has necessitated costly maintenance to infrastructure. In addition, both the eroding ravines and the deposition areas at the base of the slopes are prime colonization sites for invasive plants.

According to the Scott County Soil Survey, the park's eastern agricultural fields are dominated by Webster, Lester, Hayden, and Dundas soils (all fine-loamy). Most of the park's bluffslands are mapped as "Steep land" and "Terrace escarpments." The park's western lowland soils are generally mapped as "Alluvial land (coarse-loamy)" and Dorchester (fine-silty) soils (Figure 2). The park's upland soils developed under primarily wooded conditions, but can support a variety of plant communities, including grasslands, shrublands, crops, etc. These soils would not be expected to present any significant constraints on park development, with the exception of steep slopes.

Hydrology

The park reserve is tributary to the Minnesota River. The Blakeley Bluffs region is defined by the Minnesota River, its floodplains, the surrounding bluffs, and the forested ravines that drain to the River. Due to the river's alignment, ravines in the park area generally flow to the west and northwest, while the Minnesota River flows to the north and northeast. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) mapping identifies the 100-year floodplain associated with the Minnesota River to encroach up to the western edge of the park and extend into the park in a couple areas (Figure 11).

A recent preliminary study of ravine erosion in the Blakeley area by the Scott Watershed Management Organization and Scott Soil and Water Conservation District has identified points of erosion associated with ravines both within and outside the park reserve boundary. The majority of erosion points appear to be fairly small and easily mitigated. Three sites identified within the park reserve boundary appear to be more serious. The Scott WMO is conducting a feasibility study to determine the best mitigation approach and associated costs. Scott County will participate as a partner in

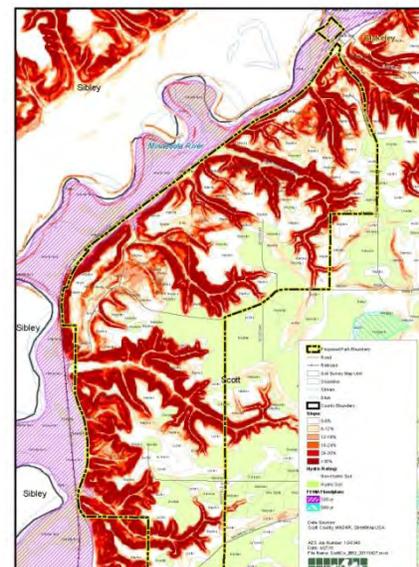


Figure 11: Slope, Soils and Hydrology

mitigation work and in seeking grant funding from the Clean Water Fund and other sources. Moving forward, the County will work with the Scott WMO to continue identification and mitigation of ravine erosion. Once park land is acquired, further opportunities to buffer ravine edges and restoration of adjacent upland cropland areas to native plant cover will be a focus.

In general, Scott County has abundant and high quality groundwater resources. No wellhead protection areas exist in the park area, and based on a three-tiered classification system (Low, Moderate, and High), the park area’s susceptibility to groundwater contamination is rated as “Low,” with the exception of the park areas within the Minnesota River floodplain, which is rated as High Susceptibility. This suggests that standard groundwater protection practices (e.g., sealing of unused wells) should suffice in the majority of the park; however, special precautions should be employed in and near the Minnesota River Floodplain to prevent groundwater impacts (e.g., handling techniques to prevent hazardous material spills).

Historical Vegetation

The MNDNR’s Ecological Classification System identifies the park within the Big Woods Subsection of the Minnesota & NE Iowa Morainal Section of the Eastern Broadleaf Forest Province. MNDNR data and previous research by F.J. Marschner (1974) indicate that the park is located in an area that, prior to European settlement, was dominated by “Big Woods hardwood forest (oak, maple, basswood, and hickory),” and the area immediately west of the park was dominated by “River Bottom Forest.” Small patches of wet and upland prairie were documented in the vicinity of the park.

Existing Land Cover

Blakely Bluffs Park Reserve consists of approximately 2,440 acres (Figure 3). The park contains a variety of land cover types, dominated by a variety of upland forests, floodplain forest, and agricultural lands. Minnesota Land Cover Classification System (MLCCS) mapping was completed for the park by Scott County Soil and Water Conservation in 2001-2003 and updated by a consulting firm, Applied Ecological Services, in 2005-2006 (Figure 12). Figure 13 summarizes the acreage and relative cover of different major land cover types within the park.

Figure 13:

Major Land Cover Types within Blakeley Bluffs Park Reserve	
Land Cover Type	Approximate Acres
Developed areas	92
Cropland and other planted areas	843
Forests and Woodlands	1,127
Grasslands and similar	127
Other	4

The MNDNR County Biological Survey (completed for Scott County in 1998) identified many of the park’s forested ravines as areas of moderate to high biological significance. Most of these



areas are mapped as consisting of native plant communities, primarily “Red Oak – Sugar Maple – Basswood (Bitternut Hickory) Forest” and “Sugar Maple – Basswood - (Butternut Hickory) Forest.” While the Minnesota River Valley is generally rich in sites of biodiversity significance and native plant communities, the Blakeley Bluffs area is among the most diverse and intact portions of Scott County. Figure 12 and Map 8 illustrate the park’s areas of biological significance and native plant communities as mapped by the County Biological Survey. During MLCCS mapping, natural communities were assigned a quality rank, ranging from ‘A’ (high quality) to ‘D’ (poor quality). Figure 12 shows quality ranks for mapped native plant communities.

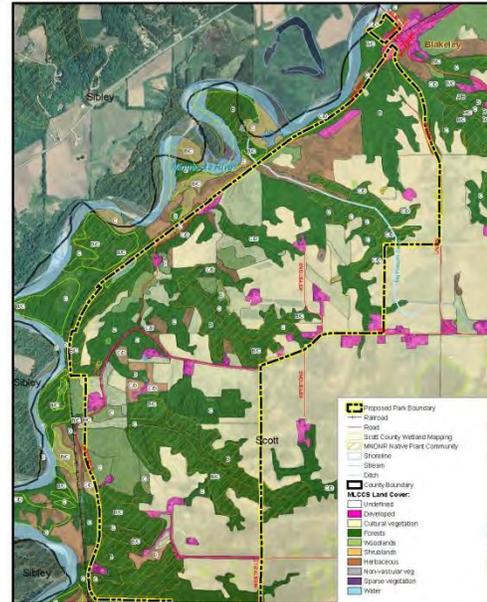


Figure 12: Minnesota Land Cover Classification Inventory



Native Plant Communities

MLCCS mapping identified the majority of the park’s forested uplands as Maple Basswood Forest (quality ranks A/B to D) and Oak Forest - Mesic Subtype (quality ranks A/B to D). Excellent groundcover exists at many locations. Invasion by non-native plants is minimal, despite garlic mustard and common buckthorn being common in the region. Poorer quality native upland forests and woodlands received their rank due to a combination of historical logging (resulting in the absence or scarcity of keystone species), historical grazing (resulting a in depauperate ground layer and abundance of armed and other grazing-resistant vegetation), low native species and/or structural diversity, low recruitment of keystone vegetation (e.g., oaks), invasive species (including common buckthorn, Tartarian honeysuckle, and garlic mustard), and severe erosion (commonly associated with the forests’ steep ravines).

The park contains areas of Floodplain Forest near the town of Blakeley and along the park’s western boundary. River flooding is a dominant disturbance and it is impossible to manage nutrients or flooding frequency, which determines the plant community structure and composition. Generally this results in low plant species diversity.

In addition to these native forests, several other native plant communities were also found in the park, including Aspen Forest, Lowland Hardwood Forest, Eastern Red Cedar Woodland, Oak Woodland-Brushland, Mesic Oak Savanna, Mesic Prairie, Willow Swamp, Wet Meadow, and Mixed Emergent Marsh.

Shade suppression is occurring in some of the park’s forests. Dense growth of aggressive woody plants (including both native and non-native species) can shade and suppress ground layer vegetation and result in the loss of beneficial ground cover. The loss of soil-stabilizing

plants often leads to erosion, which can result in loss of topsoil, loss of native seed and propagules, and sedimentation and nutrient enrichment of aquatic resources such as lakes and wetlands.

Non-native and cultural vegetation within the park is dominated by cultivated agricultural fields, altered/non-native deciduous forest, grasslands with sparse deciduous trees, altered/non-native wetlands, and rural/residential areas with small percentages of impervious surface.

Wildlife

A wildlife survey was not conducted in the park; however, the large blocks of contiguous natural habitat on bluffs and in ravines are expected to support area-sensitive species that are regionally rare due to habitat loss and fragmentation. Uncommon wildlife species likely to utilize the Blakeley Bluffs area includes:

Forests: Cerulean Warbler, Louisiana Waterthrush, Least Flycatcher, Acadian Flycatcher, Hooded Warbler, Red-shouldered Hawk

Blufftops & Brushlands: Eastern Towhee, Whip-poor-will, Lark Sparrow

Minnesota River (adjacent to the park): Bald Eagle, Smooth Soft-shell Turtle, Sandy Stream Tiger Beetle, Northern Rough-winged Swallow, Bank Swallow, Kingfisher; also rare species such as King Rail, Forster's Tern, Common Moorhen

Rare Plants & Animals

Endangered, threatened, and special concern plant and animal species and animal congregations (e.g., heron rookeries) are recorded and tracked in the MNDNR's Natural Heritage Database. As of March 2010, 13 records of rare plants or animals were documented within one mile of the park's proposed boundary. These records include:

- (2) American ginseng
- Rare mussels: (1) Black sandshell, (1) Ebonyshell, (1) Monkeyface, (2) Mucket, (1) Pistolgrip, (1) Smooth softshell, and (1) Winged mapleleaf
- (2) Shovelnose sturgeon
- Western fox snake

In addition, a colonial waterbird nesting site has been documented within one mile of the park.

Conservation Priorities, Issues and Opportunities

Core Habitats and Connectivity

Blakeley Bluffs Regional Park Reserve represents one of the most important concentrations of large, native habitats in Scott County and is one of only several large, continuous blocks of habitat in the surrounding region. Therefore, protecting the existing vegetation and preventing more habitat fragmentation are the two most important conservation goals. While existing land uses, habitat fragmentation, fire-exclusion, invasive species, and severe ravine erosion

have compromised many of these natural areas and limited their conservation value, the area provides unique opportunities for natural resource protection, enhancement, and expansion, and could become an important recreational destination in the Twin Cities metropolitan area. Restoring native ecosystems, enhancing degraded habitats, addressing invasive species infestations and erosion, providing ecological connections, and protecting and buffering core habitats are each critical to maximize the conservation benefits of the park. Restoring large blocks of high quality native plant communities will provide habitat mosaics for a diversity of wildlife species and especially favor species with large territories, special habitat needs, or isolation from human activity. These habitat mosaics should center on the park's highest quality natural areas and be expanded outward to encompass lower quality natural and cultural vegetation.

While important conservation steps can be taken inside the park, additional buffer areas could be established around the park with partnerships, conservation easements, and other mechanisms. Such buffers will provide additional natural resource protection and conservation value to the park and region by reducing biological edge effects, dumping and uncontrolled trespass to the core natural areas in the park. Existing conservation lands in the area owned by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, MNDNR, and Ney Nature Center offer unique opportunities for collaborating on a joint partnership to accomplish land acquisition and buffering, ecological restoration, and long-term stewardship. Such a partnership might allow pooled funding and shared resources (e.g., technical resources, equipment, volunteers) for the mutual benefit of the natural resources and the individual partners. Adjacent landowners can be provided with technical assistance and cost-sharing for stormwater management, conservation plantings (e.g., WRP, CRP), native landscaping and screening on their properties. Educational programs for all nearby residents could inform them of the park's conservation goals and what they can do to assist (construct rain gardens upstream of the park, install native landscaping for ecological buffering, restrict pet cats to indoors, etc.).

Forests

The park's most significant natural features include the bluffs leading down to the Minnesota River and their associated mesic forests. Many of these forests are ranked as B/C and higher, but are impacted or threatened by ravine erosion, invasive plants, and overall fragmentation due to adjacent agricultural land uses. When habitat blocks are small and interrupted by cultural habitats (e.g., cropland and development), species and disturbances from the edge interfere with the life cycles of species living inside the forests. This is called "edge effect." Reducing the edge effect of forest blocks improves their quality and insulates them against future changes, should temperatures become warmer or other new environmental challenges arise. Large blocks of intact habitat are critical to the survival of many area-sensitive species (e.g., Scarlet Tanager).

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Most of the park's forested ravines show signs of historical and/or active erosion. The expanding ravines result in damaged forests, degraded water quality and aquatic habitats, and opportunities for invasion by garlic mustard and other aggressive non-native plants. Road cuts are another source of erosion in the park reserve.

