

# Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission

## Designation Application

### General Section

Designation Application #: 14-005D      Date Submitted: 10/12/2015

Park or Trail Name: Memorial Park

District #: 3      Map Coordinates (Latitude and Longitude): Latitude: 44.7997 Longitude: -95.5422

Location Description:

\*Memorial Park is located on the southern edge of Granite Falls, Minnesota in Yellow Medicine County. See the location map as well as a park site map in the attachments.

Lead Applicant Organization: Granite Falls

Lead Contact First Name: Bill      Last Name: Lavin

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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:

Memorial Park is located on the southern edge of Granite Falls adjacent to the Minnesota River. The area of the park covers 141 acres, which are all owned and maintained by the City. The park offers access to the Minnesota River for fishing, canoeing or kayaking, swimming and other natural resource based recreation. In addition, it contains many other unique natural features, such as a pond and granite outcroppings which are unique to this area of Minnesota. Park amenities include 22 camping sites for tent and RV camping with water, electricity and a sanitary dump station, hiking trails, playground equipment, a boat launch, several picnic shelters, restroom facilities with showers and several WPA

buildings that are in need of repair. The architecture of the main shelter and some of the buildings on the site have historical significance and help tell the story of the park, the City and the area. In addition, the Yellow Medicine County Museum is located adjacent to the Memorial Park and both facilities draw visitors from the region and beyond. From Memorial Park, visitors can view the falls in the Minnesota River. The park is connected to the downtown area of Granite Falls by trails and pathways and is a short walk to the historic Roebling Suspension pedestrian bridge (which is currently being rehabilitated) that connects the west side of the City in Yellow Medicine County to the east side of the City in Chippewa County. Granite Falls is the only municipality along the Minnesota River that sits on both sides of the river. The City of Granite Falls has recently contracted with the Upper MN Valley Regional Development Commission to develop a Master Plan for Memorial Park and that process is currently underway. At this time, the City has submitted an application to the DNR's Outdoor Recreation Grant Program for approximately \$300,000 in repairs and improvements to the campground sites and picnic shelters as well as the construction of a new restroom facility. More projects will be identified as the community goes through the Master Plan process for the park. Right now, the City is looking for regional park designation.

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:
  - 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
Camping-cross-section of camper types, Electric/water campsites, Electric campsites, Non-electric campsites, Group campsites, Tent only sites, Picnicking and picnic shelters, Walking Trails (paved), Hiking Trails (natural), Biking Trails (paved), Lake Access for power	Camping-cross-section of camper types, Electric/water campsites, Electric campsites, Non-electric campsites, Group campsites, Tent only sites, Upgrade of camping sites., Walking Trails (paved), Hiking Trails (natural), Biking

boats, Play areas, Outdoor Amphitheater, Restrooms/sanitation building, Roads and Parking Areas, 1937 Picnic Shelter	trails (paved), Mountain Biking Trails (natural), Fishing Piers, Nature Center/Interpretation Trails, Play Areas, with an outdoor theme, Restrooms/sanitation building, Roads and Parking Areas, Invasive species removal
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Master Plan Status Section

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

Describe Other Supportive Information:

1. Memorial Park Location Map
2. Detailed Memorial Park Site Map
3. City of Granite Falls Resolution of Support
4. Letters of Support

Classification Details Section

Classification: Natural Resource Based Regional Park

Criteria #1 Provides a High-Quality Outdoor Recreation Experience: Memorial Park offers many nature-based outdoor recreation activities that is the main purpose for the park. It is a much larger park (141 acres) than an average city park intended for only city residents. It offers opportunities for camping (both tent and RV), canoeing and kayaking, fishing (from shore or in a boat), bird watching, walking/running/bicycling on paved trails, nature hiking, and picnicking. The park offers many facilities to support the wide variety of natural resource-based outdoor recreational activities such as multiple picnic shelters, water and electric at the campsites, restroom facilities with showers, a boat launch, playground equipment, a natural outdoor amphitheater, and many paved and unpaved trails. Some of these facilities are in need of upgrades and the City and community have recently decided to focus their attention to improving the facilities and recreational opportunities in Memorial Park so they can attract new visitors from a wider area and get more visitors to become repeat users of the park. They see Memorial Park as a huge tourism and economic development asset to the Granite Falls community and other nearby communities.

