

Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission

Designation Application

General Section

Designation Application #: 15-016D Date Submitted: 06/25/2015

Park or Trail Name: Irving & John Anderson County Park

District #: 4 Map Coordinates (Latitude and Longitude): Latitude: 45.4634 Longitude: -93.0572

Location Description:

Irving & John Anderson County Park is located in the SE corner of Isanti County off of Co Rd 18. It is the only county park and one of only three parcels of public land located east of state highway 65 in Isanti County. The park is located within the Twin Lakes Complex, which according to the County Biological Survey, has one of the largest remnants of critical native vegetation in the county. It is in close proximity to the regional centers of North Branch and Cambridge along with Anoka and Chisago Counties falling just outside of the 7-county metro area. Anderson Park is easily accessed by Interstate 35 and the Sunrise Prairie Trail each located 4.5 miles east of the park.

Lead Applicant Organization: Isanti County

Lead Contact First Name: Barry Last Name: Wendorf

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Joint Applicant #1 Organization: A Resolution will be sent in after July 1, 2015

Joint Applicant #2 Organization:

Joint Applicant #3 Organization:

Joint Applicant #4 Organization:

Describe other project supporters:

The Friends of Anderson Park is a group of community members who are dedicated to the stewardship of the park through preservation of the wildlife and diverse vegetation found there. Oxford Township has supported the park through donations for acquisition and development. The National Audubon Society's Wild River Chapter has supported the park through programming along with other various birding projects. The Isanti County Soil & Water Conservation District has supported the establishment of native prairie within the park. The MN Department of Natural Resources has supported this park through grant awards from Metro Greenways, Remediation Fund, Regional Parks Program, and prior Park Legacy Funding.

Description Section

Classification: Natural Resource Based Regional Park

Total proposed acreage:

Overview/Description of Park or Trail:

Irving & John Anderson County Park consists of 174 acres and was added to the Isanti County Park system in 2007. Acquisition was made possible when funding was allocated through the state Remediation Grant Program, the state Regional Parks Grant Program, the Metro Greenways Grant Program along with donations from the Trust for Public Land, Oxford Township and the Anderson Family. Being located within the Anoka Sandplain, the park provides a significant contribution for regional wildlife habitat with diverse plant communities present. The park offers a variety of outdoor recreational opportunities within its natural areas consisting of remnant and restored native prairies, two lakes (Horseshoe & Horseleg Lakes), wetlands, and hardwood forests. The 3.5 mile mowed trail system serves as one of the Park's largest assets open to hiking, biking, horseback riding, along with snowshoeing and groomed cross country skiing during the winter months. Other attractions include canoeing or kayaking on Horseleg Lake, a large log picnic shelter available for small or larger group gatherings, a series of 3 boardwalks allow ADA accessibility across wetlands providing visitors with a unique up close experience, an elevated viewing platform overlooking Horseleg Lake, geocaching, and a "Nature Themed" interactive natural play area. The Friends of Anderson Park coordinate the programming of six events throughout the year ranging from Bird Walks to an annual Fall Festival to help interpret and educate the public on their natural surroundings. Interpretive signs describing the history of the Anderson Family as well as the function of the Anoka Sandplain are located along ADA accessible routes within the park. The County is currently pursuing the acquisition of three additional properties totaling 98 acres adjacent to the park. Once acquired potential opportunities for a swimming beach along with various types of camping would be available. Acquisition of additional properties is identified as a goal within the Park's Master Plan.

What is the Acquisition and Development Status?

New Park or Trail (no land acquired or developed)

Existing Park or Trail

Land Acquisition

Status: 3 separate parcels with willing sellers - additional 98 acres possible

Percentage of Land Acquired: 65%

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
Picnicking and picnic shelters, Hiking Trails (natural), Mountain Biking Trails (natural), Cross-country Skiing Trails, Horseback Riding Trails (natural), Canoeing Facilities, Play areas, Restrooms/sanitation building, Roads and Parking Areas, Three Boardwalks Elevated Observation Platform Geocaches	Camping-cross-section of camper types, Electric/water/sewer RV sites, Electric/water campsites, Electric campsites, Non-electric campsites, Group campsites, Tent only sites, Camper Cabins, Picnicking and picnic shelters, Hiking Trails (natural), Mountain Biking Trails (natural), Cross-country Skiing Trails, Horseback Riding Trails (natural), Swimming, Canoeing Facilities, Nature Center/Interpretation Trails, Play Areas, with an outdoor theme, Outdoor Amphitheater, Restrooms/sanitation building, Roads and Parking Areas

Master Plan Status Section

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

Describe Other Supportive Information:

A Master Plan that meets the requirements of the strategic plan is in the Attachments Tab. Letters of Support have been received for previous grant submissions at this park from the Friends of Anderson Park, The Isanti County Environmental Coalition, Active Living By Design, Back Country Trail Patrol, and Oxford Township.

