

# Regional Parks and Trails System

Adopted by the Metropolitan Council in February 2015, the 2040 Parks Policy Plan is the metropolitan system plan for regional parks with which local comprehensive plans must conform.

The 2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan outlines the Metropolitan Council's goals and strategies for development of world-class regional parks. It reflects the regional vision set forth in Thrive MSP 2040, and describes how the regional parks system will be developed and operated to support Thrive MSP goals.

Hennepin County is graced with many beautiful parks and trails that showcase the unique landscapes of our area and provide year-round recreational opportunities. Some of the best-known and most-visited include the Minneapolis Chain of Lakes, Elm Creek Park Reserve, and Hyland Lakes Park Reserve.

Parks and trails used for recreation positively influence our environment, health, and economy.

- Parks preserve our natural landscapes, provide animal and plant habitats, and play a vital role in community storm water infiltration.
- Parks support a healthy community by providing opportunities to connect with nature, which has proven physical and mental health benefits, for

example: making it easier to be physically active regularly, reducing risk of preventable chronic disease, and strengthening family relationships and community connections by providing formal and informal gathering places.

- Parks positively influence property values and make areas more attractive for development and redevelopment.

## Hennepin County's role

Hennepin County does not plan for, own, or operate the parks and trails within its borders. These are the responsibility of cities and special park districts. Some are part of the regional park system, and regional parks are supported by planning, funding, and marketing from the Metropolitan Council.

The cities or districts that operate regional parks are designated as Regional Parks Implementing Agencies. The Regional Parks Implementing Agencies in Hennepin County are Three Rivers Park District, the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, and the City of Bloomington. District boundaries, regional parks and regional trails are depicted in Figures 3-1, 3-2, and 3-3.

The county supports parks by making physical connections to parks with roads and trails and by providing, supporting, and funding various environmental, health, social and education programs. Prime examples include the Hennepin Youth Sports Program, Active Living, the Sidewalk Participation Program, and 2040 Bicycle Transportation Plan.



# Regional Parks and Trails

## Three Rivers Park District

The Three Rivers Park District is the largest parks agency in the county, with approximately 17,000 acres of parks and 140 miles of regional trails. Named after the three rivers in Hennepin County — the Mississippi, the Minnesota, and the Crow — Three Rivers Park District owns and manages 5 park reserves, 9 regional parks, and 3 special recreation features within the county.

### Goals of Three Rivers Park District:

- Protect the region’s water and natural resources
- Inspire people to recreate
- Connect people to nature
- Create vibrant places
- Collaborate across boundaries

Outdoor recreation activities in Three Rivers Park District parks and trails include camping, hiking, cross country and downhill skiing, tubing, bicycling, in-line skating, horseback riding, nature interpretation, golfing, fishing, and swimming. Three Rivers Park District also operates a natural resources management program, which administers the restoration and perpetuation of both native wildlife and plants in order to provide opportunities for a high-quality recreational experience for park visitors.

## Park Reserves, Regional Parks and Special Recreation Features within Hennepin County:

- Baker Park Reserve
- Bryant Lake Regional Park
- Clifton E. French Regional Park
- Mississippi Gateway Regional Park
- Crow Hassan Park Reserve
- Eagle Lake Regional Park
- Elm Creek Park Reserve
- Fish Lake Regional Park
- Gale Woods Farm Special Recreation Feature
- Hyland-Bush-Anderson Lakes Park Reserve
- Kingswood Special Recreation Feature
- Lake Minnetonka Islands Regional Park
- Lake Minnetonka Regional Park
- Lake Rebecca Park Reserve
- Lake Sarah Regional Park
- Noerenberg Gardens
- North Mississippi Regional Park

Three Rivers Parks have seen tremendous growth in use over the past decade, nearly doubling the number of visits between 2006 and 2016.

