

# Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission

## Designation Application

### General Section

Designation Application #: 15-025D      Date Submitted: 06/30/2015

Park or Trail Name: MB Johnson Park

District #: 3      Map Coordinates (Latitude and Longitude): Latitude: 46.9124 Longitude: -96.7597

#### Location Description:

MB Johnson park is located within the City of Moorhead, Oakport Township, Clay County. It is primarily a natural resource-based setting that provides outdoor recreation facilities including paved and unpaved trails for biking, mountain biking, walking, hiking, cross country skiing and snow shoeing. It also has facilities for fishing, geocaching, picnicking and gathering people visiting the FM Metro Area. MB Johnson Park has been designated as a future trailhead for the Heartland Trail extension connecting MN lakes in Becker County to the Red River of the North in Clay County.

Lead Applicant Organization: City of Moorhead

Lead Contact First Name: Holly      Last Name: Heitkamp

Mailing Address: 202 1st Avenue N

City: Moorhead State: MN      Zip: 56560

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Joint Applicant #1 Organization:

Joint Applicant #2 Organization:

Joint Applicant #3 Organization:

Joint Applicant #4 Organization:

Describe other project supporters:

### Description Section

Classification: Natural Resource Based Regional Park

Total proposed acreage:

#### Overview/Description of Park or Trail:

M.B. Johnson Regional Park is located on the Red River of the North in north Moorhead, MN. The 110 acre Park has a varied topography including grassy meadows and sloped wooded areas that provide numerous opportunities for a variety of outdoor, natural resource-based activities. Existing amenities

and current activities occurring at M.B. Johnson Regional Park include: Groomed cross country ski trails for both casual skiing and racing events; Fishing including a boat ramp and trailer parking for river access; Off road bicycle and hiking trails; Small shelter with Restrooms; Playground Equipment; Cross country running; Picnicking; On leash dog walking; Bird watching; Orienteering and geocaching; and Limited interpretive signage, with information about wildlife and plant species found in the Park, surrounding the perimeter of the Park's wooded area. The Park also contains a Wetland area in the center of the Park; Open lawn area in the oxbow of the River; Sleigh rides; Cross country ski and snowshoe rental; and Special events including an annual winter festival, Polar Party, and Weddings, reunions, family gatherings and corporate events.

What is the Acquisition and Development Status?

- New Park or Trail (no land acquired or developed)
- Existing Park or Trail
  - Land Acquisition
    - Status:
    - Percentage of Land Acquired: 100
  - Development Status
    - No Development
    - Some Development, but more Proposed
      - New Facilities Proposed
      - Existing Facilities to be Upgraded
    - Fully Development

Facility Listing Section

Classification: Natural Resource Based Regional Park	
Existing Facility List	Proposed Facility List
Picknicking and picnic shelters, Walking Trails (paved), Hiking Trails (natural), Mountain Biking Trails (natural), Cross-country Skiing Trails, Fishing Piers, Nature Center/Interpretation Trails, Play areas, Restrooms/sanitation building, Roads and Parking Areas	Walking Trails (paved), Hiking Trails (natural), Biking trails (paved), Mountain Biking Trails (natural), Cross-country Skiing Trails, Roads and Parking Areas, Pedestrian Bridge, Site Lighting

Master Plan Status Section

Master Plan Status: Master Plan meeting requirements of strategic plan is available

#### Describe Other Supportive Information:

Attached is the Master Plan for Moorhead's MB Johnson Park. Additional information regarding Moorhead's Parks and Recreation department can be found at: [www.cityofmoorhead.com/parks](http://www.cityofmoorhead.com/parks)

#### Classification Details Section

Classification: Natural Resource Based Regional Park

Criteria #1 Provides a High-Quality Outdoor Recreation Experience: MB Johnson Regional Park is located in a tranquil, scenic, natural setting along the Red River of the North. This municipal park offers a wide array of recreational facilities that appeal to visitors of all ages, interests and all seasons including a picnic shelter with restrooms, playground facilities, natural hiking and mountain biking trails. In the winter, there are groomed, cross-country skiing trails and ski and snowshoe rental. There is a river access and fishing piers that provide the perfect venue for catching catfish, as the Red River of the North has been recognized on television. There are also plenty of natural setting areas for birdwatching or orienteering with some interpretative signage educating visitors on wildlife and plants. This 110 acre regional park has been noted to have the best mountain biking trails within a 40-50 mile radius of the Fargo, ND-Moorhead, MN area with a 4 out of 5 star rating from SingleTracks.com. Throughout the flat prairie in the Red River Valley, mountain biking enthusiasts struggle to find the combination of topography and wooded area which MB Johnson Park provides to local and regional guests. MB Johnson Regional Park has been designated as a trailhead for a future Heartland Trail connection. This state trail connection will bolster the activity and use that MB Johnson currently experiences throughout the year. The location of the Park along the Red River of the North offers a unique opportunity to provide areas for outdoor recreational facilities as well as preserve, protect, and educate the public on the importance and sensitive nature of the Red River to visitors from near and far exploring the Fargo, ND-Moorhead, MN area.