Classification Details Section

Classification: Natural Resource Based Regional Park

Criteria #1 Provides a High-Quality Outdoor Recreation Experience: A broad range of recreational activities are available for people of all ages at Anderson Park; nearly all attract individuals and groups of people interested in experiencing the outdoors for the natural beauty of the place and the connection to the landscape and wildlife. Recreational activities provided at Anderson Park include: -World-class bird-watching (Audubon Society involvement, annual birdwalks hosted by the Friends Group), including an elevated observation platform overlooking Horseleg Lake and emergent marsh, and man-made bird habitats, such as the chimney swift tower. These were built through partnerships between the Friends of Anderson Park, the Isanti County Parks Department, Wild River Audubon Chapter, and Audubon Minnesota. -Unique and well-maintained prairie plantings and diversity throughout. Hiking is pleasurable and, because of the flat terrain, the Park has the potential to attract elderly/handicapped visitors. -Labeled raingarden plantings help to identify prairie plants in the field, in order to enhance

experience for those interested in plant identification. -Public access to Horseleg Lake, facilitating canoeing or kayaking. -Horseback riding and groomed cross country ski trails are maintained. -A large picnic shelter, which allows larger group gatherings to occur within the Park's beautiful setting. -A nature-based interactive playground area which provides opportunities for children to create their own unique experience through building, digging, and arranging objects from the Park within the play area. - The County is currently pursuing the acquisition of three additional properties totaling 98 acres adjacent to the park. Once acquired potential opportunities for a swimming beach along with various types of camping would be available.

Criteria #2 Preserves a Regionally-Significant and Diverse Natural or Historic Landscape: Prairies are vitally important to the history and function of Minnesota's landscape. At the time of European settlement, tallgrass prairie covered approximately one-third of Minnesota. The grass and sedge species with deep root systems cultivated the rich soil which served as the foundation of agricultural use across the state. Today, less than 2% of the original prairie exists within the state. Within Anderson Park, there are approximately 13 acres of remnant prairie, containing species such as little bluestem, stiff goldenrod, wild strawberry, pussytoes, hoary puccoon, round-headed bushclover, spiderwort, Indian grass, and prairie sage. Restored prairies cover over (68) acres within the park. Species seeded in these areas include big bluestem, indiagrass, little bluestem, sideoats grama, and prairie dropseed, to name a few. The prairie areas overlap the valuable oak savanna areas, which provide additional habitat and contribute to the diversity of flora and fauna within the Park. Within the wetland areas, there are approximately 30 acres of emergent marsh, adjacent to Horseshoe and Horseleg Lakes. Red-osier dogwood, willow, alder, lake sedge, softstem bulrush, broad-leaved cattails, broadleaved arrowhead, and cranberry can be found in this area. This is the critical habitat for the threatened Blandings turtle, often spotted within the park. Horseshoe and Horseleg Lakes provide staging areas for migratory waterfowl and the nearby shrub swamps serve as habitat for songbirds and frogs. The two lakes and adjacent wetlands provide nesting areas for loons, trumpeter swans, ducks, shorebirds, and other birds such as warblers, wrens, and lark sparrows. Most vestiges of the original Anderson Family farm do not exist within the park boundaries, as the emphasis has been to preserve the natural setting and revert the land back to pre-settlement native plant communities. This landscape stands in contrast to the surrounding land cover, which is primarily dedicated to agricultural and residential use.

Criteria #3 Well-located and Connected to Serve Regional Population and/or Tourist Destination: Anderson Park is located in the southeast corner of Isanti County, with close proximity to Anoka and Chisago Counties. Isanti County falls just outside of the 7-county Twin Cities metropolitan area; Anderson Park is easily accessed by Interstate 35 from both Minneapolis (45 miles) and St. Paul (43 miles), and also accessed by Hwy 95 from St. Cloud (65 miles). The park is located six miles south west of the regional center of North Branch and 16 miles south east of the regional center of Cambridge. Projections indicate that by 2035, the Central region will grow in population by 74.4 percent, with Isanti County listed within the top three counties in the region projected to grow significantly, by 94.8 percent. (An Inventory of Recreation Experience Opportunities in Minnesota: Central Region Profile, 5). Visitors travel to this part of the Central Region of Minnesota to enjoy the rural character of the landscape and to utilize the many lakes, rivers, and outdoor recreational areas.

Criteria #4 Fills a Gap in Recreational Opportunity within the Region: Trail-hiking, birdwatching, picnicking, horseback-riding and geo-caching are currently the most popular recreational offerings at Anderson Park. While many of these activities are allowed and encouraged at parks throughout Isanti, Chisago, and Anoka counties, Anderson Park is able to offer a unique experience for recreational users. Anderson Park is the only county park and one of only three parcels of publicly-owned land east of Hwy 65 in Isanti County. The park boundaries lie within the Twin Lakes Complex, an area identified by the Minnesota County Biological Survey as having one of the largest remnants of critical native vegetation in the county. Unique and interesting plant and animal species that are found within the Twin Lakes Complex include Blanding's turtles, red-shouldered hawks, black bears, beavers, otters, sandhill cranes, redheaded woodpeckers, orchids, yellow birch, cranberries, pitcher plants, leatherleaf, waterwillow, white pine, white cedar, wild rice, mink frogs, warblers, loons, black terns and trumpeter swans. Within the Park, there is a convergence of a variety of ecosystems: lakes, marshes/wetlands, oak savanna, tallgrass prairie, and hardwood forests exist within the property. The trails have been intentionally placed to border the edges of adjacent ecosystems. Because of this, viewing nature, and especially birdwatching are premium activities that are provided by the Park's setting. In 2012, Anderson Park was the recipient of Legacy Funding, further supporting the notion that this park has regional value and contributes greatly to the variety of recreational offerings that the Central Region has to provide.

Attachment List Section (only lists up to 10 documents)

Type	Description
Resolution	Joint Applicant #1 Organization added from general tab
Location Map	Location map added from general tab
Master Plan	Master plan added from master plan tab
Other	Park Map
Photo	Park Entrance
Photo	Birders on Platform
Photo	Log Picnic Shelter
Photo	Restored Prairie
Photo	Elevated Observation Platform
Photo	Play Area