General

This section provides the basic information about the park or trail and the organizations responsible for it.

Last Update
26 Mar 2018 08:50:37

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Location Description

Goodhue County Byllesby Park is located on the south shore of Lake Byllesby and the Cannon River, approximately 1 mile west of US Highway 52 on the north side of MN State Highway 19, west of Cannon Falls, in the northwest corner of Goodhue County. The main park area encompasses 64 acres, 26 of which are yet undeveloped (part of the recently acquired Goudy Property). The new Mill Towns Trail bridge connects the park to the north side of the Cannon River and Dakota County's Lake Byllesby Regional Park.

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Map of Park/Trail

Description:

Description:

Description:
Facility Website
http://www.co.goodhue.mn.us/881/Byllesby-Park

Organization
Goodhue County

Lead Contact Person
Greg Isakson

Title
Public Works Director/ County Engineer

Mailing Address
2140 Pioneer Rd

City
Red Wing

State
Minnesota

Zip
55066

Phone
651-385-3025

Email
greg.isakson@co.goodhue.mn.us

Joint Applicants

Joint Applicant #1
Goodhue County

Joint Applicant #2

Joint Applicant #3

Joint Applicant #4

Joint Applicant #5

Other project supporters
Dakota County Parks, Cannon Valley Trail, City of Cannon Falls, Friends of the Mill Towns State Trail

Description

This section provides the basic information about the park or trail and the organizations responsible for it.

Regional Significance Statement
Byllesby Park is positioned as a regional recreation hub, as it sits at the confluence of the Cannon River, the Cannon Valley Trail, the Mill Towns State Trail, and it provides public access to the largest recreational lake in the southern Twin Cities metro area.

Classification
Special Recreational Feature Park

Overview/Description of Park or Trail
Lake Byllesby, which is actually a reservoir formed by damming the Cannon River, is the largest recreational lake in the far southern metro area. Because lakes are scarce here, Lake Byllesby is popular with visitors throughout the region for boating, fishing, and swimming. Both Dakota County and Goodhue County have parkland along the lakeshore, which creates for the user one large park.
The recently constructed Mill Towns Trail bridge, located just below the dam, connects Goodhue County's Byllesby Park to Dakota County's Lake Byllesby Regional Park. In coordination with the new bridge, the City of Cannon Falls built a trail extension between the Mill Towns Trail Bridge and the Cannon Valley Trail. This connection positions Byllesby Park as a major attraction for travelers of the Mill Towns and Cannon Valley Trails. With lodging available across the lake, and camping proposed at Byllesby Park as part of this master plan, visitors can enjoy recreation in the Cannon River Valley and use Lake Byllesby as their home base, exploring what the lakes two parks have to offer over the course of a day or longer.

Amenities at Byllesby Park include a swimming beach, sand volleyball court, playground, paved walking trails, three picnic shelters, grills, picnic tables, benches, paved and soft surface trails, two parking lots, two boat launches, a fishing pier, and portable toilets.

The 25-acre central portion of Byllesby Park is home to most of the parks amenities. The master plan proposes new and expanded beach areas, an off-leash dog area, a nature play area, boat slips, a fish-cleaning station at the relocated pier, a new picnic pavilion with restrooms, and natural surface trails through restored savanna.

Most of the park is covered with turf grass with shade trees scattered throughout. West of the parking lots, a two-acre stand of pines was planted years ago as a nursery, but the trees grew too fast to be transplanted. The pines now stand over 30 tall, and walking between the rows offers focused views of the lake. This unique setting will provide a playful atmosphere for the park's proposed nature play area.

Byllesby Park recently expanded to include 26 acres to the east that have yet to be developed. This land is mostly flat, former agricultural field slated to serve as a campground in a restored savanna.

Byllesby Park also includes a soft surface pedestrian trail on four acres of shoreline that travels 600 to an eight-acre parcel of wooded cliffs on the parks western edge. This land is steep, but offers an immersive nature experience different from anything available elsewhere in the park. A proposed trail loop would provide formal access to these scenic bluffs.

A 12-acre parcel referred to as the "Upper Lake Area" functions as an informal boat launch and picnic area, but sits about 2.5 miles west of the main Byllesby Park property.

**Total Acreage or Mileage**

79.8

**Acquisition and Development Status**

Existing Park or Trail

76 acres currently, 3.8 acres of future acquisition proposed

95%

**Development status**

Some development, but more proposed

New facilities proposed

**Facility Listing**

This section provides an overview of existing and proposed site facilities and general site characteristics.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Existing Facilities</th>
<th>Proposed Facilities</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Camping-cross-section of camper types</td>
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Picnicking and picnic shelters
Walking Trails (paved)
Hiking Trails (natural)
Biking Trails (paved)
Swimming
Lake Access for power boats
Fishing Piers
Roads and Parking Areas

Electric campsites
Group campsites
Camper Cabins

Other camping-related facilities
A shower building, camping contact (check-in) station

Proposed Facilities Other Information
A Headquarters building for travelers along the Mill Towns State Trail and Cannon Valley Trail would provide information about recreational offerings in the Cannon River Valley and at Lake Byllesby, sell trail passes, and have rentals, a bike repair station, showers, and lodging resources.