Criteria #2 Preserves a Regionally-Significant and Diverse Natural or Historic Landscape: MB Johnson Park has preserved the natural and historic landscape within its 110 acres of mixed steep wooded slopes and flat, grassy open spaces along the Red River for the enjoyment of regional visitors. As the largest natural resources park in Moorhead, it provides a connection to the Red River of the North for fishing and boating. Common fish species found in the Red River of the North include channel catfish, northern pike, small mouth bass, walleye, and sauger. Three federal fish and wildlife candidate species have been found in Clay County: Sprague's pipit, Dakota skipper, and poweshiek skipperling. These species may be elevated to Threatened or Endangered status within the next few years, and are also listed as rare species in Minnesota. Common wildlife species in the Moorhead area include whitetail deer, squirrels, chipmunks, rabbits, skunks, raccoons, beavers, Canadian geese, mallards, red-tailed hawks, and many species of songbirds. MB Johnson Park may contain varying types of vegetative communities including river shore, floodplain forest, wetland, and prairie. The rivershore and floodplain forest plant communities are dominated by American elm, green ash, eastern cottonwood, and bur oak trees. The wetland in the center of the Park is dominated by cattails and smartweed, with primarily curly dock and field sowthistle at the edges. Smaller green ash and American elm trees are also growing at the southern and northwestern edges of the wetland. An area of restored prairie is located west of the wetland at the center of the Park, and it is dominated by bluestem, wheat grass, sweet clover, goldenrod, and various

aster species, such as purple coneflower. Ornamental evergreens are planted in two rows along the southeastern edge of the park, which faces County State Aid Highway 3; the remainder of the park is manicured lawn.

**Criteria #3 Well-located and Connected to Serve Regional Population and/or Tourist Destination:**

Located in the largest community in northwestern Minnesota, Moorhead's MB Johnson Park serves as a regional park and destination for single track mountain biking, cross country skiing and fishing. According to the 2015 population projections, the FM Metro Area has a total urban population over 225,000 that is densely settled and rapidly growing regional destination. Downtown Moorhead and Fargo, North Dakota State University students and many residential units are located within a 2.5 mile radius or approximately 10 minute drive from MB Johnson Park in north Moorhead. Events held at MB Johnson Park that attract regional visitors include Bicycle Races held by F-M Trailbuilders; Cross Country Running: Moorhead, Fargo South and West Fargo High Schools all hold regional meets at the Park. North Dakota's Eastern Dakota Conference Cross Country Running Championships prefer MB Johnson Park as the venue for their meets. The Red River of the North is one of the best cat fishing rivers in the United States. Syndicated fishing shows have featured the Red River on multiple occasions. Prairie Edge Nordic Ski Club (PENS) hosts events throughout the year drawing visitors from throughout the region. MB Johnson Park is proposed to be a trailhead connection to the Minnesota state Heartland Trail system and Moorhead's future Red River Corridor Trail system. This extension will increase the regional tourists through Moorhead.

**Criteria #4 Fills a Gap in Recreational Opportunity within the Region:** The Park is the largest natural resource based park in Moorhead. Recreational opportunities available at this Park that are not offered at other parks in the FM Metro Area include: Off road trails of significant length currently used for Cross country running, Cross country skiing, Snow shoeing, Bicycling and Hiking. The next closest opportunity for these activities is Buffalo River State Park and areas surrounding Detroit Lakes, approximately 15 miles and 60 miles respectively, from the F-M Metro Area. MB Johnson Park is noted as the best off-road Mountain bicycle trail within 40-50 miles of the metropolitan area. MB Johnson Park has a 4 mile path with assorted offshoots that have technical areas including narrow bridges and ramps and topography found nowhere in the flat red river basin. MB Johnson Park benefits from an active mountain bike trail group, FM Trailblazers that has been instrumental on the existing and future construction, development and maintenance of the trail. FM Trailblazers also host a variety of races and events throughout the year including The Flugly Mountain Bike Race. The next closest notable mountain bike facilities is privately owned, MapleLag resort or the Sheyenne Natural Grassland in ND. The proposed Heartland Trail extension will also provide northwestern Minnesota a connection from lakes country in Becker County to the Red River of the North in Clay County.

Attachment List Section (only lists up to 10 documents)

Type	Description
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Designation Resolution	City of Moorhead Resolution
Letters of Support	Compilation of 2015 Letters of Support
Location Map	Location map added from general tab
Letters of Support	MB Johnson Park partners have expressed their Letters of Support for Regional Designation and funding
Master Plan	Master plan added from master plan tab
Resolution	
Other	Documentation of Events/Activities held at MB Johnson Regional Park
Other	Additional Programming/Operations and Maintenance/Implementation Details
Location Map	Updated Site Plan of Site Amenities
Location Map	Location map added from general tab