Criteria #2 Preserves a Regionally-Significant and Diverse Natural or Historic Landscape: The signature feature of Memorial Park is the Minnesota River, with multiple secondary features such as the granite outcroppings, rare plant and animal species, a pond and hiking trails. This section of the Minnesota River flows through granite outcrops, which are some of the oldest rocks discovered in North America, dating back more than three billion years. The Minnesota River in this area is a haven for bird life, especially bald eagles. Several species of waterfowl and wetland birds use the river for corridor nesting, breeding and resting during migration. This section of the river also supports a large diverse fish population, which attracts anglers from around the state and other states throughout the U.S. The landscape of the park and its natural amenities are the main attraction to the park. Visitors come to Memorial Park to take in nature and the outdoors to fish, bird watch, hike, camp, and enjoy the unique geological features of the granite outcroppings. Memorial Park offers protection for the rock outcrops with a host

of lichen species and many species of habitat-specific vascular plants and wildlife, while also allowing the public access to these beautiful natural features and natural environment. The protection of the natural environment this park offers is extremely important, as many other areas along the Minnesota River with similar natural resources are not protected and are used for granite mining, housing and other development. There are two Minnesota Scientific Natural Areas (SNA) nearby that offer protection to this sensitive and rare habitat; however, those SNAs are generally not available for the public and are not available for outdoor recreation activities. Therefore, both the access for the public to such rare and unique natural habitat and the protection of that habitat from mining and development make Memorial Park an important public amenity.

Criteria #3 Well-located and Connected to Serve Regional Population and/or Tourist Destination: Granite Falls is located equally between Marshall and Willmar, the two largest regional centers in southwest Minnesota. Granite Falls is the County seat of Yellow Medicine County and a smaller regional hub which is close to other smaller regional hubs, such as Montevideo. Granite Falls and Memorial Park are also along the planned Minnesota River Trail system that connects many communities along the entire length of the Minnesota River. Once more portions of the Minnesota River Trail are built, Memorial Park will serve as an important resting place for future trail users, whether they stop for a few hours or are on a longer bike tour and stay overnight. Memorial Park is currently connected to the local community by trails and walking paths. Memorial Park is also located on the Minnesota River Valley National Scenic Byway.

Criteria #4 Fills a Gap in Recreational Opportunity within the Region: There are not many parks of Memorial Park's caliber that provide access to the Minnesota River in this region. In Region 6W, Ortonville is the only other municipality that has parks that offer access to the Minnesota River. There are three city parks in Ortonville: Riverside, Lakeside and Peninsula Parks that have access to the Minnesota River which in Ortonville, takes the form of Big Stone Lake. While Memorial Park is used by residents of Granite Falls, it draws visitors from a larger area because of the unique outdoor recreation facilities and opportunities discussed in the sections above and due to its options of overnight camping. Memorial Park is a destination in and of itself and there are no other municipal parks in the region that offer the amenities and access to the Minnesota River like Memorial Park. Additionally, as mentioned under criteria #2, the natural habitat that supports unique and rare geological features as well as plants and wildlife in this portion of the Minnesota River Valley is often susceptible to mining or other development. There are two nearby SNAs that offer protection of this habitat; however, they do not offer the public access to enjoy these unique natural features, wildlife and plants. Memorial Park helps preserve this natural landscape, while being one of the few protected areas that the public can also enjoy and use for outdoor recreation. The Upper Sioux Agency State Park is located a few miles downstream from Memorial Park and offers access to the Minnesota River and camping opportunities. However, entry to that park is not free for users like it is at Memorial Park and it is possible that visitors of one park may also visit the other if they are touring the area on a trip.

Attachment List Section (only lists up to 10 documents)

<b>Type</b>	<b>Description</b>
Location Map	Location map added from general tab
Resolution	Granite Falls Resolution
Letters of Support	Yellow Medicine East Community Education
Letters of Support	Granite Falls Chamber
Letters of Support	Mary Gillespie
Letters of Support	Granite Falls EDA
Letters of Support	Granite Falls Historical Society
Letters of Support	Granite Falls Riverfront Revitalization
Letters of Support	Helen Stukel
Letters of Support	Mn DNR