Woodlands, Wetlands & Prairies

Many of the non-forested remnant native plant communities within the park are small, but they add important habitat and wildlife diversity to the landscape. These include oak woodlands and bluff top prairies on well-drained, drought-prone areas (e.g., sandy soils, west- and south-facing slopes). Some of these habitats are not included in the MLCCS mapping because of their small size or degraded state. Invasive plants in these habitats include sweet clovers and smooth brome grass (abundant in open grasslands and brushlands), and reed canary grass, which dominates some of the park's wetlands

Many of the park's native plant communities (e.g., bluff-top prairies, oak savannas, oak woodlands, and wet meadows) are formerly fire-maintained communities. Exclusion of fire from these plant communities has resulted in encroachment by trees and shrubs, leading to increased shading, loss of native plants and habitat for rare wildlife (including dragonflies, birds, and mammals), and erosion. Unlike Maple-Basswood Forest which can thrive without fire, many native plant communities require frequent fire or other natural disturbance to persist.

Minnesota River

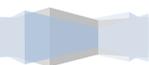
The Minnesota River represents a conservation corridor of statewide significance. Maintaining existing contiguous habitat, improving existing habitats, and controlling erosion are important conservation goals for the park, given its steep slopes and adjacency to the Minnesota River.

Surface waters within the park should be managed to provide the highest quality water and aquatic habitats so that the park's ecosystems as well as the adjacent Minnesota River are protected and enhanced. Surface water management should include low-impact development (LID) techniques, ecological stormwater treatment trains, and other best management practices. Special efforts may be necessary to manage runoff from contributing off-site subwatersheds, including rate and volume management of runoff from cropland at the tops of ravines.

Invasive Species

Invasive vegetation exists in all but the highest quality native plant communities within the park. These species thrive in disturbed habitats and often dominate and outcompete native plants, resulting in poor habitat diversity and a lower resilience in the face of disturbances and environmental change. Therefore, the control of invasive plants is an important restoration and management issue. Invasive animals, such as non-native earthworms, may also be degrading park forests; however, obvious indicators of widespread earthworm invasion have not been documented in the park reserve.

Invasive species pose a significant threat to native plant communities, even during ecological restoration, enhancement, and management activities. The MNDNR has developed guidelines to minimize the introduction and/or movement of invasive species (Appendix C). These guidelines should be followed at all times within the park to prevent new introductions as well as the spread of invasive species within the park reserve.



Species of Greatest Conservation Need

Establishing Blakeley Bluffs Park Reserve as a refuge for certain Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) would be appropriate. As indicated above, uncommon wildlife probably already utilize the park reserve; however, implementation of habitat improvements and other conservation programs within the park reserve would likely attract more rare species.

Park Development and Surface Water and Groundwater Protection

Due to Blakeley Bluffs Park Reserve's ecological context and high quality natural resources, special care should be given to park development. The development and use of the park should not compromise the integrity of this County-level significant natural resource. As discussed above, protection of water resources is one of the most important tasks to ensure healthy ecosystems, especially the Minnesota River and its associated floodplains and wetlands. Techniques that should be employed to protect the integrity of the park during development, and protect surface and groundwater resources, include:

- Conservation Planning and Design. Follow principles of protecting natural areas and minimizing adverse impacts.
- Ecological Buffers. Promote native perennial plantings, especially along watercourses and shorelines.
- Low-Impact Development (LID). Use these techniques for sustainable stormwater management (e.g., infiltration) in developments.
- Ecological Stormwater Treatment Trains. Manage stormwater using a series of natural elements (e.g., swales, prairies, wetlands, ponds).
- Erosion Control. Use appropriate techniques to address erosion from steeper slopes and along trails and roads.
- Sealing of Unused Wells. Abandon unused wells per Minnesota Department of Health standards.
- Proper Material Storage and Handling. Store, handle, and dispose of hazardous and recyclable materials using County waste management procedures.
- Other Best Management Practices. Use best practices in areas where they are available and appropriate.

Boundary Plan

Introduction

This section presents the vision and goals for the park reserve, describes the park reserve boundary and process of identifying an alignment, and details the anticipated function of the lands selected for the park reserve. The firm SRF Consulting Group was hired to provide master planning and site analysis and to facilitate the process of identifying the boundary.

Boundary Plan

Based on early community feedback and technical findings a set of broad goals and a vision for the future park reserve emerged. From these a set of criteria was established to guide selection of lands to acquire for the park reserve and these were used along with a set of alignment considerations to design the overall boundary (Figure 3 Map 1). Through an iterative review process that involved the CDT, Parks Advisory Commission, County Board, Blakeley Township Board and residents of Scott County the 6,000 acre Blakeley Bluffs Park Reserve Search area (Figure 2) was refined to approximately 2,440 acres.

Park Reserve Goals

The following park reserve goals emerged:

- Preserve scenic character, historic landscapes and offer scenic viewing of river valley.
- Enhance native plant communities and expand core wildlife habitat areas.
- Protect opportunity for destination hiking trails, river access, canoeing and kayaking, and bike trail connections.
- Protect cultural resources and Native American history of site.
- Protect and enhance opportunities for nature and culture exploration.
- Partnership with Ney Environmental Learning Center in Le Sueur County.
- Create opportunity to improve water quality of Minnesota River.
- Create possibilities for economic growth in Blakeley – “Little Lanesboro” concept.

Vision for Blakeley Bluffs Park Reserve

This vision looks ahead after decades of acquisition and stewardship efforts have set the stage for a new master plan and development of the site.

Blakeley Bluffs is a regional destination for river-bluff hiking, canoeing and kayaking. The park reserve is known for its high quality scenery and habitat and trail network that forms a unique water and bluff grand-round adventure trail through the Minnesota River Valley landscape. Restoration of the park reserves' landscape to a corridor of forests, woodlands, prairies and wetlands has created a quality natural environment where natural and cultural resource exploration, camping and biking opportunities compliment the grand-round trail offering the best outdoor recreation setting in the region.



Figure 14.
Parcel Review Criteria and Alignment Considerations used in Designing Park Reserve Boundary

<i>Parcel Review Criteria</i>	<i>Alignment Considerations</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality of Natural Resources • Scenic Views of River Valley • Extent of Bluff and Ravine Areas • Buffer Lands for Bluff and Ravine Areas • Known or Potential Cultural Resources • Access to Minnesota River • Adjacency with Minnesota Department of Natural Resources Lands • Buildable Area for Park Development • Proximity to cities of Henderson and Blakeley • Proximity to Ney Nature Center 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilize easily recognized features to create clear boundaries (roadways, distinct topographic features) • Minimize impacts to landowners. Follow parcel lines and agricultural fields • Community interest in supporting long-term agriculture • Landowner interest • US Fish and Wildlife acquisition plans for the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge • Contiguous land areas

Park Reserve Boundary

This section gives an overview of the park reserve boundary and the primary factors that went into determining its placement (Figure 3). It is broken up into a description of the Overall, Western and Northern and the Southern and Eastern portions of the boundary. (Full page enlargements of the park reserve can be found in the Maps Section.)

Overall Boundary

The Blakeley Bluffs Park Reserve boundary encompasses approximately 2,440 acres of land. (Full page master plan images appear in the Maps Section.) At its northern tip the boundary includes a portion of the hamlet of Blakeley. To the south the boundary extends just beyond a portion of Salisbury Hill Road and is adjacent to the Ney Wildlife Management Area. On its western side, the park reserve is bounded by the Minnesota River and floodplain lands. The eastern park reserve boundary follows roadways and parcel lines.

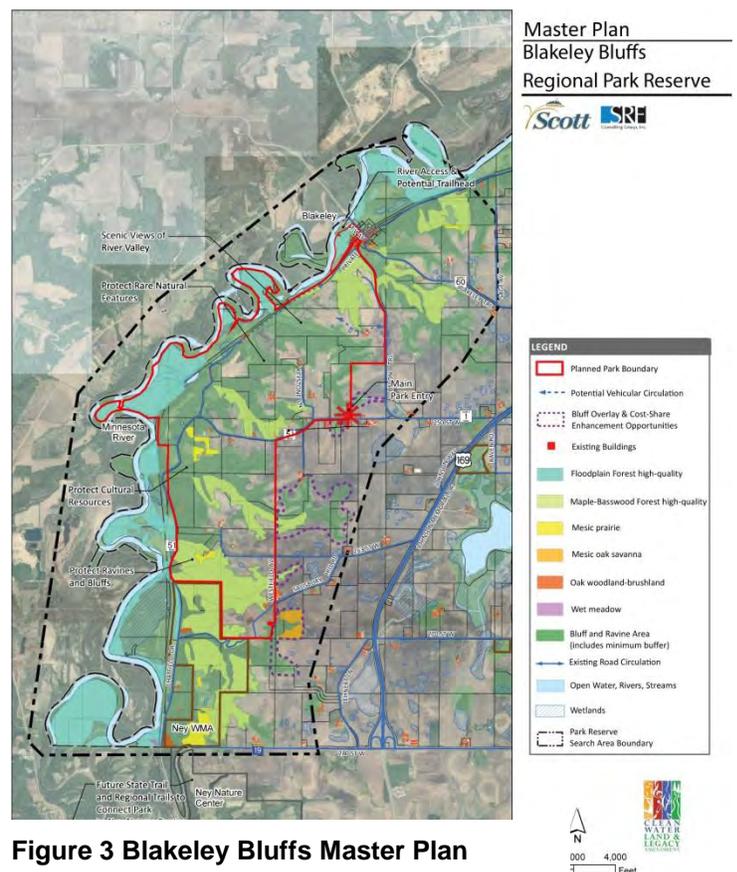


Figure 3 Blakeley Bluffs Master Plan

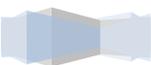
Western and Northern Boundary

The western park reserve boundary follows the Minnesota River and its floodplain. This boundary captures lands that offer outstanding natural, cultural and scenic features that will support outstanding recreation activities and resource conservation. There were three primary considerations in determining the extent of the western boundary from the hamlet of Blakeley on the north end to the Ney Wildlife Management Area (Ney WMA) on the south. Assembling sufficient contiguous area that as a whole will protect the identified goals for the site was a strong consideration. Access to the Minnesota River and to areas of floodplain landscape at key locations was identified as being important to providing quality river-based recreation as a compliment to bluff and upland based activities, and to support a connection with the hamlet of Blakeley as a gateway to the river and a “Little Lanesboro” concept. Floodplain lands offering access to the Minnesota River across the Burlington Northern Railway were considered a high priority. This rail line runs between the Minnesota River and the base of the bluffs the full length of the park reserve, limiting pedestrian and vehicular access to official railway crossings. New crossings for park reserve purposes are unlikely, making acquisition of areas that have existing crossings a priority.

Eastern and Southern Boundary

At the northern tip of the park reserve, the eastern boundary follows County Road 1 and parcel lines towards County Road 51 where the site of the future main park entrance has been preliminarily identified. The boundary continues to the west along County Road 51, and then follows parcel lines southward, to just south of Salisbury Hill Road. The southern boundary follows parcel lines and is adjacent to the Ney WMA. Lands in what is roughly the eastern half of the park reserve were selected for their natural features, capacity to buffer cultural and natural resource areas, opportunity for native plant cover restoration and habitat expansion, and for locating infrastructure and amenities related to park use and development. Specific alignment of the eastern boundary uses parcel lines and roadways to limit impacts to landowners and for ease of boundary management.

The southern park reserve boundary was based on the presence of the Ney WMA. Adjacency with this property provides protection of the ecologically linked resources within the WMA and park reserve and provides an opportunity for cooperative programming and land stewardship between the County and MNDNR. The specific alignment of the southern boundary follows roadways and parcel lines. Several parcels to the south of the park reserve boundary were removed from a preliminary park reserve concept. Strong landowner opposition to the park reserve triggered a reassessment of the potential value of the lands to the park reserve. It was determined that while the forests in this area are of exceptionally high quality and the properties potentially could offer trail connections, land owner concerns outweighed the need to plan for these lands as a part of the park reserve today. Partnering with the private landowners on stewardship activities will be an effective way to protect these ecologically impressive lands. In the coming years and with a future development master plan process, these parcels should be re-evaluated for their potential functional value to the regional park reserve for paved trail connection, recreational use and other possible functions. Any future planning would also include public, resident and landowner involvement.

