

# Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission

## Designation Application

### General Section

Designation Application #: 15-057D      Date Submitted: 09/01/2015

Park or Trail Name: Lake Washington Regional Park

District #: 5      Map Coordinates (Latitude and Longitude): Latitude: 44.2675 Longitude: -93.9008

#### Location Description:

47102 Washington Park Rd, Kasota, MN 56050. Lake Washington Regional Park is located on the North/West corner of Lake Washington in Le Sueur County in south central Minnesota. Mankato is the nearest metropolitan area located only seven miles away.

Lead Applicant Organization: Le Sueur County Parks and Recreation

Lead Contact First Name: Don      Last Name: Reak

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Joint Applicant #1 Organization:

Joint Applicant #2 Organization:

Joint Applicant #3 Organization:

Joint Applicant #4 Organization:

Describe other project supporters:

Le Sueur County Board, Friends of Ney Park Nature Center

### Description Section

Classification: Natural Resource Based Regional Park

Total proposed acreage:

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

Lake Washington Regional Park (LWRP) is a 166 acre park adjacent to a large wetland complex and Lake Washington. All land is acquired for the park. There are open lawn areas, a reconstructed native prairie area, wetlands, Shanaska Creek, woodland areas and agricultural land within the current park boundary. There are self-guided trails, 29 electric campsites, 4 primitive sites, a playground, community room, restrooms, and shower facilities. LWRP is considered a regional park because it includes natural features for interacting with the environment for users including a lake, creek, wetlands, prairie,

woodland, camping, playgrounds, picnic areas, hiking and a historic bridge that spans over Shanaska Creek. LWRP is the only public park on Lake Washington. There are two DNR boat landings on the Lake but they are not part of a park facility. LWRP provides an important lake destination with trails, fishing, camping, and high quality recreational opportunities. The nearest campground is Bray Park on Madison Lake. There is a small city park in St. Peter with camping about 7 miles ways. Based on user feedback, user groups that most frequently use LWRP include campers from Central and Southern Minnesota communities including Waseca, St Peter, Mankato, North Mankato, Nicollet, Elgin, Apply Valley, Kasota, Le Center, Montgomery, Mountain Lake, Mapleton, and Waterville. Non-camping users are residents of nearby Mankato, North Mankato, St. Peter and Madison Lake. Overview of programs to be offered: Currently, only self-guided tours are available at the Park. Future plans include utilizing staff and volunteers from Le Sueur County's Ney Nature Center to provide some of the fantastic programming options they currently offer. Ney Nature Center is within 25 miles of LWRP and will serve as a great resource for programming options. Future programming identified include tree identification, geocaching, bird watching, summer day camps and others that will include children and adults. Other Parks: LWRP is located within 15 miles of Minneopa State Park and is just over two miles from the Sakatah Singing Hills State Trail. There are several small County parks within Le Sueur County: Gelder Saw Mill Park, Ray's Lake Park, Ney Nature Center, Bradshaw Woods Park, Clear Lake Park, Lake Gorman Dam Park, Lake Volney Park, Richter Woods Park, Lake Peppin Park and Public Access, Lake Emily Park and Ludwick Island, and St. Peter Park. LWRP is withing five miles of Minnesota Highway 169 and U.S. Highway 14.

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

<p>Camping-cross-section of camper types, Electric campsites, Non-electric campsites, Group campsites, Tent only sites, Dump station hooked to City of Mankato sewer plant. , Picknicking and picnic shelters, Hiking Trails (natural), Swimming, Lake Access for power boats, Canoeing Facilities, Play areas, Restrooms/sanitation building, Roads and Parking Areas, Historic bridge.</p>	<p>Camping-cross-section of camper types, Electric campsites, Non-electric campsites, Group campsites, Tent only sites, Water hydrant for campers., Picknicking and picnic shelters, Hiking Trails (natural), Swimming, Lake Access for power boats, Canoeing Facilities, Fishing Piers, Nature Center/Interpretation Trails, Play Areas, with an outdoor theme, Restrooms/sanitation building, All land is acquired. Phase II includes: 12 more campsites w/ADA rings; additional trails, boardwalk, playground, observation tower and suspension bridge.</p>
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Master Plan Status Section

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

Describe Other Supportive Information:

A Phase II Map reflects the proposed master plan. An Operational and Maintenance Plan was developed that includes annual operating costs, 3-5 year Maintenance and Replacement Costs, 10-15 year Maintenance and Replacement Costs, as well as 20-25 Year Maintenance and Replacement Costs.

Classification Details Section

Classification: Natural Resource Based Regional Park

Criteria #1 Provides a High-Quality Outdoor Recreation Experience: Due to the rural location among a vast agricultural setting, the LWRP is considered a destination park. The County owns all 166 acres. Phase I is complete and plans are complete for Phase II to be constructed. All land is acquired for Phase II. Located on 2,200 feet of Lake Washington shoreline, LWRP is the only public park on the Lake. There are about 25 acres of wetlands and prairies, 50 acres of woods, lake access, a walnut grove, creek, play areas and 3 1/4 miles of natural hiking trails. LWRP has the existing facilities, amenities and infrastructure required to serve user groups. Within these settings the following outdoor recreational offerings are provided: picnicking, hiking, walking, running and snowshoeing on multi-use trails, fishing, canoeing, kayaking, and other non-motorized boat access. Facilities that support these activities include restrooms, parking lots, showers, picnic shelters and a community room. Future plans for the Park include developing new ways of engaging residents and tourists in outdoor activities. For example, the Park could serve as an outdoor classroom for area schools. This would be accomplished through coordination with area schools and the Ney Nature Center staff. The Nature Center staff regularly coordinates camps and educational events and their expertise will be a valuable asset to LWRP.