### **Regional Trails of Three Rivers Park District:**

Baker/Carver Regional Trail  
Bassett Creek Regional Trail  
Cedar Lake LRT Regional Trail (Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authority corridor)  
Crow River Regional Trail  
Crystal Lake Regional Trail  
Dakota Rail Regional Trail (Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authority corridor)  
Lake Independence Regional Trail  
Lake Minnetonka LRT Regional Trail (Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authority corridor)  
Luce Line Regional Trail  
Medicine Lake Regional Trail  
Minnesota River Bluffs LRT Regional Trail (Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authority corridor)  
Nine Mile Creek Regional Trail  
Nokomis-Minnesota River Regional Trail (or Intercity Regional Trail)  
North Cedar Lake Regional Trail  
Northeast Diagonal Regional Trail (Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authority corridor)  
Rush Creek Regional Trail  
Shingle Creek Regional Trail  
Twin Lakes Regional Trail  
West Mississippi River Regional Trail

In addition to the existing and planned regional trails of the Three Rivers Park District, there are a number of trail corridors, referred to as search corridors, that have not been master planned and/or have not been approved by the Metropolitan Council. However, these search corridors are part of the Hennepin County 2040 Bicycle Transportation Plan. These future regional trail proposals need to be evaluated within the comprehensive, region-wide framework of the Regional Bicycle Transportation Network to ensure that regional facilities are not duplicated.

Because the tentative alignments of these trails have not been approved by the Metropolitan Council as part of a master plan, they are identified on the

maps as regional trail search corridors and are not yet eligible for Regional Parks System funding for acquisition and development.

### **Search corridors identified by the Metropolitan Council within Three Rivers Park District:**

CP Rail Regional Trail Search Corridor  
Dakota Rail Extension Regional Trail Search Corridor  
Eagle Lake — Regional Trail Search Corridor  
Purgatory Creek Regional Trail Search Corridor  
Gray's Bay Regional Trail Search Corridor  
Lake Independence Extension Regional Trail Search Corridor (from Luce Line State Trail to Dakota Rail Regional Trail)  
Progressive Rail Regional Trail Search Corridor  
Lake Sarah Regional Trail Search Corridor  
Mid-Lake Regional Trail (from Dakota Rail to Lake Minnetonka LRT Regional Trails)  
Diamond Lake Regional Trail Search Corridor  
Bryant Lake Regional Trail Search Corridor



## Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board

The Minneapolis Park System, governed by the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, spans 6,804 acres of parkland and water, and features 179 park properties. The system includes the 55-mile Grand Rounds National Scenic Byway, 102 miles of Grand Rounds biking and walking paths, 22 lakes, 12 formal gardens, seven golf courses and 49 recreation centers. Together these properties annually receive approximately 23 million visits. The 20-Year Neighborhood Park Plan provides funding through 2036 to maintain and revitalize existing parks.

### **Regional parks within the Minneapolis Park System include:**

Above the Falls Regional Park  
Central Mississippi Riverfront Regional Park  
Kenilworth Regional Trail  
Minneapolis Chain-of-Lakes Regional Park  
Minnehaha Regional Park  
Mississippi Gorge Regional Park  
Nokomis-Hiawatha Regional Park  
North Mississippi Regional Park (with Three Rivers Park District)  
Theodore Wirth Regional Park

### **Regional trails of the Minneapolis Park System include:**

Kenilworth Regional Trail  
Grand Rounds National Scenic Byway

- Cedar Lake Regional Trail
- Columbia Parkway Regional Trail

- Dean Parkway
- East River Parkway
- Minnehaha Parkway
- Theodore Wirth Parkway
- Victory Memorial Drive
- West River Parkway
- William Berry Parkway
- Ridgway Parkway Regional Trail
- St. Anthony Parkway

The Metropolitan Council identified the following regional trail search corridors within the Minneapolis Parks and Recreation Board District:  
Grand Rounds Missing Link Regional Trail Search Corridor

For more, see the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board Comprehensive Plan, 2007–2020: [www.minneapolisparcs.org/asset/9h52lq/comprehensive\\_plan.pdf](http://www.minneapolisparcs.org/asset/9h52lq/comprehensive_plan.pdf).