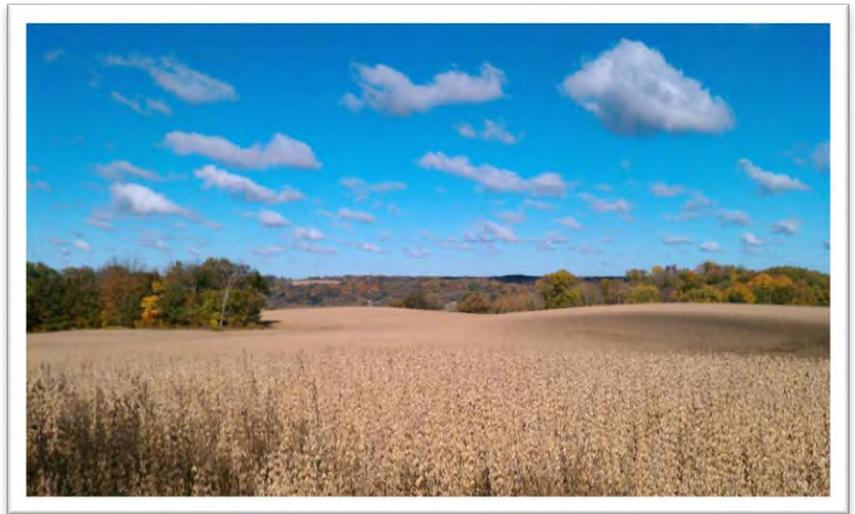


Park Reserve Elements and Land Function

Below is a detailed discussion of the park reserve features and land function identified as priorities for the park reserve and intended to be protected through acquisition.

Scenic Character and Views

Acquisition of the site's contiguous land areas featuring ravines and bluff tops was identified as critical to ensure the scenic and historic character of Minnesota River Valley landscape continues to define the site and offer a quality setting for outdoor recreation. It will be important to acquire and subsequently restore residential and agricultural areas to native land covers in order to protect the fundamental character of the park reserve. Bluff property in the northern and central areas of the site offer extensive view sheds of the Minnesota Valley. Acquisition of these areas will ensure the scenic character of the bluff landscape is a part of the recreational experience of Blakeley Bluffs. Future site design and placement of infrastructure and support amenities will need to carefully consider impacts to views and sightlines.



Ecological and Natural Resources

The Blakeley Bluffs area has regional ecological significance as one of only several large, continuous blocks of habitat in the surrounding region and as the only large area of contiguous bluff and ravine landscape currently protected or planned for protection on the Minnesota River in the region. Acquisition and restoration of the ravines and the intervening upland areas currently in agricultural and residential cover is intended to enhance the site's value as a wildlife corridor and habitat area for rare species, to preserve native plant communities and biological diversity and to help address ravine erosion which may be contributing to poor water quality of the Minnesota River. Due to the extreme slopes of ravine areas the majority of the visitor access and experience in the upland portions of the park reserve will occur in the restored agricultural fields.

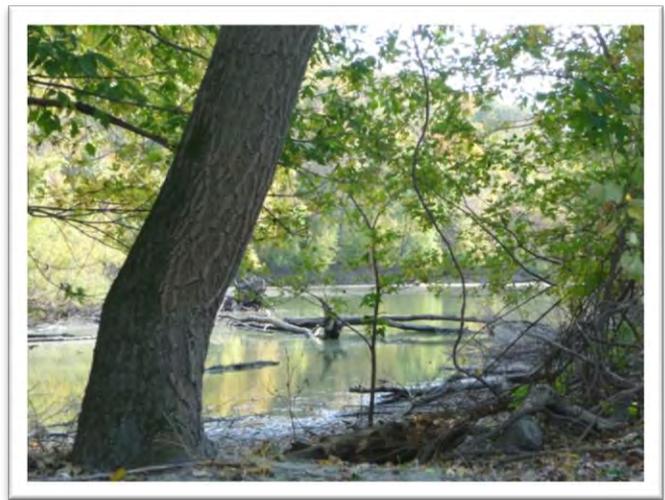


Cultural Resources

Blakeley Bluffs Park Reserve presents a significant opportunity to protect culturally important sites and to interpret the intensive occupation of the Minnesota River and its tributaries by indigenous people during the Ceramic/Mound state (ca. 3,000 BP to A.D. 1750) as well as the Euro-American history period. Archaeological sites representing both pre-contact and early Euro-American are documented in this area and the lands have been identified as having high potential for additional cultural resources. Bluff and ravine areas have the highest potential for containing pre-contact cultural artifacts. Inclusion of these cultural resources into the park reserve was recognized as being important to their protection and for the opportunity to interpret the history of the site, particularly the story of the earliest inhabitants of the area.

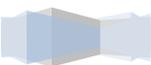
Gateway to the River and “Little Lanesboro Concept”

Floodplain properties adjacent to the hamlet of Blakeley are included in the boundary, identified to provide a ‘Gateway to the River’ for direct access to the Minnesota River for passive recreation (canoeing/kayaking, fishing, birding, and informal swimming) and educational pursuits providing a superb point of interaction with the river. Eight acres of these floodplain lands are former residential properties that were purchased by the County Highway Department over the past several years due to repeated flooding and will be transferred for park purposes. Capacity of the lands to provide a motor boat access and the need and site appropriateness for a power-boat access will be evaluated during a future development master planning process.



The floodplain lands adjacent to the hamlet of Blakeley also support a **“Little Lanesboro”** concept that emerged from a public tour of the park reserve site. The concept envisions economic growth possibilities within the town of Blakeley related to the site as a trailhead and Gateway to the River. Small business venture opportunities could be based on these outdoor activities. The concept recognizes and builds on existing trail, canoe and kayak use in the area, on the unique character of the hamlet, and the

proximity to the City of Henderson, a river community that actively promotes nature exploration and education.



Recreational Uses

While recreational and development amenity planning is not a component of acquisition master plans, the Blakeley Bluffs park reserve goals and vision reflect recreational use and conservation ideas that came through strongly in the public workshops and parallel the values shared by members of the community. These set the stage for future use and will guide acquisition priorities. They are in-line with the concept of park reserves, and through careful design should fit sustainably within the natural and cultural resources of the site; however a development master planning process will confirm future uses, amenities and infrastructure. The uses most commonly identified in the process included an extensive network of hiking trails, bike trail connections and linkages to regional and state trails; wildlife observation and nature study; camping; cultural resources learning and river canoeing and kayaking.



A grand-round water and bluff trail concept was envisioned to meander through a diversity of bluff top and ravine landscapes and then a paddle on the river. Camping could be incorporated and potentially the hamlet of Blakeley could offer outfitting, food and lodging accommodations. The City of Henderson, upstream approximately 20 river miles currently offers similar accommodations and potentially could serve as the upstream gateway for the water and bluff trail.

Environmental Education and Outdoor Recreation Programming

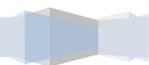
It is the County's intent to partner with organizations and other public agencies as much as possible to offer outdoor and environmental programming in the park reserve. A short distance to the south of the park reserve across the Le Sueur County boundary is the Ney Environmental Learning Center. The Ney offers year round environmental learning and outdoor recreation programming and events. The County will explore opportunities to collaborate with the Ney, and the Cities of New Prague, Belle Plaine and Henderson in delivering programs and activities.



Main Entry and Road System

A possible future main entrance has been identified on County Road 51 (250th Street), close to the intersection of County Road 1 and County Road 51, providing fairly direct access to/from

Interstate 169. The County's 2030 Comprehensive Transportation Plan identifies the current and future functional classification of County Road 1 as Collector street, but in the future will be tied in with an extension of County Road 2, an A Minor Arterial. The existing road network is expected to be utilized and a possible access road provided towards the north end of the park from County Road 1 (Union Trail). The master plan also identifies the possibility of making a road connection along the base of the bluffs, reconnecting Chatfield Drive where it flooded out previously, if it is found feasible and meets a vehicular access need.



Conflicts and Mitigation

Land Acquisition and Residents

Residents within and adjacent to the park reserve expressed interest in the County's approach to land acquisition – is the County actively seeking to acquire park land? Will the County utilize eminent domain? Residents were provided with the County's current approach to acquiring land for the park reserve. The County is not actively seeking to purchase land, but will respond to opportunities as they arise. For instance, if a landowner approaches the County with the intent to sell or if land is proposed for development the County will consider acquisition. If funding is identified, the County may choose to purchase the property. While, the County has legal authority to utilize eminent domain and has chosen to use it related to road projects, it has been the County's practice to only buy parkland from willing sellers and this practice is expected to continue. This acquisition approach was shared with residents throughout the master planning process. It will be critical that residents and property owners continue to receive consistent and updated communication regarding the park reserve. The County is committed to proactively communicating updates on the park reserve and to proactively clarify the County's acquisition approach and any changes to the approach.

Park Roads

Much of the road system within the planned park reserve boundary is currently under the jurisdiction of Blakeley Township with the remainder under County jurisdiction. While a future development master plan will determine the need and location for the park reserve road network, this Plan anticipates it will primarily utilize the existing roadway network and could include the addition of an access road on the north side of the park off of Union Trail and potentially (if feasible) a reconnection of Chatfield Drive towards the hamlet of Blakeley. Typically the road network within a developed park or park reserve offering public services is the responsibility of the park agency jurisdiction, in this case Scott County. Blakeley Bluffs is anticipated to be in an acquisition phase for years to come, and possibly decades, with public use either not offered during that time or offered at very low levels. As land is acquired for the park reserve and as interim or formal facility development occurs, the County will work with the Township to evaluate when the transition of a road should be made from Township responsibility to the County.

Implementation: Acquisition, Operations and Maintenance

Overview

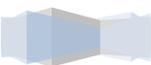
Implementation of this plan will be a long term effort, with land acquisition likely occurring over the next thirty years. Operations and maintenance activities, both for property and natural resources, will be needed as acquisitions are made. The following describes the governing and operational framework within which the plan will be carried out and provides an overview of the acquisition, operations and maintenance strategies that will be utilized. This section also includes an *acquisition plan* for acquiring lands for the park reserve over the coming decades and introduces a concept being explored that could offer land conservation and recreation in the Blakeley Bluffs area through a collaborative, multi-agency effort as an ‘outdoor recreation complex’.

Governance and Operational Framework

The Scott County Board of Commissioners is the governing and policy board with jurisdictional and operational authority for Scott County regional parks and trail facilities. The Scott County Parks Advisory Commission, appointed by the Board, serves as ambassadors for the citizens of the County and to inform and make recommendations to the Board on policy, planning, operational and financial matters related to the Scott County regional parks and trails facilities and system.

In December 2010, the Scott County Board and Three Rivers Park District Board entered into a unique operating partnership, the “Partnership”, to collaboratively operate the regional facilities within Scott County – both those under Scott County ownership and those under Three Rivers Park District ownership. Under the Partnership, Three Rivers will assist in the operation and maintenance of the park and trail units owned by Scott County and will continue to operate the Three Rivers facilities within Scott County. The intent of the Partnership is to bring efficiencies to the provision of parks and trails to the citizens of Scott County.

Ultimate policy and management direction for Scott County facilities, including Blakeley Bluffs Park Reserve, will continue to be set by the Scott County Board, with guidance from the Scott County Parks Advisory Commission. However, under the new Partnership, it will be done in consideration of the collaborative implementation effort of the two agencies and within a governance structure that includes a Partnership policy-making board made up of the chair and vice chair from the Scott County Board of Commissioners and the Three Rivers Park District Board of Commissioners. Additionally, under the Partnership, a Three Rivers board member will serve on the Parks Advisory Commission.



Ordinances

Scott County has adopted Park Ordinance, Number 29 to provide for the safe and peaceful use of the parks, trails, and corresponding facilities. Scott County's Park Ordinance, Number 29 will be enforced for all users and activities within the Scott County-owned facilities of the park and trail system, including Blakeley Bluffs as land is acquired. The Three Rivers Park District Ordinance is enforced at Three Rivers Park District facilities. The two ordinances are very similar, however there are differences. Enforcement and communication of the ordinances will continue to be monitored and Scott County and the Park District will work proactively and cooperatively to remedy confusion or potential conflicts that could arise from having two sets of rules and regulations.

Acquisition Plan

Implementation of the Blakeley Bluffs Park Reserve Acquisition Master Plan is expected to be a long-term process, with land acquisitions being made over the next thirty or more years and the possibility of in-holdings remaining within the park reserve boundary even longer. ("Inholding" is a term used to describe private lands that are within a planned park boundary and identified to someday be purchased for parkland.) The total investment required is substantial and given park land acquisition needs elsewhere in the Scott County park and trail system responding to acquisition opportunities whether in the short or long-term could be a challenge. To be successful the acquisition approach will need to be flexible, to use a process of prioritization, to work in partnerships and to emphasize maintaining open dialog and good relationships with the residents and landowners in the area.

It is the County's practice to acquire lands for park purposes from willing sellers and only as funding permits. While the County has legal authority to utilize eminent domain and has chosen to use it related to road projects, it has been the County's practice to purchase parkland only from willing sellers and this practice is expected to continue.