General Site Characteristics
The lake itself is the prime compelling feature of Byllesby Park. Whether on the water looking back at the limestone cliffs that border the lake, on the new Mill Towns Trail Bridge marveling at the dam or the Cannon River Valley, or on the shoreline looking out across the water, Lake Byllesby provides a scenic setting unmatched in the area.

Byllesby Dam is a hydroelectric dam that has been in use for over 100 years. The historic nature and unique form of the dam create a compelling attraction to view and learn about during a visit to Byllesby Park. The reservoir formed by the dam in 1910 is now the largest recreational lake in the far southern metro area. Because lakes are scarce here, Lake Byllesby is popular with visitors throughout the region for boating, fishing, and swimming. It varies in depth from less than 10 feet at the lakes western bay to more than 50 feet deep near the dam. Lake Byllesby is designated as an Important Birding Area (IBA) by the Audubon Society, because the mud flats on its western reach provide essential habitat to migrating waterfowl.

The Cannon River, which is designated a Wild and Scenic River, has particularly beautiful scenery and undeveloped surroundings. It is also a State Water Trail, and is a popular canoe, kayak, and tubing destination. The recently opened Mill Towns State Trail bridge spans the Cannon River immediately downriver of the dam, and offers an up close view of the power of the dam with a long view of Lake Byllesby on one side, and a gorgeous view of the river flowing through the forested banks of the Cannon River Valley on the other. Both Dakota County and Goodhue County have parkland along the lakeshore, and the Mill Towns State Trail Bridge connection creates the appearance of one large park. Combined, the Dakota County and Goodhue County parks provide over 250 acres of contiguous park land, several miles of hiking and ski trails, two miles of paved walking trails, two swimming beaches, multiple boat launches, a campground, several picnic areas, and other amenities.

The central portion of Byllesby Park has a classic pastoral park setting of turf grass and scattered shade trees. A two-acre stand of pines was planted years ago as a nursery, but the trees grew too fast to be transplanted. The pines now stand over 30 tall, and walking between the rows offers focused views of the lake. Underutilized areas of the park are proposed to be restored to the land's native savanna habitat. Byllesby Park recently expanded to include 26 acres to the east that have yet to be developed. This land is
mostly flat, former agricultural land that will also be restored to a savanna landscape. The western third of Byllesby Park is projected to expand its trail network, rewarding hikers with long views across Lake Byllesby from the top of wooded cliffs that rise over 30' above the water. This land is steep, and currently has limited formal access, but offers an immersive nature experience different from anything available elsewhere in the park. Already a quality habitat featuring red pines, red and white oaks, and spring ephemerals, the woodland will be enhanced by clearing buckthorn and planting native understory shrubs. The slopes at the top of the bluffs flatten out and present a natural gathering space for hikers to rest.

The shoreline condition along Byllesby Park varies, transitioning from rip rap near the dam to a sandy swimming beach, grassy lakeshore, and finally steep, rocky cliffs with natural vegetation at the lakes edge. The northern border of the former Goudy property is owned by the DNR and has a steep, forested slope leading down to the Cannon River below the dam. The pre-settlement vegetation along the Cannon River in this location would have been floodplain forest. Remnants of this can be seen along the lakes western edge. Above the floodplain stretched prairie and savanna habitats, except at the cliffs, which have never been developed and still feature Red and White Oak mesic mixed forest.

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Master Plan

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

Upload Existing Master Plan

http://dms.gmrptcommission.org/uploads/applications/18-006D/GoodhueCounty_ByllesbyParkMaster
Plan_Final_135b09.pdf

