

Section V.

DPC and E-Team *Operating Guidelines* and *Evaluation Process*

Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission

Revised 2/25/2015

Revised 5/24/2017

Adopted 6/25/2017

Overview: These guidelines operationalize the *Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Strategic Plan* (Strategic Plan) *at the district planning level*. The Strategic Plan is the guiding document for establishing a regional system in Greater Minnesota and should be referred to for additional detail on the provisions covered under these guidelines. Any discrepancy between these guidelines and the Strategic Plan will be resolved at the discretion of the Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission (Commission).

The guidelines consist of four parts:

Part 1: District Planning Committee Roles, Responsibilities and Selection

Part 2: Evaluation Team (E-Team) Roles, Responsibilities and Selection

Part 3: Evaluation Process for Designating Regional Parks and Trails

Part 4: Evaluation Process for Funding Designated Regional Parks and Trails

Part 1: District Planning Committee Roles, Responsibilities and Selection

Commission Members are appointed by the Governor's office consistent with the enabling legislation. The Commission has full oversight and final authority on all matters considered within and affected by the Strategic Plan and these guidelines. *The District Planning Committees (DPCs) are advisory to the Commission.* As illustrated in Exhibit A (attached), there are a total of six districts in Greater Minnesota. Each district is represented by two Commissioners and a DPC. The Commission also has an At-Large Commissioner who may participate in the activities of any or all the Districts.

Membership. Each of the six DPCs will have a minimum of seven and a maximum of 13 members, including the two Commissioners from that district. The two (2) District Commissioners along with the At-Large Commissioner shall recommend members from a cross section of interested public officials, allied associations, and/or private individuals. Members shall be appointed by the Commission in each District. Half of the initial appointments shall be for 2-year terms and

half for 3-year terms. Thereafter all appointments shall be for two years. Potential members shall be sought every two years.

The protocol for selecting DPC members is included in the *District Planning Committee Application Form* (www.grmptcommission.org/about-the-commission.html) that is available from the Commission. All prospective members must go through the application process to ensure a cross-section of interests, backgrounds, and geographic representations are accommodated on the DPCs.

Application Schedule:

- a) The application process is open and filled as needed
- b) New members will be reviewed and selected by the Commission as the agenda allows

Roles and responsibilities of members include:

- a) Understanding factors influencing planning decisions and outcomes, especially district-level trends
- b) Participating in an advisory role in applying and refining the classification system
- c) Clarifying and prioritizing the meaning of "regional" for that District
- d) Making recommendations on regional priorities, as defined under *Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Funding Program* in the Strategic Plan (see www.grmptcommission.org/our-work.html)
- e) Making recommendations to the Commission on the regional-level prioritization of projects each year for funding
- f) Promoting local jurisdiction involvement in the Regional Parks and Trails system planning process, as appropriate
- g) Work with district planners to define and update the district plan

DPC Coordination. Each DPC planner will coordinate regional planning and development efforts with Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and Metro Regional Parks (in contiguous districts) to ensure that district system master plans are complementary to state and metro-regional parks and trails within a given region of the state. In all districts, correspondence between DPCs and DNR will be through a district liaison appointed by DNR to coordinate the agency's planning efforts with each of the DPCs. In districts abutting the metro area, correspondence between DPCs and Metro Regional Parks will be through a district liaison appointed by Metro Regional Parks to coordinate planning. Where Commission districts abut more than one Metro Regional Park implementing agency, additional liaisons may be appointed by Metro Regional Parks to avoid gaps in planning coordination.

DPC Annual Meeting Schedule/Key Activities:

Each DPC will meet according to the following schedule. All work will be completed at these meetings, or via electronic means if the designation review process falls between meetings.