In the 2030 Comprehensive Plan, a number of Siting and Acquisition Guidelines were established and a Park Land Functional Analysis System created to help guide acquisition considerations and to evaluate the priority of specific parcels. Together these will help ensure success in meeting the long-term acquisition goals and purpose of the planned park reserve. The following strategies are the focus of the acquisition approach for Blakeley Bluffs:

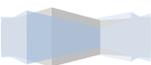
1. *Land Use Changes and Parcel Availability Status* – Staying apprised of potential land use changes and land sales is an important element of a successful acquisition program. Primary means of doing so include; having consistent communication and dialog and building relationships with landowners and residents of the area and with Township officials; tracking development applications and building permits through the County's Planning and Zoning process and; and monitoring real-estate listings.
2. *Resident and Landowner Involvement* – Involvement of residents and landowners brings valuable insights to planning, acquisitions and operations. It adds creativity and a ground-

level awareness to these processes and decisions. Periodic up-date mailings, public meetings, updates to Township officials and informal discussions are all activities that will be used to maintain open dialog with the community and individual residents.

3. *Parcel Prioritization* - An evaluation system has been established to prioritize parcels for potential park purposes. As acquisition opportunities arise this system will be used to help determine the County's response.
4. *Level of Threat* - Assessing the level of threat is an important part of prioritizing acquisitions and allocation of financial resources. If a parcel that has been identified for the park reserve is in imminent threat of having its land use changed to be incompatible with future park needs (e.g. from agricultural to residential), the parcel may need to be moved up in the acquisition priority list. Areas that have been identified for future park lands but have a low level of threat, due to remoteness from development pressures or a landowner who is simply not willing to sell, can be placed further down the priority list.
5. *Maximize Opportunities of County's Land Use Growth Plan* - With a well-planned and targeted growth plan landowners can be approached early on by the County and be made aware of the future opportunity to sell (or donate) their land for park purposes. Landowners should view being located in a future park or corridor as a potential asset since there is one more potential buyer (the County) when they are ready to sell.
6. *Leveraging* - There are multiple ways in which the County can leverage resources. Acquisitions grants, cost share programs, donations and multiple partners should be explored.
7. *Partnerships* - Options to work with other agencies on acquisitions will be regularly explored.
8. *Donations* - Donations of property and financial donations can be an effective element of a park land acquisition program.

Collaborative Approach

Scott County and the MNDNR are exploring a partnership to provide an 'Outdoor Recreation Complex' in Blakeley that blends regional park and wildlife management area activities. This concept emerged from an affiliated collaborative planning process that had begun in 2010 to maximize community goals for land conservation and outdoor recreation and to facilitate cooperative planning and management in Blakeley and the surrounding river bluffs area. (Participants included the MNDNR, US Fish and Wildlife, Minnesota Valley Trust, Le Sueur and Sibley Counties, City of Henderson, Ney Environmental Learning Center and area townships.) While this concept is still preliminary, the integration of two or three different categories of outdoor recreation facilities into an outdoor recreation complex is being considered:



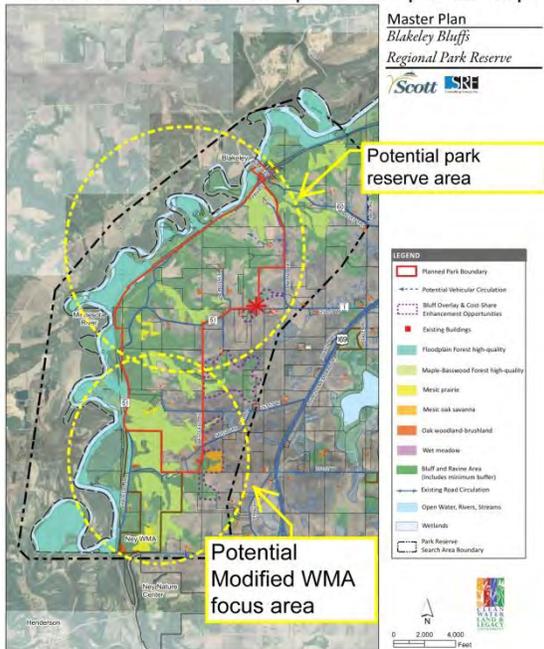
Regional Park or Park Reserve: Depending on the size, a portion of the area could be designated as either a Regional Park or Park Reserve

Wildlife Management Area (WMA): Could expand the existing Ney WMA along Highway 19 to offer enhanced hunting. By statute and past practice, WMA's have limitations on other types of outdoor recreation facilities like paved trails.

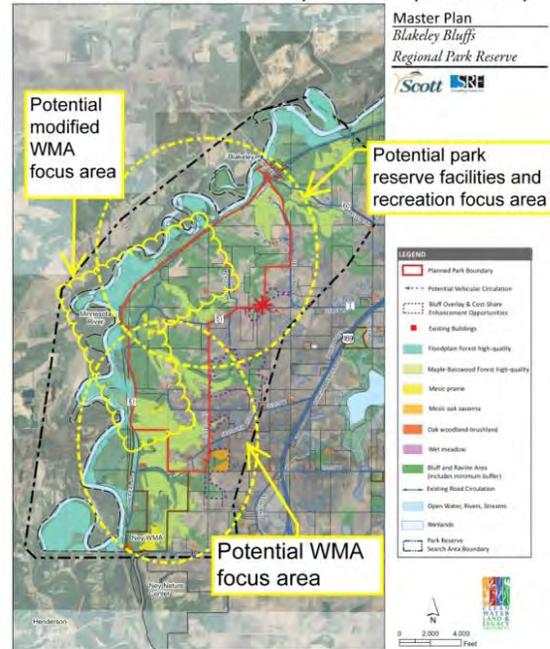
Modified WMA: This is a relatively new approach that was authorized by the Legislature in 2006 for the Vermillion Highlands in Dakota County. The Modified WMA provides traditional hunting experiences but also allows other recreational uses such as paved trails, cross country ski, etc. in a managed setting.

Under this concept, segments of the land identified in the park reserve boundary would be designated for each respective use. Management of the lands would be performed collaboratively between the County and the MNDNR under an overall master plan for the area. The collaborative approach offers potential benefits, including shared resources and expertise, access to funding not readily available to Scott County, ability to address current land acquisition opportunities, and the ability to achieve the goal of land conservation and outdoor recreation more effectively and efficiently. Potential challenges in the collaborative approach include potential concerns about expanding hunting, resources required to develop, implement, and manage the partnership, legislative approval needed for the Modified WMA, and the challenges of managing hunting and outdoor recreation uses simultaneously.

Outdoor Recreation Complex Example Concept



Outdoor Recreation Complex Example Concept



Operations and Maintenance

Maintenance of Blakeley Bluffs Park Reserve will be overseen by the Scott County Parks and Trails Department and carried out through the Partnership, with activities being completed by the County's Highway and Facilities Departments and Three Rivers Park District.

Public Services and Safety

The Scott County Sheriff's office is responsible for patrolling County parks and trail facilities. A Sheriff's Deputy or a Community Service Officer will respond to calls for service needs at the park reserve. Community Service Officers are uniformed, non-sworn officers. In addition to responding to calls for service, the 911 First Responder system will answer any emergency call made from the park reserve. Scott County participates in a statewide mutual aid program that facilitates the sharing of public safety resources in times of emergency or other unusual conditions. This program serves to facilitate the assistance received from surrounding police agencies, including City of Belle Plaine police and Three Rivers Park District police.

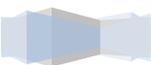
As part of the new Partnership agreement, Scott County and Three Rivers Park District are evaluating long-term public safety operations to determine the best approach to providing a safe, consistent, efficient, and cost-effective service to the public. Considerations include ways to enhance communication and collaboration between the Sheriff's Office and Three Rivers Park District Police. Some examples include: utilizing the Scott County 911 system for Three Rivers officers in Scott County, open Scott County Sheriff training to Three Rivers officers, and increased resource sharing.

The park reserve is outside the current Metropolitan Urban Service Area (MUSA). There is no public transportation service available in the area at this time.

Property and Natural Resource Stewardship

At the time of acquisition lands are evaluated for health, safety and welfare concerns and existing infrastructure systems such as water and, sewer systems, electrical, and building conditions. Property stewardship activities begin immediately upon acquisition and these activities include, but are not limited to general cleanup of the site, location and identification of property lines and property corners, grounds maintenance, noxious weed control, building maintenance, invasive species control and cultivation of lands currently being farmed. Lands used for farming will either be planted with a cover crop or will continue to be cropped through a rental agreement with the County. Properties with houses can be considered for residential rentals. Scott County has a partnership with the Scott County Community Development Authority (CDA), through which the CDA manages the houses as rental properties.

A review of natural resources is also completed at the time of acquisition. Based on current site condition, land use and the Natural Resources Inventory and Assessment findings a natural resources management brief will be prepared. This will identify rare or significant resources and needed stewardship and will identify potential land restoration or conversion to natural cover opportunities and costs. Whether lands are maintained as cropland or other cultural use (e.g.



lawn) related to residential rentals or converted to natural cover will be based on a review of the natural resource management brief, planned near-term site use, and funding. Overall, the site will be secured and appropriate measures taken to protect it until park development and operations occur.

Partnerships and Volunteers

In addition to the partnership with Three Rivers Park District, Scott County promotes pursuing and working through partnerships whenever possible. It is the County's practice to proactively and cooperatively work with the local, state and federal park providers in Scott County and the region sharing information and resources and identifying and entering into cooperative agreements where it can create efficiencies, improve service or enhance the management of important resources.

Similarly, Scott County is committed to working with volunteers as a means to achieve more with less and to support the community. Volunteering provides youth with job experience, offers purposeful work to retired-age residents, and provides the opportunity for individuals and groups looking to give back to their community. The County will continue to work with existing partnerships and volunteer arrangements and will look for new prospects to carry out work at Blakeley Bluffs through these approaches.

Sustainability

Scott County strives to incorporate sustainable practices into its daily operations, resource management, planning, and design, and construction projects. The County will consider implementation of green technology such as pervious pavement, rain gardens, geothermal heating, green roofs, recycled products, and other innovative techniques into future infrastructure enhancements as appropriate. In implementation of the Blakeley Bluffs Park Reserve concept the County will utilize guidelines such as the Minnesota Sustainable Building Guidelines (B3 Project) and the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED). The County will pursue implementation of sustainable principles that encourage conservation of natural resources, energy conservation, waste reduction, maintenance of healthy systems, and achievement of lowest life-cycle cost.

Public Awareness

Promotion of Scott County's park and trail system and outreach to the public on planning and development issues are primary interests of the Scott County Board of Commissioners and the Parks Advisory Commission. Scott County is committed to providing up-to-date useful information to citizens and park users and to working with residents and other agencies on the long-term implementation of the Blakeley Bluffs Acquisition Master Plan.



Scott County uses a variety of resources to promote its regional park and trail system. Available resources include:

- Scott County SCENE
- Press releases to local media outlets
- Brochures, newsletters, and direct mailings
- On-line presence (website, e-mail lists, maps)
- City/township park & recreation websites
- Regional park & trail maps (Met Council, Cyclopath.org)
- Advertisements in recreation and tourism publications

GoScottGo.org

New technologies and improved access to public databases have greatly enhanced the ability to share accurate park and trail information with residents. Scott County recently partnered with Carver County to develop GoScottGo.org, which includes a clearinghouse of recreational activities, programs, and facilities in Scott County. This website and the underlying initiative is based upon a national “active living” effort, which has found that the overall health of a community is impacted by its built environment and residents’ safe access to recreational opportunities.



GoScottGo.org will be a key component for promoting the Scott County regional park and trail system. The website includes an interactive park and trail mapping application that assists users in charting out their walking, biking, and running routes, as well as find parks and trails close to their home. As park development is completed, the interactive map will be updated to provide the latest data available.

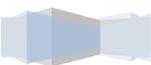
In addition to the above resources, other new opportunities for promotion may arise as part of Scott County’s new partnership agreement with Three Rivers Park District. Three Rivers could provide an increased role in marketing all regional park and trail facilities in Scott County. Scott County will continue to explore additional promotional opportunities (and efficiencies gained) with Three Rivers and other park/trail partner agencies.

Park Planning Construction Projects

As additional park planning projects arise (e.g. development master plan) and construction plans are proposed, public information meetings will be held as a means to inform the public, collect input and have dialogue on ideas and potential conflicts. Scott County is committed to working with residents and other agencies once the design process commences for park construction projects.

Accessibility

Scott County is committed to providing activities, access and resources for all park visitors, including persons with disabilities and members of special population groups and will do so throughout planning, development, and operation and maintenance activities of the regional



park and trail system. Scott County supports equal access for all users to its park and trail facilities. Park facilities will be designed to meet or exceed guidelines established by the Americans with Disabilities Act. Future park facilities will be aligned to accommodate a wide-range of user groups with varying abilities and offer access to many populations. Given the terrain throughout much of Blakeley Bluffs Park Reserve and the likelihood of much of the hiking opportunities to be physically challenging the development master planning should include opportunities for trail segments that are accessible and input from organizations and programs that connect individuals with physical disabilities to programs that facilitate their use of standard amenities.