Upload Existing Master Plan

Appendix_0fa69d.pdf

Additional Supportive Information:
Because both Dakota County and Goodhue County have parkland on the shores of Lake Byllesby,
now connected by the Mill Towns State Trail Bridge, Byllesby Park transcends its size to become a
regionally significant recreation destination. Combined, the Dakota County and Goodhue County
parks provide over 250-acres of contiguous park land, several miles of hiking and ski trails, two miles
of paved walking trails, two swimming beaches, multiple boat launches, a campground, several picnic
areas, and other amenities. Byllesby Park is perfectly positioned to serve as a gateway to Lake Byllesby from the Mill Towns and Cannon Valley Trails, and to those looking to use the Cannon River State Water Trail. Goodhue County worked with Dakota County using a combined master planning process to ensure that the facilities, amenities, and improvements that the two park master plans propose are complementary and not redundant. For example, an off-leash dog area where Lake Byllesby Regional Park's campers can exercise and socialize their pets was a frequent request throughout the master planning process, but it fit better at Byllesby Park where it will be able to serve future campers and residents of the region as well. With future investment in the scenic bluffs trail loop, visitors will be able to explore the cliffs that rise above Lake Byllesby, rather than only being able to look at them from the water. Visitors to Byllesby Park can hop across the Mill Towns State Trail Bridge or paddle across the lake to take advantage of Dakota County's trails and amenities, like a proposed splash pad and swimming lagoon, or a future mountain biking skills course. The parks work together to provide visitors to the Cannon Valley with a recreational lake experience not found anywhere else in southeastern Minnesota.

Additional Supportive Documents:


http://dms.gmrptcommission.org/uploads/applications/18-006D/ShortTermCosts-General_010a98.JPG


Classification Details

Special Recreational Feature Park Classification

Provides a High-Quality Outdoor Recreation Experience

Today, Byllesby Park is a popular park for boating, fishing, swimming, and other lake access activities. The County is actively pursuing expansion of park activities and services beyond lake activities with the construction of the Mill Towns Trail Bridge, which connects the park to Dakota County’s Lake Byllesby Regional Park, the Cannon Valley Trail, Cannon River State Water Trail, and the Mill Towns State Trail. Additional recreation features that are available with these connections include: bicycling, running, walking, camping, hiking, visiting local businesses in Cannon Falls, and sightseeing along the Cannon River. The location of the park on Lake Byllesby makes it an attractive and unique feature in a region where there are few recreational lakes.
Provides a Natural and Scenic Setting Offering a Compelling Sense of Place
The lake itself is the prime compelling feature of Byllesby Park. Whether on the water looking back at the limestone cliffs that border the lake, on the new Mill Towns Trail bridge marveling at the dam or the Cannon River Valley, or on the shoreline looking out across the water, Lake Byllesby provides a scenic setting unmatched in the area. Byllesby Dam is a hydroelectric dam that has been in use for over 100 years. The historic nature and unique form of the dam create a compelling feature to view and learn about during a visit to Byllesby Park.

Well-located to Serve a Regional Need and/or Tourist Destination
Byllesby Park is easily accessed from the Twin Cities metro area and Rochester by US Hwy 52 to State Hwy 19. The park is only a couple miles west of the city of Cannon Falls and 12 miles northeast of the city of Northfield, a bustling college town. With overnight accommodations at the Dakota County Lake Byllesby Regional Park campground, as part of future development at Byllesby Park, and in Cannon Falls and Northfield hotels, the park can serve as an attraction for tourists spending time exploring the Cannon River Valley. Trail connections to the Cannon Valley Trail and Mill Towns State Trail provide opportunities for day long journeys in east and west directions from the park. Hiking trails in both Goodhue and Dakota County on either side of the lake provide local opportunities for exploring nature. Retail destinations in Cannon Falls offer a variety of dining, shopping, lodging, and entertainment options that enable the park to serve a larger audience.

Criteria #2 Images

Criteria #2 Images
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http://dms.gmrptcommission.org/uploads/applications/18-006D/cannonriver_b0fd32.JPG

Criteria #2 Images

Criteria #3 Images

Criteria #3 Images

Criteria #3 Images

Criteria #3 Images
Fills a Gap in Recreational Opportunity within the Region

The recreational boating access available at Lake Byllesby is unique in the southern Twin Cities metro area and southeastern Minnesota, where relatively few exist. The lake is the main attraction at the park, which draws users from Minneapolis to Rochester and beyond. Frequent comments heard by park rangers at Nerstrand Big Woods State Park, fifteen miles southwest of Byllesby, include, “where is the lake?” Lake Byllesby’s popularity is evidenced by the full boat trailer parking lot at the park every weekend in the summer.

Criteria #4 Images


Criteria #4 Images

http://dms.gmrptcommission.org/uploads/applications/18-006D/fishing lake byllesby_54d1ac.jpg

Criteria #4 Images


Attachments

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Additional Attachment
Byllesby Park 10-Year Master Plan

Additional Attachment
Byllesby Park 10-Year Master Plan

Additional Attachment
Byllesby Park 10-Year Master Plan

Additional Attachment
Byllesby Park 10-Year Master Plan

Additional Attachment
Byllesby Park Long-term Master Plan

Additional Attachment
South Byllesby Bay Picnic Area Detailed Plan

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South Byllesby Bay Picnic Area
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Regional Map Uploads

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Public Health Values Upload

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Existing Master Plan


AcqDev Cost Projections Upload


AcqDev Cost Projections Upload


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