Criteria #2 Preserves a Regionally-Significant and Diverse Natural or Historic Landscape: LWRP provides a natural and scenic setting along the shores of Lake Washington in a vast agricultural area. In addition to being located adjacent to Lake Washington, there are a variety of natural settings, not often found in one park. They include wetlands, prairie, woods, including a walnut grove, and a creek. Sakatah Creek runs through LWRP and is a natural feature to explore. A 19th century pedestrian bridge extends over the Sakatah Creek for hikers. This historical bridge is posted to the National Register of Historic Places, and is an 8-panel truss, pin-connected and spans over 100 feet over the river. A sign on the bridge reads, "Last Active Bridge 1876 D.O.T. System". Wildlife include deer and turkey, as well as other small animals. There are three and a half miles of natural hiking trails throughout the park. Phase II includes expansion of the trail system, additional camping, picnic, and outdoor play areas as well as providing proven outdoor education programming from the Ney Nature Center, also in Le Sueur County. The Phase II plans for LWRP are suitable for and large enough to accommodate desired recreational uses without undue impacts to the 166 acre land resource. All land is completely acquired for Phase II. The goal is to minimally impact on the land in Phase II of the Parks Master Plan by providing a primitive camp, natural trails and a boardwalk near wetland areas.

Criteria #3 Well-located and Connected to Serve Regional Population and/or Tourist Destination: LWRP is ideally located near the Mankato and North Mankato Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA), consisting of two counties in south central Minnesota, anchored by the cities of Mankato, North Mankato and St. Peter with an estimated population of 97,204. This area is considered a rapidly growing area within the region. Area parks, Ney Park is located 25 miles away. LWRP is located 2 miles from Sakatah Singing Hills State Trail and future plans include connecting the Park to the Trail with bike routes. Located on a converted rail-trail, the Sakatah Singing Hills State Trail offers 39 miles of paved trail between Mankato and Faribault. The Trail is available for bicycling, hiking, in-line skating, horseback riding, snowmobiling, and cross-country skiing. It is generally level and wheelchair accessible. The closest large cities this park serves are Mankato (population 39,309) and St. Peter (population 11,196). The nearest small cities include Cleveland, Kasota, Eagle Lake and Madison Lake. Le Sueur County population is 27,307. Mankato is the fourth largest city in Minnesota outside of the Minneapolis-Saint Paul metropolitan area. The county seat of Blue Earth County, it is located along a large bend of the Minnesota River at its confluence with the Blue Earth River. Lake Washington is one of the largest in southern Minnesota at 1487 acres with 13.2 miles of shoreline. Fishing and water sports are major activities on the lake. Washington is the favorite of many fishermen because of the many Crappies, Bass, Northern Pike, and Walleye in the lake. There are two public access ramps on the lake for launching boats. A marina with a bar and grill provides another tourist destination on the lake.

Criteria #4 Fills a Gap in Recreational Opportunity within the Region: LWRP has an ideal location to serve a large region of southern Minnesota. It is in close proximity to the Minneapolis-St. Paul metropolitan area, the City of St. Peter and the Mankato-North Mankato metropolitan statistical area. LWRP compliments recreational opportunities in the region, especially the Sakatah Singing Hills State Trail because it provides recreational use and camping for those who use the Trail. LWRP is one of the largest lakes in south central Minnesota and provides an abundance of high quality boating, water skiing and fishing opportunities to thousands of visitors from around the region. There is a lack of public parks on

the lake and short-term camping in the region. LWRP fills the gap for campers and outdoor enthusiasts. Blue Earth County parks often sends campers to LWRP when they are full. LWRP is the only park on Lake Washington and provides access to the Lake for the public. There are two DNR boat landings on Lake Washington but neither are part of a public park. Phase II of the LWRP Master Plan includes an additional picnic area, open play area, fishing dock, and council ring/fire pit. A suspension bridge would be a new attraction over the Sakatah Creek, as well as a boardwalk over a marsh/wetland area, additional camp sites and primitive camping. There are plans to incorporate user feedback into the development of programs and additional future opportunities at the Park.

Attachment List Section (only lists up to 10 documents)

<b>Type</b>	<b>Description</b>
Master Plan	Lake Washington Regional Master Plan
Resolution	Resolution to approve applying for GMRPTC Regional Designation and for the Lake Washington Regional Park Master Plan
Location Map	This map shows the communities served by Lake Washington Regional Park
Master Plan	Lake Washington Regional Master Plan
Resolution	Resolution to approve applying for GMRPTC Regional Designation and for the Lake Washington Regional Park Master Plan
Location Map	This map shows the communities served by Lake Washington Regional Park
Letters of Support	Letter of Support from Region 9 Development Commission indicating the Park's significance to the Region.