Scott County's current policies strive to keep public park, trail, and open space facilities affordable for all residents. Future master planning and operations of the site will incorporate affordability considerations.

Estimated Costs and Funding

Estimated Costs

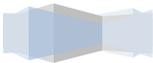
Land Acquisition and Property Stewardship

In total, approximately 2,440 acres in 45 privately held parcels and 9 in Scott County ownership (Appendix B) fall within the planned park reserve boundary. Together, the privately held parcels have an estimated combined 2012 tax-assessed property value of approximately \$14.85 million. Additional acquisition costs will include legal fees, appraisal costs, environmental site assessments, and survey costs, and these will need to be included in a final acquisition cost figure at the time of purchase. Property stewardship is often needed at the time of land acquisition and includes activities such as general demolition, well abandonment, septic tank removal, and other miscellaneous activities. These activities vary substantially from site to site depending on the current use and immediate planned use of the property after acquisition (i.e. for public recreational, cropland, or residential rental use) and their costs will be determined at the time of acquisition

Natural Resources Restoration and Management Costs

Natural resources restoration and management costs vary significantly depending on existing type of land cover (row crop, old field, degraded woodland, high quality woodland), site condition (soils, invasive plants, vegetative structure), target land cover, and the approach to restoration. Per acre costs are listed below for initial restoration and on-going management of generalized land cover types. Determining refined management needs and restoration targets for specific lands and the associated costs will require additional field work and assessment. A natural resources field inventory will be completed and a refined management plan including costs will be prepared as lands are acquired. The costs below reflect the use of contractors. Scott County’s management approach incorporates volunteers and Sentence-to-Serve crews which can substantially reduce costs.

Figure 16. Estimated Natural Resource Restoration and Management Costs		
Restoration/Enhancement Activity	Initial Unit Cost	Management Unit Cost
Cropland to Prairie or Wetland	\$1,000/ac	\$500/ac/yr
Forest/Woodland Enhancement (brushing and limited seeding)	\$1,000/ac	\$250/acre/yr
Old Field/Pasture to Prairie	\$2,000/ac	\$500/ac/yr
Degraded Wetland to Enhanced Wetland	\$2,000/ac	\$500/ac/yr
Ravine Stabilization	\$50- \$500/lf	\$2-10/lf/yr



Operations Estimated Costs

With acquisitions will come maintenance and operational costs. These will vary from site to site. Anticipated operational resource needs, costs and a strategy for meeting those needs will be determined as acquisitions are made. Beginning in 2011, Scott County parks have been operated under the Partnership. Starting in 2011 a part-time seasonal Three Rivers Park District maintenance position was added to the Partnership. Three Rivers Park District's role in directing and carrying out maintenance activities will be expanded in 2012 and future years. As the acquisition plan is implemented, additional resources and capacity will be required to operate and maintain the park. Anticipated operational resource needs, costs and a strategy for meeting those needs will be determined as specific acquisitions are planned.

Funding Sources

A number of potential funding sources are available for regional park land acquisition and natural resources restoration including local, Metropolitan Council, state and federal sources. Traditionally, operations and maintenance activities are funded by the local implementing agencies, in this case Scott County, with some contributions from the Metropolitan Council. For Blakeley Bluffs Park Reserve and other regional facilities in Scott County annual operating costs are funded through the Partnership budget. The primary source of those funds is through Scott County property taxes. Additional operational revenue is received from the State of Minnesota as part of the Operations and Maintenance Fund allocations from the Metropolitan Council.

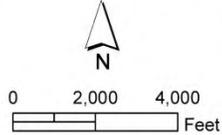
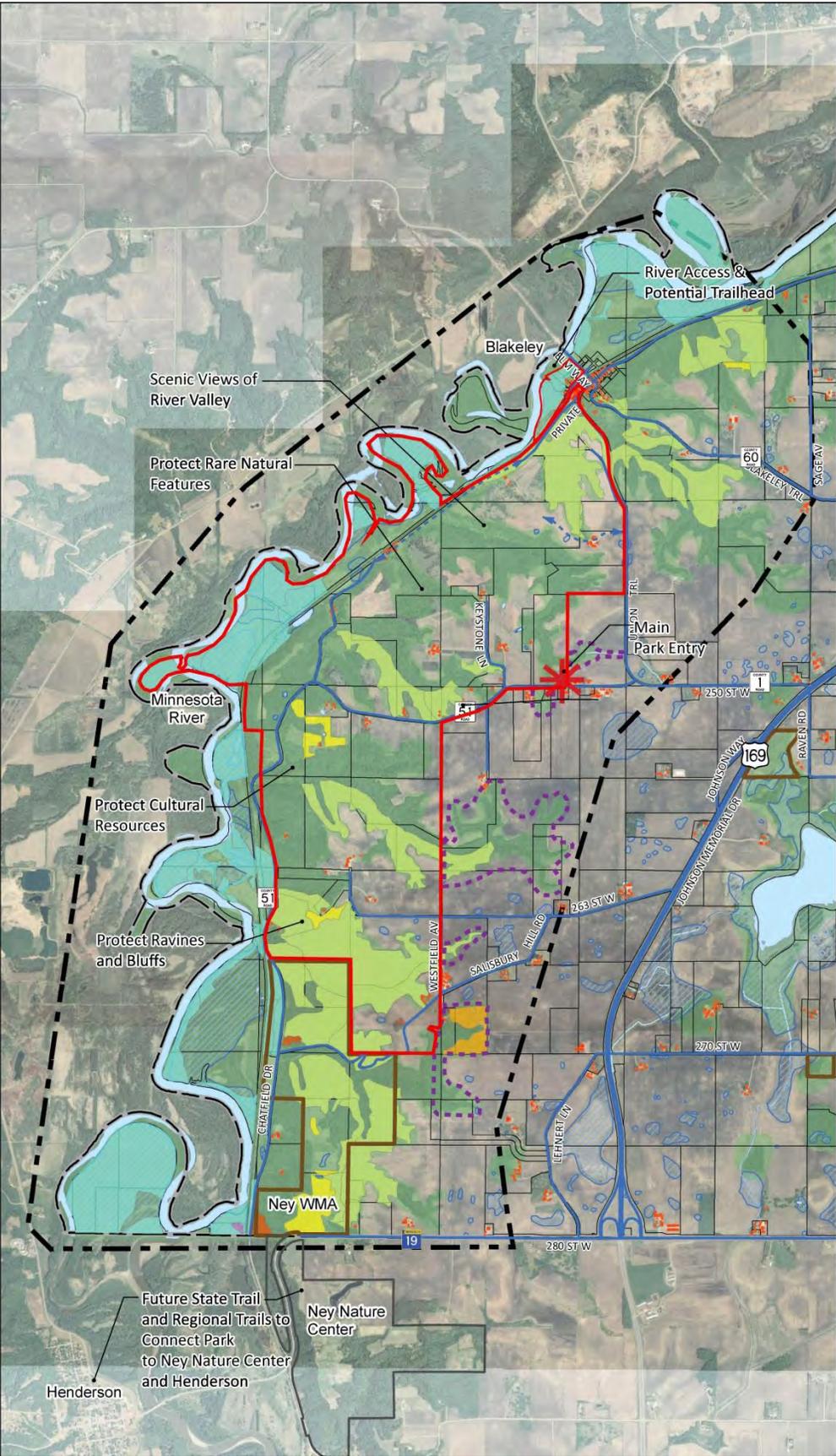
The integration of Three Rivers Park District and further use of volunteers are anticipated to result in an increase in the operational capacity for the park system. While an increase in operational funding will be necessary in the future as the plan is implemented, near term acquisitions and projects are expected to be operated within the existing budget and the efficiencies gained through the Partnership.

Revenue is expected from agricultural rentals where properties with tillable lands acquired and from home rentals in cases where acquisitions include houses or outbuildings. There are approximately 700 acres of tillable land within the park reserve boundary.

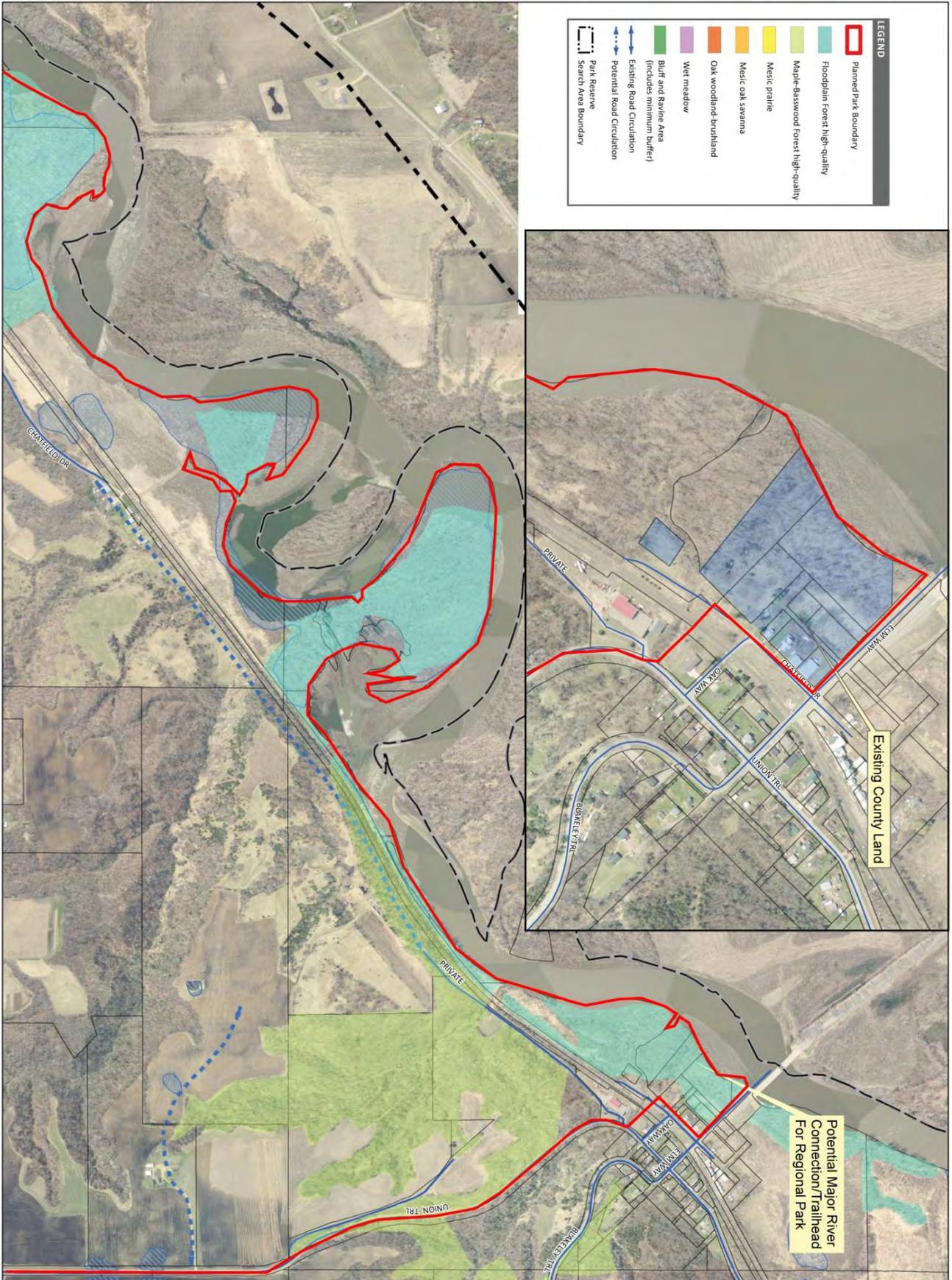
The Metropolitan Council and State of Minnesota provide funding for acquisition and development through the Regional Parks Capital Improvement Program (CIP) and the Minnesota Clean Water, Land and Legacy funds. Acquisition at Blakeley Bluffs Park Reserve may be funded through the Regional Parks CIP, Scott County Capital Investment Program, donations or other funding sources that may be available at the time of development.