## City of Bloomington

The City of Bloomington has one park reserve that is part of the metropolitan regional parks and open space system: Hyland-Bush-Anderson (HBA) Regional Park Reserve. The 2,565 park reserve is jointly managed by the City of Bloomington and Three Rivers Park District.

In 2010, Three Rivers and the City of Bloomington adopted the Hyland-Bush-Anderson Lakes Regional Park Reserve; Joint Master Plan. The plan affirms the policy of retaining 80 percent of the upland area for restoration and preservation in a natural state.

To see a copy of the Hyland-Bush-Anderson Lakes Regional Park Reserve; Joint Master Plan, visit <https://www.bloomingtonmn.gov/pr/hyland-bush-anderson-lakes-regional-park-reserve-master-plan>

### **Regional trail search corridors within Bloomington include:**

Intercity Extension

South Hennepin East (CP Rail)

South Hennepin West (CP Rail)



## State of Minnesota Parks and Trails

**The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) manages state parks, lands, and trails in the region, including:**

Fort Snelling State Park

Luce Line State Trail

Minnesota Valley State Trail

Robina Lake Wildlife Management Area

Schendel Wildlife Management Area

Wolsfeld Woods Scientific and Natural Area

Wood-Rill Scientific and Natural Area

There are six state water trails and their attendant system of boat and canoe launches that travel through Hennepin County along the Crow, Minnesota, and Mississippi rivers. The DNR and its local unit of government partners actively manage the state water trails for canoeing, kayaking, boating, and camping. Additionally, 72 miles of the Mississippi River and four miles of the Minnesota River have been designated as the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area Water Trail, a national water trail.

### **Snowmobile trails**

State-supported grant-in-aid (GIA) trails connect communities to an extensive network of trails throughout the state. The snowmobile GIA program webpage has more information on the program and funding: [https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/grants/recreation/gia\\_snowmobile.html](https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/grants/recreation/gia_snowmobile.html)

### **Fishing**

There are 17 water bodies in Hennepin County that are part of DNR's Fishing in the Neighborhood program: <https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/fishing/fin/index.html> These lakes and ponds are periodically surveyed and stocked to provide urban fishing opportunities.

**Scientific and Natural Areas (SNAs)** are exceptional places where native plants and animals flourish; where rare species are protected; and where we can know and study Minnesota's fascinating natural features: <https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/snas/index.html>

**Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs)** are established to protect those lands and waters that have a high potential for wildlife production, public hunting, trapping, fishing, and other compatible recreational uses: <https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/wmas/index.html>