- a) Annual meeting schedule and key DPC activities will be consistent that of the Commission
- b) A minimum of three meetings per year is anticipated, although each DPC will coordinate with the Commission on any additional meetings necessary to complete district planning work
- c) The minimum meeting schedule will include one January/February all District meeting to review the system plan, one April/May public workshop for potential new Regional designation applicants, and one August/September meeting to review the E-Team outcomes, funding applications, and update district priorities
- d) Additional meetings may be requested by the System Plan Coordinator as necessary to review designation applications

Part 2: Evaluation Team (E-Team) Roles, Responsibilities and Selection

Membership. To maintain the credibility of the vetting process, individual park and trail proposals submitted for regional consideration are initially evaluated by the E-Team, which is made up of five (5) outdoor recreation experts or citizen advocates without any connection to, or a vested interest in, the outcome of the evaluation. The Commission approves appointments to the E-Team. The Commission Executive Director and the Commission's System Plan Coordinator serve as non-voting liaisons to the E-Team and its work.

The protocol for selecting E-Team members is included in the *Regional Park and Trails Project Proposal Evaluation Team Application Form* that is available from the Commission. The Commission shall make every effort to achieve and maintain statewide geographic representation among the five members on the E-Team.

Roles and Responsibilities. The duties of the E-Team will include:

- a) Evaluate individual park and trail grant proposals against established criteria for parks and trails of regional significance that are eligible for funding from the parks and trails fund as outlined in the Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Strategic Plan and Minnesota Statute 85.536, Subd. 6.
- b) Based on changing circumstance, recommending modifications to the following protocols and criteria:
 - a. Provides a High Quality Outdoor Recreation Experience
 - b. Preserves a Regionally Significant and Diverse Natural or Historic Landscape or Provides a Compelling Sense of Place

- c. Well Located and Connected to Serve a Regional Population and/or Tourist Destination
- d. Fills a Gap in Recreational Opportunity Within the Region

The Commission will undertake an annual performance evaluation of the E-Team and make changes based on progress as detailed in the Parks & Trails Legacy Plan, a 25-year long range plan for Minnesota.

E-Team Annual Meeting Schedule: On-going - E-Team reviews Regional designation applications; work includes general review of system and district master plans to identify gaps in service and define other planning issues for consideration by the Commission and DPC's.

August 15-September 30 – E-Team may also weigh in on funding applications submitted for approved parks and trails of regional significance as requested by the consultant team.

Part 3: Evaluation Process for Designating Regional Parks and Trails

Section 3 of the Strategic Plan should be referenced for complete description of the park and trail classifications and evaluation criteria. These criteria are used as the primary basis for determining whether a park or trail meets regional designation criteria. The Commission's online Application for Designation as a Regional Park or Trail in Greater Minnesota complements the Strategic Plan and further defines specific requirements.

Section 4 of the Strategic Plan defines the protocol for designating regional parks and trails in Greater Minnesota. Specifically, the Protocol for Formalizing Regional Park and Trail Designation highlights the steps in the overall process. The following detailed description defines the roles of the Commission, E-Team, DPC's, and consultant team in the Regional Designation evaluation process.

Initial Designation Application Ranking Process: The purpose of this step is to determine if a given park or trail unit meets the basic requirements for consideration of being regionally significant. The goal is to give entities in Greater Minnesota an opportunity to verify completeness and potential competitiveness of a proposal before seeking a more completed (and involved) evaluation and formal ranking.

Step 1: District Workshops

- a) System Plan Coordinator and DPC's hold workshops in each District to train and assist potential applicants with the designation process.

- b) DPC members actively work within each district to publicize the application process, and actively participate in discovering regional opportunities through various forms of public outreach.

Step 2: Application for Designation

- a) Cities and Counties in Greater Minnesota submit applications on an open timeline through the GMRPTC's Data Management System (DMS).
- b) System Plan Coordinator and consultant team conducts administrative review for completeness.

Step 3: E-Team Reviews and Ranks

- a) E-Team conducts a review of the Designation Application and ranks it High, Medium, or Low, based on its potential for Regional designation compared to established criteria. To avoid potential for conflict of interest, DPC members do not directly score park and trail proposals.
- b) After E-Team review, each of the DPC's receive a summary of the applications and evaluation results. DPC's review findings and consider rationale for outcomes and pose questions to the Commission through the System Plan Coordinator and District Commissioners about proposals to ensure scoring is fair and well-reasoned, and that all initiatives are fully vetted and consistently ranked against the criteria.

Step 4: Commission Reviews Ranking

- a) Rankings and comments from the E-Team are submitted to the Commission. DPCs, if the meeting cycle allows, will also submit comments for ranking review.
- b) Commission formally accepts the ranking or requests additional information.