MAPS

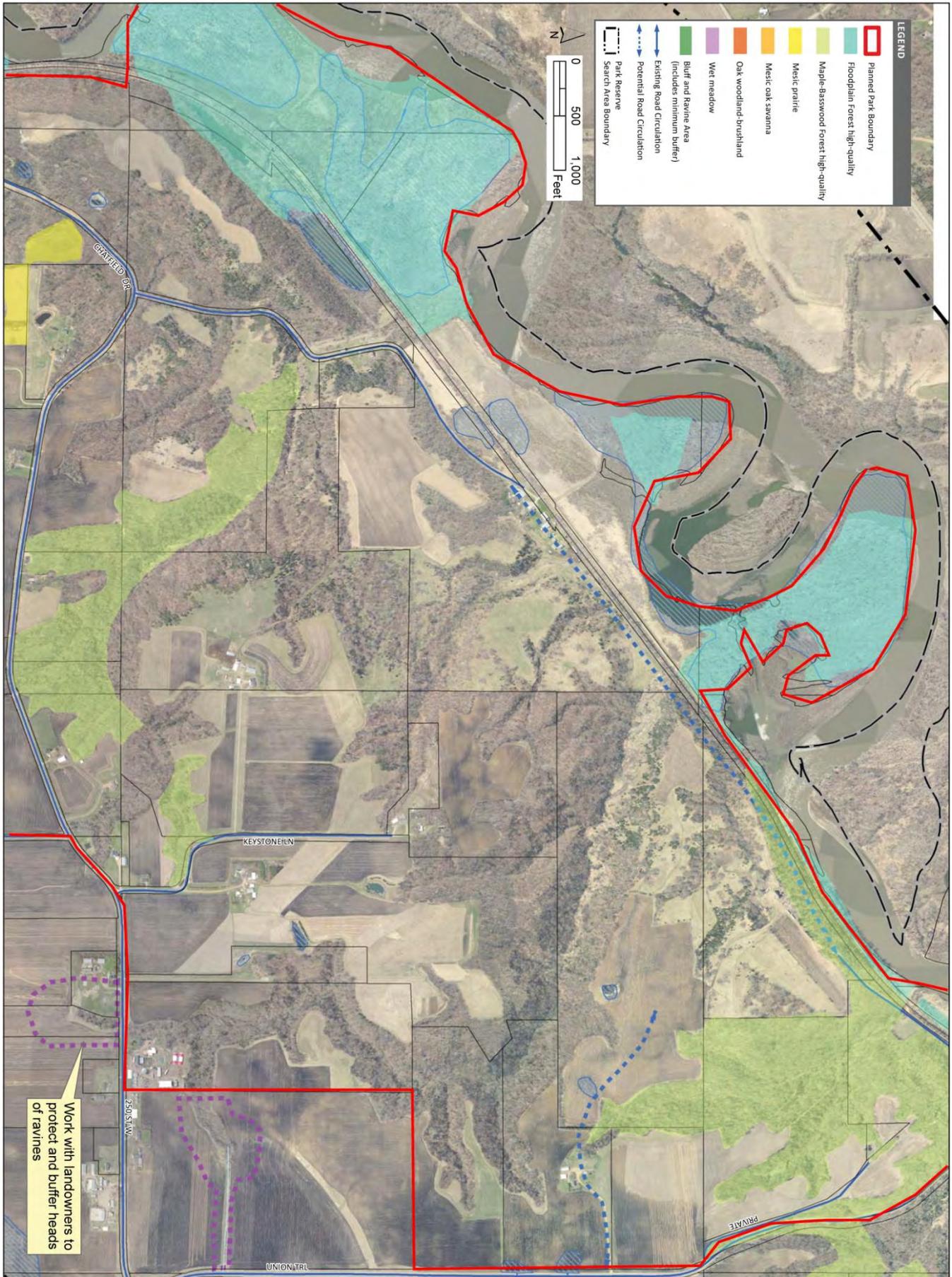
Master Plan Blakeley Bluffs Regional Park Reserve



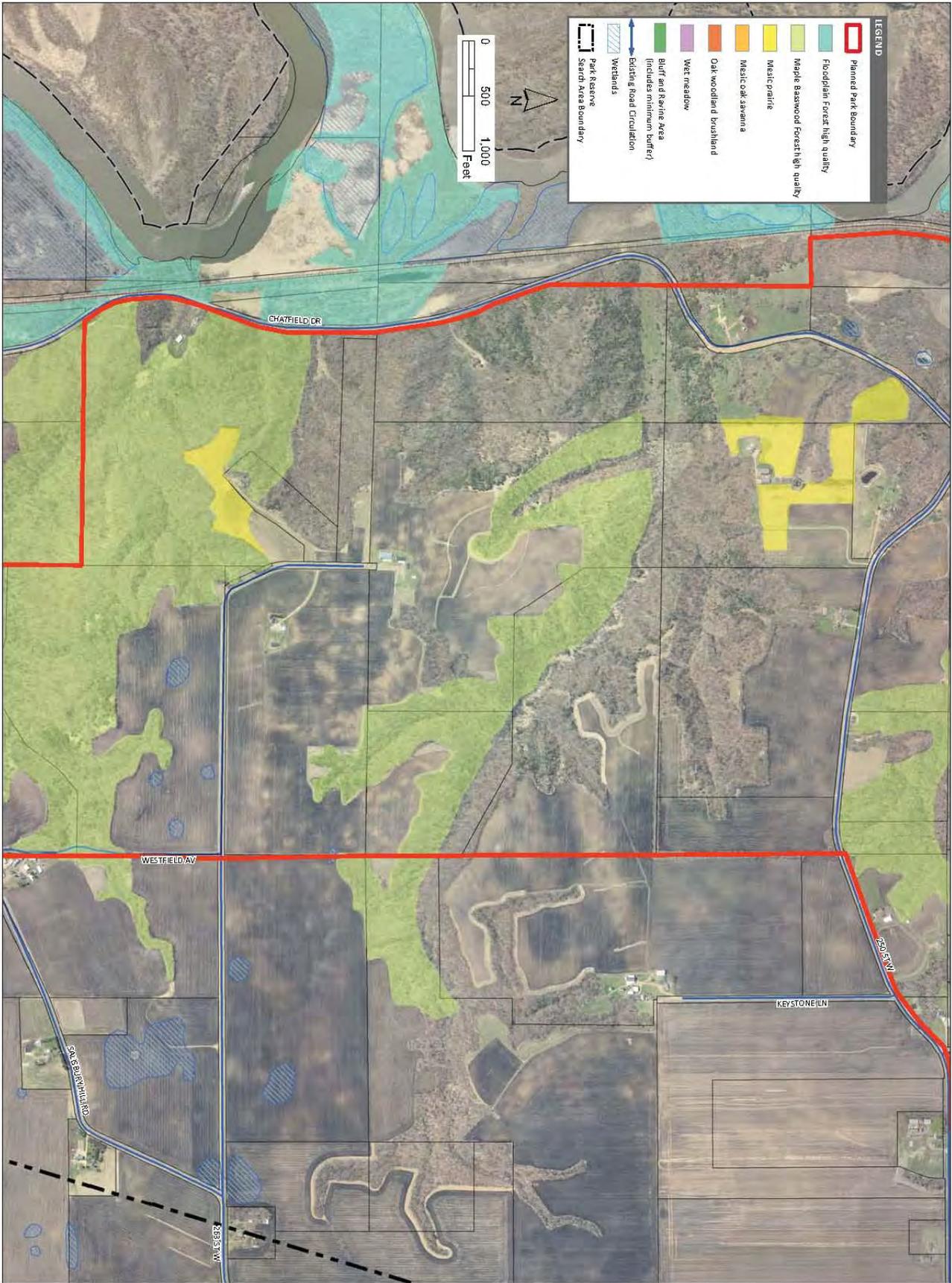
MAP 1: Blakeley Bluffs Park Reserve Master Plan



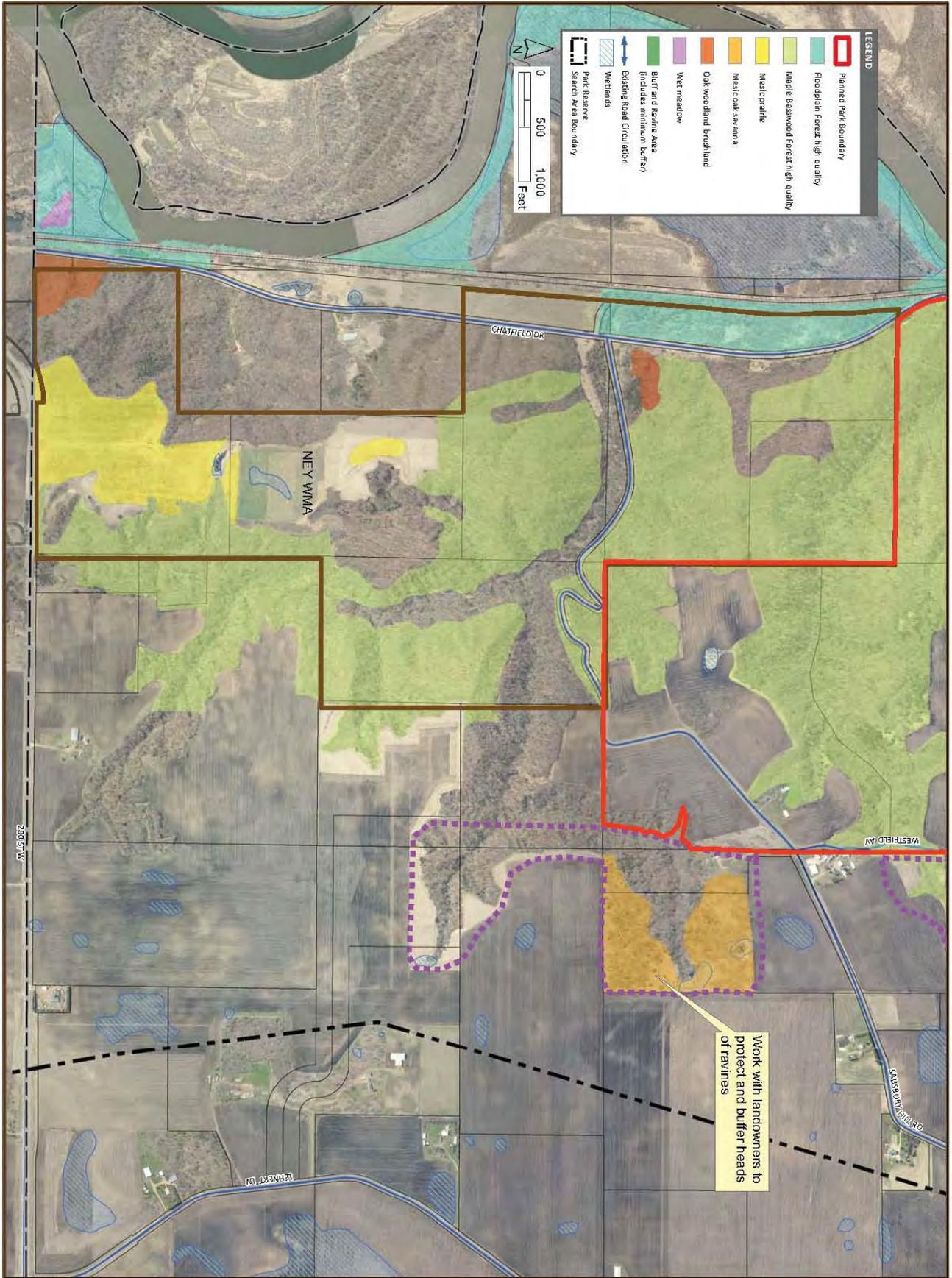
MAP 2: Blakeley Bluffs Park Reserve Master Plan Enlargement Area A