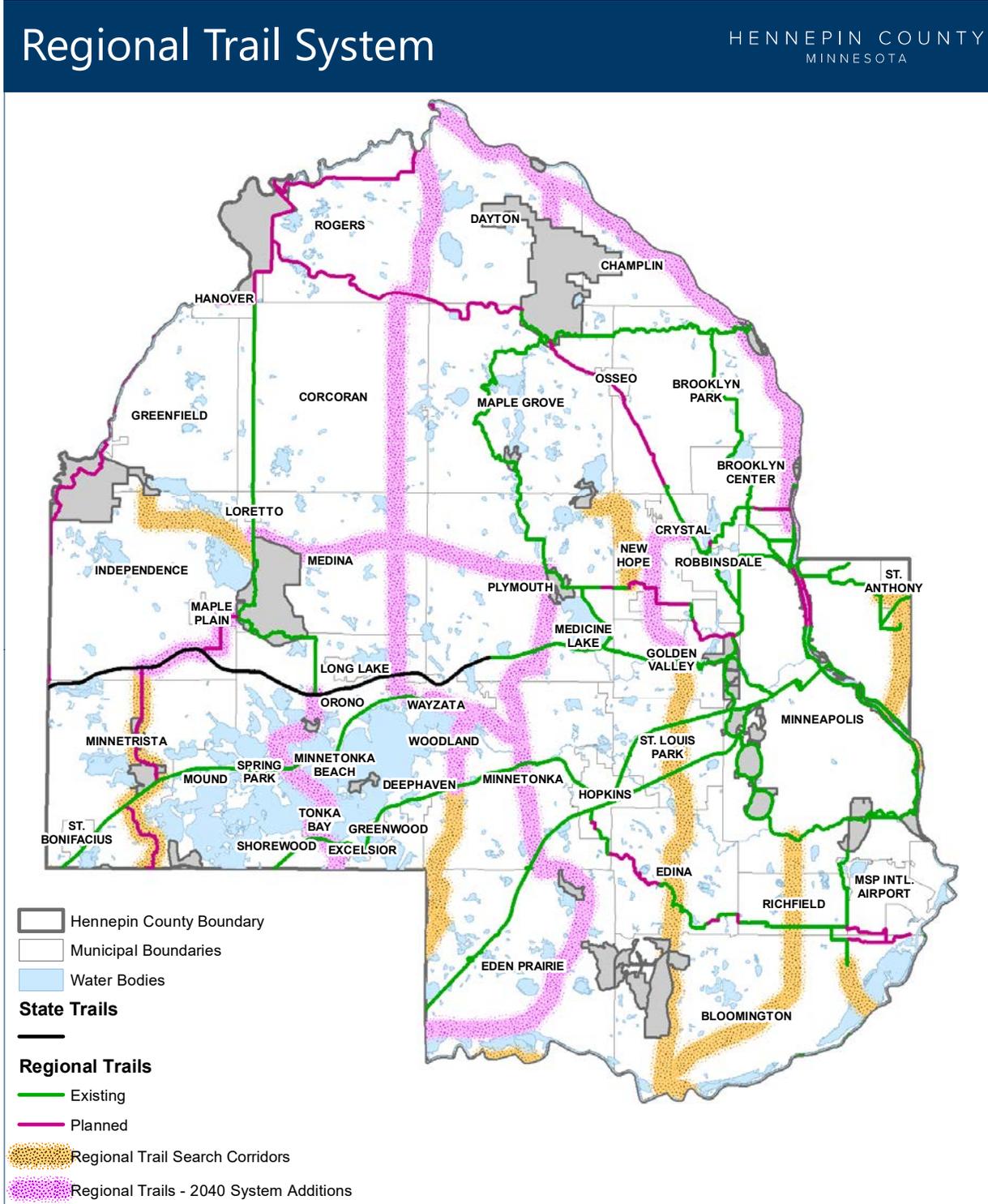


## National Parks and Federal Lands

Hennepin County is also home to the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge and the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area (MNRRA). The Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge is a corridor of land and water along the Minnesota River that stretches from Bloomington to Henderson and is managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The refuge was established in 1976 to provide habitat for a large number of migratory waterfowl, fish, and other wildlife species threatened by commercial and industrial development, and to provide environmental education, wildlife recreational opportunities, and interpretive programming for Twin Cities residents.

The 54,000-acre Mississippi National River and Recreation Area (MNRRA) was established in 1988 and is a unit of the National Park Service. The National Park Service owns very little land within its borders but partners with local governments, state agencies, and organizations to protect the significant resources along the 72-mile stretch of river running through the region. Several regional parks and trails, which are owned and operated by regional park implementing agencies, are located within the MNRRA corridor.

