**Funding Protocol for Regionally Designated Significant Parks and Trails**

Parks and trails in Greater Minnesota are eligible to apply for funding only after their formal designation by the commission.

The very process of designation sets a high standard to achieve regional significance, therefore a thorough vetting process had already been done prior to the funding evaluation, ensuring all projects recommended for funding in FY2016 and FY2017 are of high regional value.

Funding Evaluation Protocol

* Funding requests were evaluated based on the ability to provide a high-quality experience, serve a regional population or visitor destination, enhance connectivity and/or fill a gap in a recreational opportunity
* The Four Legacy strategic directions were given high consideration; connect people to the outdoors; acquire land, create opportunities; take care of what we have; coordinate among partners
* Guiding principles and themes complementary to the above, with additional focus on projects most relevant to, and valued by, residents and visitors, and those that generate economic impact

A total of 31 funding requests were submitted for consideration and ***all*** requests were evaluated and placed in one of four categories. The first two categories encompass the projects recommended by the Commission for the FY2016/2017 funding cycle.

1. High value top priority projects that line up well compared with evaluation protocol and are ready to move forward. There are 19 funding recommendations in this category.
2. High value top priority prototype projects that provide test cases upon which to build support strategies for future investments. There are four funding recommendations in this category

The remaining eight funding requests were placed in one of the two following categories:

1. Worthy projects that match up well against the evaluation protocol but are either not ready to go and/or are less of a priority than the high value top priority projects.
2. Future potential projects that have baseline merit against the evaluation protocol but need additional refinement or enhancement to become higher priorities.

The funding requests in these categories are not priorities for FY2016/2017 funding cycle but may be prospects for future funding cycles with refinement of the request.

**Funding Recommendation Prioritization Process**

Funding application screening was performed by the Executive Director and consultant team based on the funding protocol established. The initial screening resulted in consensus of project recommendations and ranking order. A second screening was done by the Evaluation Team and consensus was reached for the recommendations.

The project recommendations and ranking order were discussed and voted on by the Commission, which ultimately voted unanimous approval for both project recommendations and ranking order.