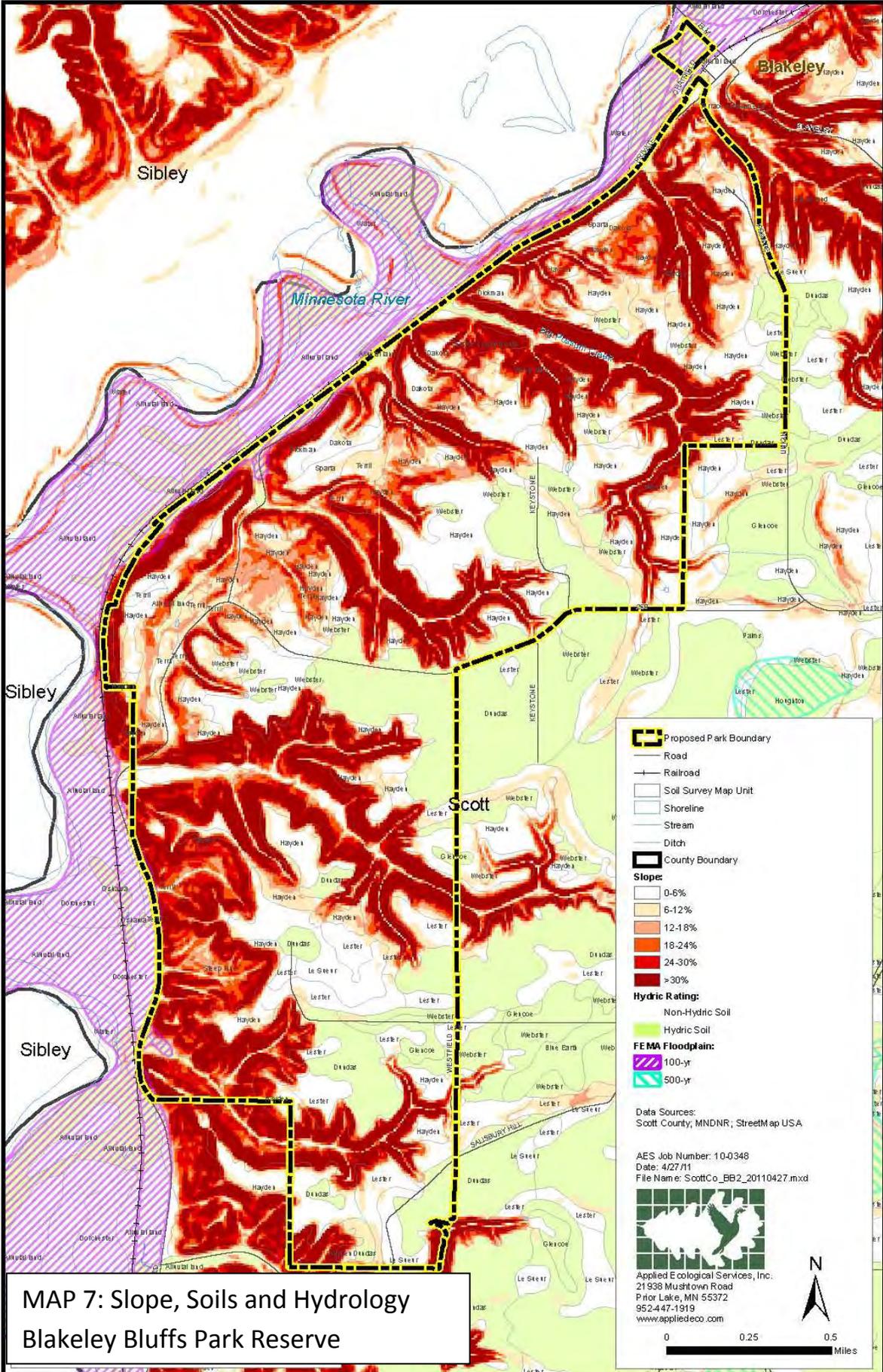
MAP 3: Blakeley Bluffs Park Reserve Master Plan Enlargement Area B



MAP 4: Blakeley Bluffs Park Reserve Master Plan Enlargement Area C



MAP 5: Blakeley Bluffs Park Reserve Master Plan Enlargement Area D



MAP 7: Slope, Soils and Hydrology
Blakeley Bluffs Park Reserve

Proposed Park Boundary
 Road
 Railroad
 Soil Survey Map Unit
 Shoreline
 Stream
 Ditch
 County Boundary

Slope:

- 0-6%
- 6-12%
- 12-18%
- 18-24%
- 24-30%
- >30%

Hydric Rating:

- Non-Hydric Soil
- Hydric Soil

FEMA Floodplain:

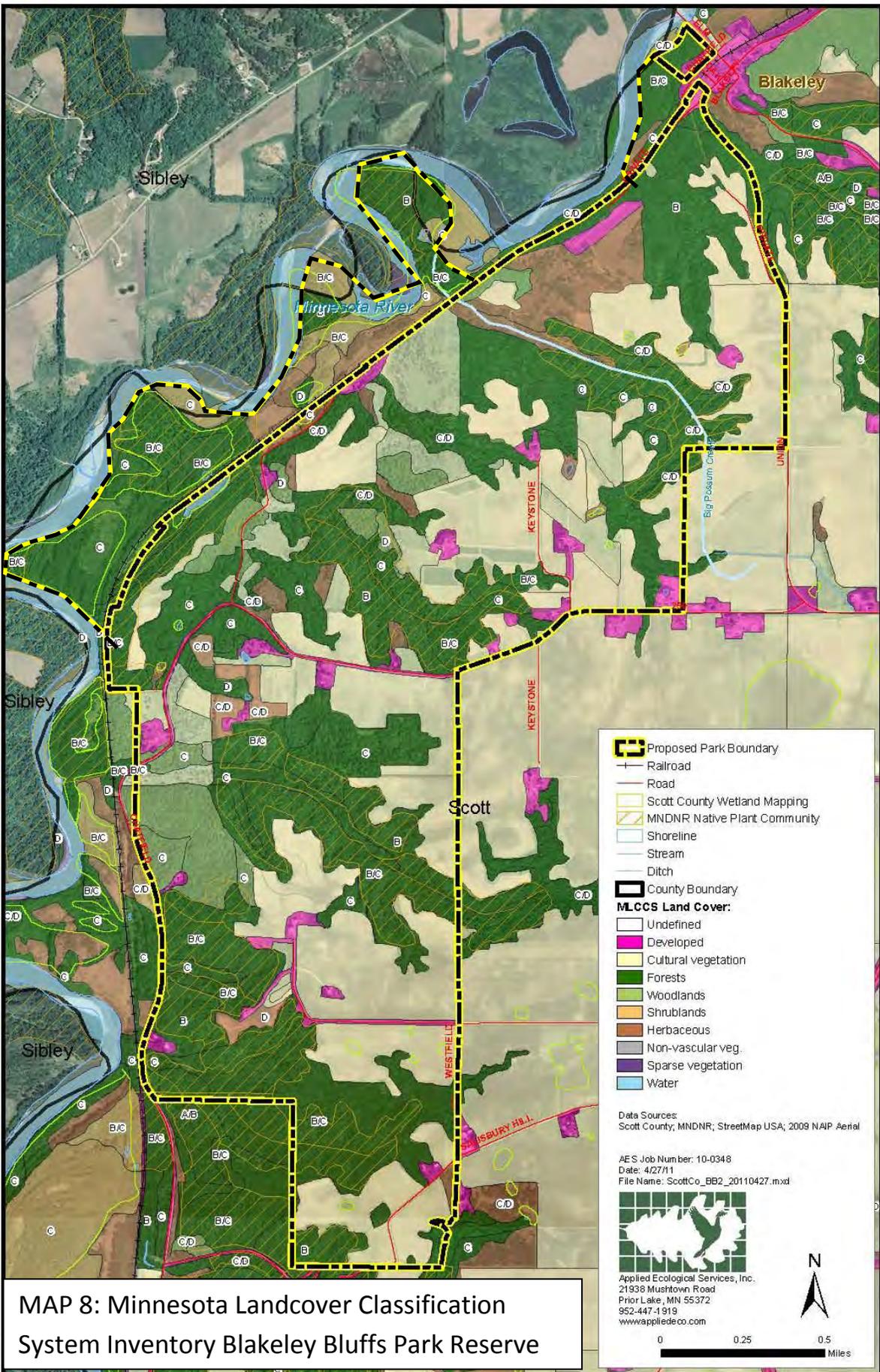
- 100-yr
- 500-yr

Data Sources:
 Scott County, MNDNR; StreetMap USA

AES Job Number: 10-0348
 Date: 4/27/11
 File Name: ScottCo_BB2_20110427.mxd

Applied Ecological Services, Inc.
 21 938 Mustown Road
 Prior Lake, MN 55372
 952.447-1919
 www.appliedeco.com

0 0.25 0.5 Miles



MAP 8: Minnesota Landcover Classification System Inventory Blakeley Bluffs Park Reserve

Proposed Park Boundary
 Railroad
 Road
 Scott County Wetland Mapping
 MNDNR Native Plant Community
 Shoreline
 Stream
 Ditch
 County Boundary

MLCCS Land Cover:

- Undefined
- Developed
- Cultural vegetation
- Forests
- Woodlands
- Shrublands
- Herbaceous
- Non-vascular veg.
- Sparse vegetation
- Water

Data Sources:
 Scott County, MNDNR; StreetMap USA; 2009 NAP Aerial

AES Job Number: 10-0348
 Date: 4/27/11
 File Name: ScottCo_BB2_20110427.mxd

Applied Ecological Services, Inc.
 21938 Mustown Road
 Prior Lake, MN 55372
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 www.appliede.com

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 Miles

Appendix A

1 - List of Public Meetings and Events

2- Summary of Public Comments for Blakeley Bluffs Site Planning Workshop

3 - Master Plan Concept Open House – Written Comments



Scott County Park and Trail Master Planning Process
List of Public Events and Meetings

FIELD TRIP EVENTS – On-Site Field Trips with Citizen Design Team and Public

DATE	TOUR LOCATION/FOCUS
Saturday, September 11, 2010 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8:30am to noon – CDT only • Noon to 2:00pm – Public 	Cedar Lake Farm Regional Park
Saturday, September 18, 2010 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8:30am to noon – CDT only • Noon to 2:00pm – Public 	Doyle-Kennefick Regional Park
Saturday, September 25, 2010 9am to Noon – CDT only	Trails Field Trip
Saturday, October 2, 2010 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9am to Noon – CDT Only • Noon to 2:00pm – Public 	Blakeley Bluffs Park Reserve Area

CITIZEN DESIGN TEAM MONTHLY MEETINGS

MEETING	DATE	LOCATION
#1	Thursday, July 22, 2010	Scott County Law Enforcement Center
#2	Thursday, August 12, 2010	Scott County Regional Training Facility
#3	Thurs, September 16, 2010	PARKS CDT - Ney Nature Center TRAILS CDT - Scott County Government Center
#4	Thursday, October 21, 2010	Cleary Lake Regional Park
#5	Thursday, November 18, 2010	PARKS CDT - State Bank of New Prague TRAILS CDT - Scott County Government Center
#6	Thurs, January 20, 2011	PARKS CDT - Scott County Law Enforcement
#6	Thursday, January 27, 2011	TRAILS CDT - Scott County Conference Center
#7	Thursday, March 10, 2011	Scott County Regional Training Facility
#8	Thursday, September 28, 2011	Cedar Lake Farm Regional Park

PUBLIC WORKSHOPS

First Set of Workshops: Public Policy Discussion and Collection of Park/Trail Ideas

DATE	WORKSHOP FOCUS
Wednesday, August 18, 2010	Cedar Lake Farm Regional Park
Thursday, August 19, 2010	Doyle-Kennefick Regional Park
Wednesday, August 25, 2010	Blakeley Bluffs Park Reserve Search Area
Thursday, August 26, 2010	Scott West and Spring Lake Regional Trail Search Areas

Second Set of Workshops: Presentation of Master Plan Concepts and Input/Feedback

DATE	WORKSHOP FOCUS
Wednesday, February 16, 2011	Doyle-Kennefick Regional Park
Thursday, February 17, 2011	Cedar Lake Regional Park
Wednesday, February 23, 2011	Blakeley Bluffs Park Reserve Search Area
Thursday, February 24, 2011	Scott West and Spring Lake Regional Trail Search Areas

LOCAL GOVERNMENT UNIT (LGU) MEETINGS – DISCUSSIONS AND INPUT

DATE	GOVERNMENTAL BODY	MEETING FOCUS
November 4, 2010	Sand Creek Township Board	Spring Lake Trail search area
November 22, 2010	Shakopee Park and Rec Board	Scott West Trail search area
November 22, 2010	Jordan Parks Commission	Spring Lake Trail search area
December 6, 2010	Credit River Township Board	Scott West Trail search area
December 7, 2010	Blakeley Township Board	Blakeley Bluffs search area
January 4, 2011	Cedar Lake Township Board	Doyle-Kennefick concepts
January 4, 2011	Helena Township Board	Cedar Lake Farm concepts
January 20, 2011	Prior Lake Parks Commission	Scott West and Spring Lake Trails
February 1, 2011	Downtown Shakopee Partnership (business group)	Scott West Trail/Downtown route
February 1, 2011	Blakeley Township Board	Blakeley Bluffs concepts
February 1, 2011	Helena Township Board	Cedar Lake Farm concepts
February 8, 2011	Shakopee City Council - Workshop	Scott West Trail/Downtown route
February 8, 2011	New Prague Parks Commission	Cedar Lake Farm concepts
February 10, 2011	Elko New Market Parks Commission/New Market Township Joint Meeting	Doyle-Kennefick concepts
May 3, 2011	Shakopee City Council	Scott West Trail/Downtown route – Selection of preferred alignment

SCOTT COUNTY MEETINGS – INPUT AND AUTHORIZATION

DATE	GOVERNMENTAL BODY	MEETING FOCUS
October 6, 2010	Scott County Parks Advisory Commission	Shared findings from 1 st round of public workshops
October 12, 2010	Scott County Board of Commissioners - Workshop	Shared findings from 1 st round of public workshops
November 3, 2010	Scott County Parks Advisory Commission - Workshop	Presented preliminary concepts
December 1, 2010	Scott County Parks Advisory Commission - Workshop	Presented early preliminary concepts
February 2, 2011	Scott County Parks Advisory Commission	Presented preferred concepts from CDT
February 8, 2011	Scott County Board of Commissioners - Workshop	Presented preferred concepts from CDT
May 4, 2011	Scott County Parks Advisory Commission	Presented refined preferred concepts
July 6, 2011	Scott County Parks Advisory Commission	Recommend Approval of Trail Master Plans
September 13, 2011	Scott County Board of Commissioners	Approved Trail Master Plans and Submittal to Metropolitan Council
November 2, 2011	Scott County Parks Advisory Commission	Recommend Approval of Cedar Lake Farm Master Plan
December 7, 2011	Scott County Parks Advisory Commission	Recommend Approval of Doyle-Kennefick and Blakeley Bluffs Master Plans
December 13, 2011 (tentative)	Scott County Board of Commissioners	Approval of Parks Master Plans and Submittal to Metropolitan Council