Figure 3-1



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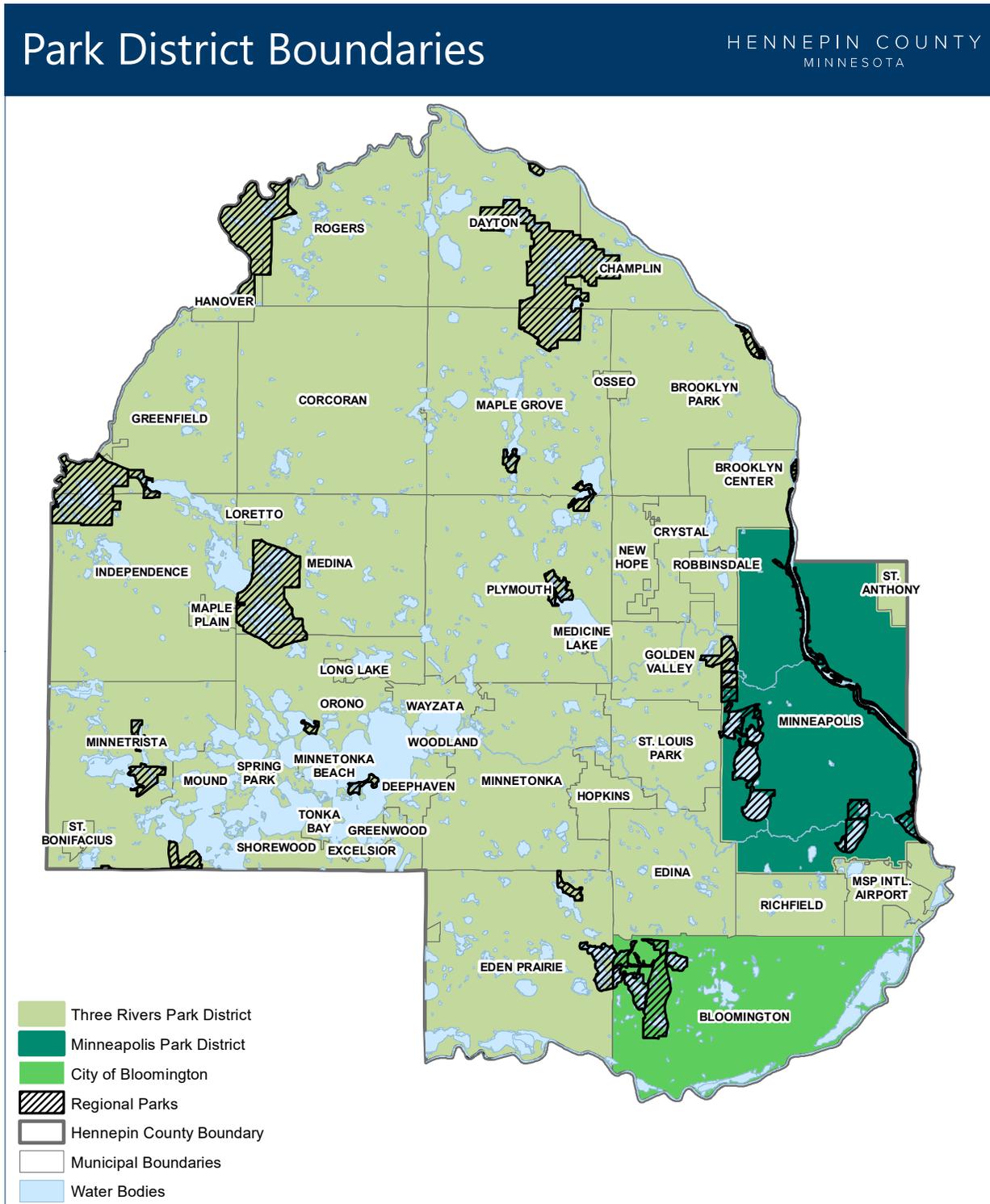
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Figure 3-3



**Disclaimer:** This map (i) is furnished "AS IS" with no representation as to completeness or accuracy; (ii) is furnished with no warranty of any kind; and (iii) is not suitable for legal, engineering or surveying purposes. Hennepin County shall not be liable for any damage, injury or loss resulting from this map.

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