Step 5: Consultants Notify Applicants

- a) Executive Director notifies applicants of the outcome of their evaluation, including ranking and any E-Team or Commission comments.
- b) Medium and Low ranked applications may address deficiencies and re-submit application.
- c) High ranking applications are directed to complete a Master Plan for comprehensive scoring.

Detailed Designation Application Scoring Evaluation: The purpose of this process is to evaluate a park or trail application that was determined to be complete and ranked highly against the criteria under steps 1-5. For this to occur, proposers must meet all the detailed information requirements defined in the application – the most important of which is providing an

approved/adopted unit master plan and a statement as to the initiator's commitment to fulfill its obligations/role as the implementing agency.

Step 6: Applicant Develops Master Plan

- a) System Plan Coordinator and/or Consultant Team provides pre-submission review upon request.
- b) Master Plan is submitted online in the Master Plan portal of the GMRPTC DMS.

Step 7: Master Plan Review and Score

- a) Consultants review for completeness and evaluates for quality and viability.
- b) E-Team conducts a review of the Master Plan and scores it according to the criteria and scoring system defined in the *Strategic Plan*. Additional analysis may be provided to the applicant and Commission in the form of comments.
- c) DPC's review findings and consider rationale for outcomes and pose questions to the Commission through the System Plan Coordinator and District Commissioners about proposals to ensure scoring is fair and well-reasoned, and that all initiatives are fully vetted and consistently scored against the criteria.

Step 8: Commission Reviews and Determines Designation

- a) Commission reviews finding and considers input and recommendations from E-Team, consultant team and DPC's.
- b) After determining that evaluations were fair and well-reasoned, the Commission decides which initiatives meet the criteria and warrant being included in the regional park and trail system in Greater Minnesota, along with providing any qualifying statements.
- c) All designations must receive final approval of the Commission to be formally included in the regional system and become eligible for funding.

Step 9: Commission Notifies Applicant of Designation

- a) Commission formally approves facilities to be added to the regional system, which triggers formalizing agreements with responsible public entities – which could be a city, county, or joint powers authority.
- b) Executive Director notifies applicant of the result of the designation evaluation via formal letter.

Step 10: Annual Review of Classifications and Evaluation Criteria Regional Priorities

- a) DPC annually reviews classifications and evaluation criteria in context of regional needs.

- b) DPC's review, comment and make recommendations to the Commission as related to the Regional designation list; DPC's also provide comments and recommendations on overall findings.
- c) Commissioners representing each district make recommendations, based on the DPC review, to the Commission as it pertains to the district they represent.
- d) Commission annually reviews and adopts updates.

Part 4: Evaluation Process for Funding Designated Regional Parks and Trails

The following detailed description defines the roles of the Commission, E-Team, DPC's, and consultant team in the funding application evaluation process.

Step 1: Notification to Designees

- a) Parks and Trails of Regional Significance are notified that funding applications are being accepted on the GMRPTC DMS funding portal until a specified application deadline, typically on or around the end of July.
- b) Application workshops or tutorials will be held if needed.

Step 2: Application for Funding

- a) Qualified applicants submit a funding application on the GMRPTC DMS by the specified deadline.

Step 3: Consultants Review Application

- a) System Plan Coordinator reviews application for completeness and qualification.
- b) Consultant team scores and ranks funding applications according to GMRPTC funding criteria policy.
- c) Applications that receive unanimous agreement from the consultant team are submitted to the Commission in writing. Applications that are not unanimous are submitted to the Commission for further discussion.
- d) DPC's prioritize funding applications, based on district demands and opportunities, for the Commission's funding determination.

Step 4: Commission Reviews and Recommends Funding to Legislature

- a) Prioritized list of recommended projects for funding must be submitted to the Legislature by January 15th.

Step 5: Notifications Sent to Applicants of Funding Recommendations

- a) Formal notification sent to applicants of funding recommendations.

- b) Notification to applicants of recommended projects includes contract implementation process should the Legislature approve the recommendations.
- c) Contracts for funding are executed by the DNR on behalf of the Commission.