Blakeley Bluffs Public Workshop #1 Comments: February 23, 2011

Group Comments:

Issues and Opportunities:

- Good Views/View sheds
- Adjacent Residential Land Use
- Roads within park- that could be used
- Bluffs/Preservation
- Elevation- challenges with biking and hiking
- Minnesota River is polluted
- Preserve what is there- keep it primitive
- East side/flat land- use for camping
- Co. Rd. 1- down to Ney to keep primitive
- Roads will need improvements
- Concern about road development- "Who maintains park roads?"
- Make use of the river and varied experiences of the bluff
- Areas down from Blakeley on river- already being used (ATVs) - set up to be a park already?
- Preservation- Do not develop

Programming Ideas:

- Hiking and Nature Trails
- Hunting
- RV Camping/Long-term camping
- Primitive cabins (rent out)
- Education- bird watching
- Horse Trails- concern with wear on land
- Fishing Pier
- Sledding Hill
- Skiing Areas
- Mountain Biking

Individual Forms: (16 forms, 9 answered following questions)

1. What issues or challenges do you see for developing the park reserve boundary?
 - a. Farming
 - b. Development (Housing)
 - c. Polluted River, Responsibility for Run-off
 - d. Preservation of bluffs/Erosion of Bluffs (Advantages of lit. differences our valley views)
 - e. Hiking/Biking- hard with elevations
 - f. Keeping things natural with beautiful views/Keeping the area looking as well as it does now (2)
 - g. Money and Buying Land

2. Are there specific areas or amenities that you would like to see included in the park reserve boundary?

- a. Scenic Byways
- b. Observation towers
- c. Bluffs
- d. American Indian Burial grounds
- e. Trails and Connectivity
- f. Hills that provide views

3. What programming ideas would you like to see incorporated as part of the park reserve? (I.e. camping, interpretive trails, etc.)

- a. Observation areas- possibly short towers
- b. Equestrian trails
- c. Camping (4) – with views and wooded areas
- d. Camping- RVs
- e. Trails (6)- **hiking**, walking, biking
- f. No Hunting
- g. Mountain Biking Opportunities
- h. Destination Park- longer stops instead of day visits

What is your favorite park or trail and why?

- Our farm because it has trail and it is well kept
- Ney Center (4) (historical significance, wildflower trails)
- Gooseberry Falls/Split Rock Lighthouse (historic) (2)
- St. Lawrence Park (2) (close to home)
- Flandreau State Park, New Ulm (2) (camping, nice trails, sand bottom swimming pool)
- Cedar Lake Farm (diverse activities for families)
- Yellowstone- incredible beauty and wildlife
- Central Park in Bloomington (3)- for hiking trails, close to home, well-maintained, easy walking
- Trails off of Lake Superior
- Minneopa Falls Park, Mankato
- Jordan MiniMet (?)
- Cleary Lake (2)- ice fishing
- Baylor Park (2)- for trails and great camp sites
- Baker Park- Ice Fishing

Additional Comments/Questions:

- Since I moved to a farm I don't have time or reason to go to a park.
- I like parks with trails for bikes, walking, and horses.
- Good Scenery is a must.
- Good landscaping is very important- even if it's kept wild.
- Shelters are important in this climate
- Don't want to vote for more taxes/simple is better- varies between people who live in town vs. people who live in the country
- Conversation at table centered on personal neighborhood issues- not questions, just chit-chatting
- How much tax base will be lost with park land acquisition?
- Does the merger or partnership result in loss of control or authority of Scott County over its parks?
Does it give taxing authority to Met Council?



**Blakeley Bluffs Park Reserve
Master Plan Concept Open House (2/23/11)
Evaluation Form – Responses in Red**



50 Participants Signed In

1. On a scale of 1 to 10, how would you rate the proposed park boundary? (please circle)

Poor	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	Excellent
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	

9, NA, NA (Don't know enough yet), 9, 5, 8

2. On a scale of 1 to 10, how would you rate the effectiveness of the proposed park boundary to preserve the area's unique character (natural, historical, cultural, etc.)? (please circle)

Poor	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	Excellent
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	

9, NA, NA (Don't know enough yet), 9, 5, 8

3. Please describe what you like and/or dislike about the proposed park boundary and master plan.

- NA*
- Would like plan to include horse, hiking and snowshoeing trails and camping.*
- Multi-use trails: horseback, walking, biking, birding; fishing*
- Contains most of the most scenic and critical areas of the entire bluff system from Blakeley to Henderson*
- Buying large acreage from contractor and not using money for other lands.*
- This area is very special and should be preserved for future generations. The proposed boundary adequately addresses the conservation need.*

4. What issues are you concerned with related to the long-term implementation of this park master plan?

- Working with landowners without condemning land*
- Would like this park to include horse trails*
- Will my children be able to build on our current property if boundaries stay as they are currently? What does this do to my taxes that went up 24% this year?*
- Would hunting be allowed in the park when necessary due to population growth of game animals?*
- Why would my land (joining the Ney WMA) not be included in the park?*
- I hope the planning team continues to interact with landowners and the future county board deals fairly with inholdings. Please do not allow the area to be turned into a private equestrian park like Murphy-Hanrehan.*

Appendix B

Parcels within Planned Park Reserve Boundary

County-Owned Parcels within Boundary		
	Parcel Identification Number	Size (Acres)
1	20010010	1.05
2	20010020	0.36
3	20010030 A	0.15
4	20010030 B	0.23
5	20010070	0.46
6	20010100	0.46
7	20010120	0.31
8	29080070	2.35
9	29080100	0.4
10	29080120	2.74

Privately Owned Parcels within Planned Boundary - In-Holdings		
	Parcel Identification Number	Size (Acres)
1.	20090010	9.95
2.	20200010	9.29
3.	20250010	106.86
4.	20250020	128.56
5.	29070010 A	6.42
	29070010 B	3.34
	29070010 C	38.78
6.	29080030 A	48.71
	29080030 B	16.69
	29080030 C	0.26
7.	29080080	3.17
8.	29080140	52.78
9.	29080150	56.68
10.	29080170	2.57
11.	29130010 A	3.13
	29130010 B	88.45
12.	29170010	59.56
13.	29170020	75.05
14.	29170040	6.39
15.	29170060 A	8.44

	29170060 B	108.54
16.	29170061	10.79
17.	29170062	0.99
18.	29170070	121.08
19.	29170080	40.38
20.	29170081	24.78
21.	29170082	40.49
22.	29170090	42.21
23.	29180020 A	0.22
	29180020 B	0.11
	29180020 C	69.13
	29180020 D	73.28
24.	29180030	95.87
25.	29180040 A	99.03
	29180040 B	115.09
26.	29180050	11.87
27.	29190010	21.68
28.	29190020 A	12.10
	29190020 B	36.56
29.	29190021	66.74
30.	29190030	19.20
31.	29190032	29.79
32.	29190033	52.52
33.	29190040	82.87
34.	29190050	19.23
35.	29190051	21.70
36.	29190060	6.57
37.	29190070	81.17
38.	29190080	35.60
39.	29190090	123.50
40.	29200050	20.63
41.	29200061 A	2.58
	29200061 B	0.01
42.	29240010	14.23
43.	29300040 A	76.14
	29300040 B	0.69
44.	29300051	13.70
45.	29300053	121.03

Appendix C

Minnesota Department of Natural Resources Identification and Description of Practices that will Avoid the Introduction or Movement of Invasive Species

It is the DNR's policy to limit the introduction of invasive species onto DNR managed lands and waters, limit their rate of geographical spread, and reduce their impact on high value resources.

The movement of equipment, organisms, and organic and inorganic material are potential pathways for the introduction or spread of invasive species. Each of these pathways should be considered and addressed to reduce risk associated with invasive species movement.

General Procedures for Intentional Movement of Equipment

1. Before arriving at a work site, inspect for and remove all visible plants, seeds, mud, soil, and animals from equipment.
2. Before leaving a work site, inspect for and remove all visible plants, seeds, mud, soil and animals from equipment.
3. After working on infested waters or waters known to harbor pathogens of concern, clean and dry equipment prior to using in locations not known to be infested with species or pathogens present at the last location visited.

Specific Procedures: Vehicles and Heavy Equipment

1. When possible maintain separate equipment to use on uninfested sites.
2. If working on multiple sites, work in uninfested sites before infested sites and clean equipment after use.
3. When working within a site with invasive species work in uninfested areas before infested areas and clean equipment after use.
4. Avoid entering site under wet conditions to minimize rutting and other soil disturbances.
5. Minimize area of soil disturbance with equipment.
6. Minimize number of access points to site.
7. When creating roads and trails minimize area of vegetation and soil disturbance.
8. Survey site before management treatment and treat or avoid moving equipment through existing patches of invasive species.
9. Conduct post management treatment monitoring and treat any responding invasive species.
10. Inspect all gear and remove vegetation, soil, and organisms prior to arriving and leaving site.
11. On sites that are known to be infested with species such as garlic mustard, spotted knapweed, leafy spurge, etc (species with small seed that can collect on cloth material) wash clothing after work is complete.
12. Carry boot brush in or on all vehicles and clean boots and clothing (in a controlled area) when leaving any site.
13. Use brush to clean gear and equipment such as chainsaws to remove loose soil and plant materials.
14. Avoid parking in patches of invasive species. When unavoidable, clean vehicle of all visible evidence of soil and vegetation when leaving site.
15. Brush off (hand remove) plants, seeds, mud, soil and animals from vehicles, including wheel wells, tracks, humps, blades, grills, etc.
16. Power spray equipment after hand removal if necessary to remove aquatic plant remnants (particularly curly-leaf pondweed, Eurasian watermilfoil, flowering rush, and purple loosestrife) and earthworms.

General Procedures for Intentional Movement of Organisms, Organic and Inorganic Material (including water, fish, plants, mulch, soil, gravel, rock)

1. Do not plant or introduce prohibited or regulated invasive species or other listed invasive species.
2. Do not transport water from infested waters, except by permit. When you must use water from an infested waters, do not drain this water or water that has come in contact with organisms from the infested waters, where it can run into another basin, river, or drain system that does not go to a treatment facility.
3. Use only mulch, soil, gravel, etc. that is invasive species-free or has a very low likelihood of having invasive species.
4. Do not transplant organisms or plant material from any waters with known populations of invasive aquatic invertebrates
5. Do not move soil, dredge material, or raw wood projects that may harbor invasive species from infested sites.

Specific Procedures: Re-vegetation (Aquatic and Terrestrial Plants)

1. Do not plant or introduce prohibited or regulated invasive species or other listed invasive species.
2. Inspect transplanted vegetation for signs of invasive species that may be attached to the vegetation and remove (i.e., other plant material and animals, etc.)
3. Re-vegetate with native species.
4. Preserve existing native vegetation. Peel topsoil that contains natives away from the work zone, stockpile and then replace it at the end of construction. This can help re-establish native species quickly.
5. If stockpiled invasive free topsoil isn't adequate for post-construction landscaping, and black dirt, sand or gravel must be purchased, purchase invasive species (i.e., worm) free material.
6. Purchase certified weed-free mulch.
7. Inspect outside of storage containers and materials for visible presence of invasive species.
8. If possible use seeding material, plants, fill, straw, gravel, and mulch that is certified as uninfested.
9. Monitor areas where materials are added for evidence of invasive species germination.
10. When possible minimize the use of outside materials.

Procedures to Minimize the Risk of Increasing the Dominance of Invasive Species on Site

1. Survey site before burning and treat or avoid moving through patches of invasive species before burn is conducted.
2. Avoid entering site under wet conditions to minimize rutting and other soil disturbances.
3. Conduct post-treatment monitoring and treat any invasive species (such as resprouts and germination).

Site Planning and Management

Construction activities that disturb the soil surface can expose dormant invasive species seed banks and create a growth medium that favors invasive plants. Landscaping can also introduce invasive plant species, as can maintenance activities such as mowing, grading, and stormwater pond maintenance.

Exercise site-level management to minimize the introduction, spread, and impact of invasive species. Site-level management shall include planning, implementation and evaluation procedures that reduce the risk of introduction, spread, and impact of invasive species. Procedures include identification of invasive species, monitoring for invasive species, developing strategies and actions to minimize spread and impact, implementing management actions, and evaluating success.