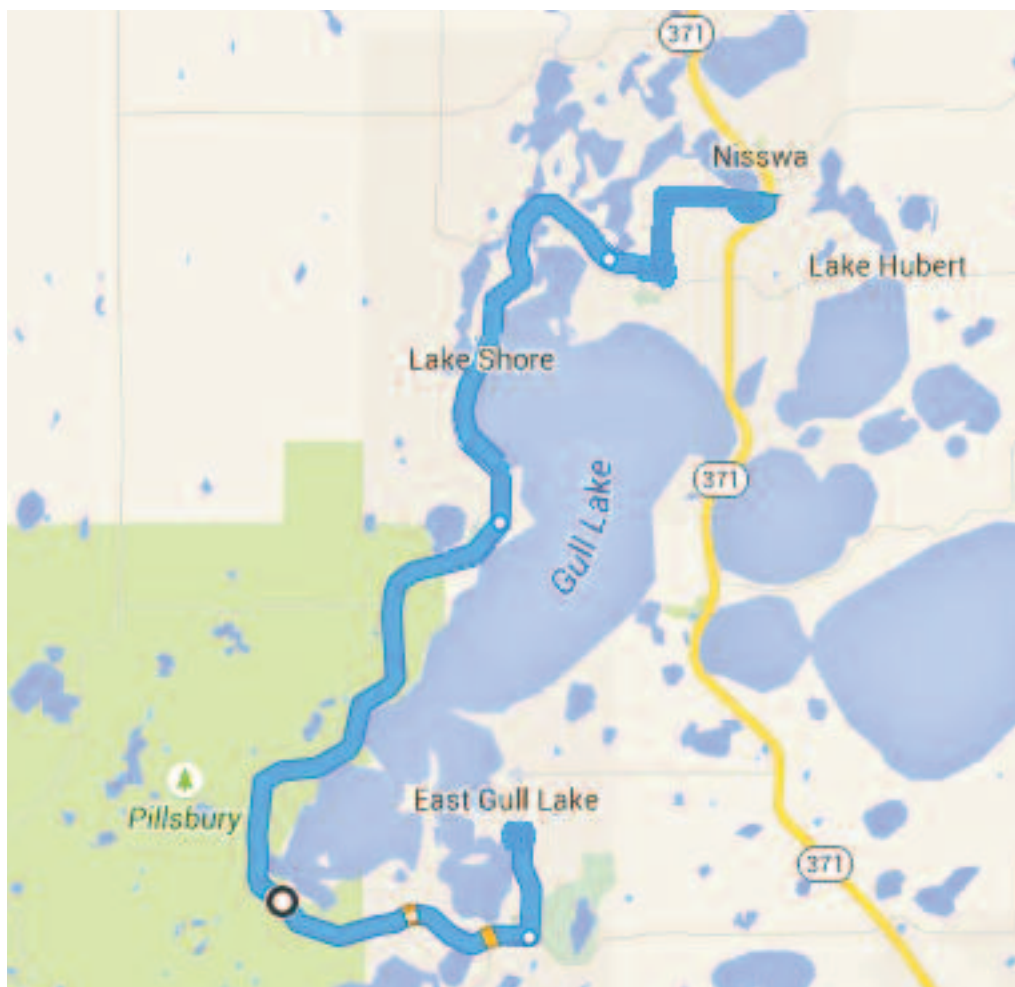


# The Gull Lake Trail Master Plan



*City of Lake Shore, the City of East Gull Lake,  
Fairview Township, and the City of Nisswa,  
with support from Crow Wing and Cass Counties*

*Working Draft (June 30, 2015)*



# History and Acknowledgements

The Jurisdictions would like to thank the following for their support of the Gull Lake Trail project:

**Cass County**

Robert Yochum (County Admin)  
Dave Enblom (County Engineer)  
Current and former county commissioners

**Crow Wing County**

Tim Houle (County Admin)  
Current and former county commissioners

**City of East Gull Lake**

Rob Mason (City Admin)  
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Former Mayor Dave Kavanaugh  
Current and former city councils  
Contractors: SEH, Anderson Brothers,  
DeChantel, Rardin

**City of Nisswa**

Alex Hondl (Park & Rec Director)  
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Current and former city councils

**Fairview Township**

Marla Yoho (Clerk)  
Current Township Supervisor  
Jim Weizenegger  
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**City of Lake Shore**

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Trail 77 Team  
Mayor John Poston  
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Current and former city councils  
Contractors: SEH, WSB

This page will be updated as the project evolves.

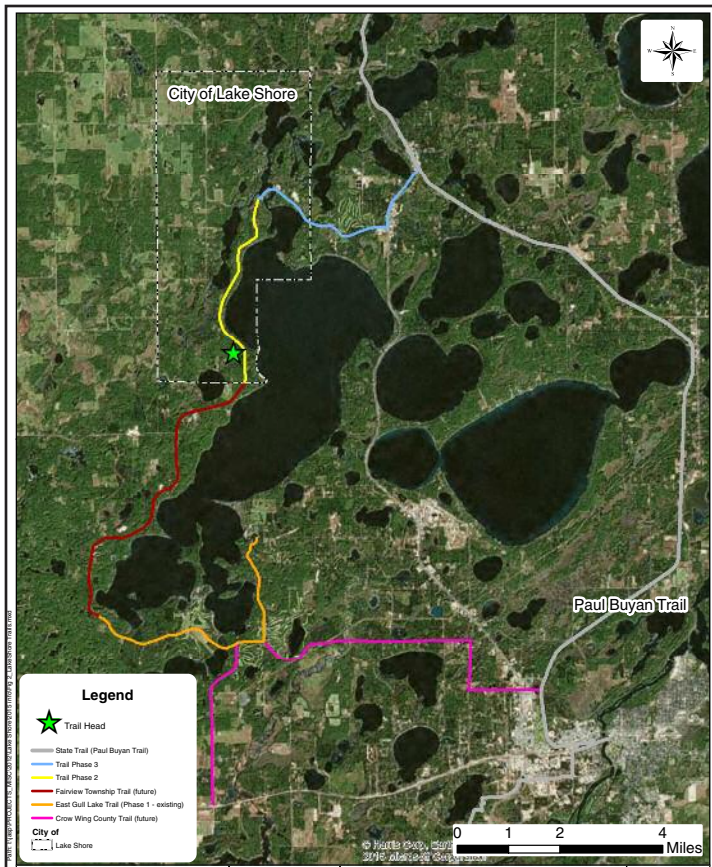


# Table of Contents

Introduction .....	1
<b>Section 1: Planning/Vision</b>	
Overview .....	3
Comprehensive Plans .....	7
Regional Significance .....	9
<b>Section 2: Development of a Master Trail</b>	
Overview .....	17
Phase 1: East Gull Lake.....	19
Phase 2: Lake Shore .....	21
Phase 3: Fairview Township .....	26
Phase 4: Nisswa.....	27
Phase 5: Trailhead Facility.....	28
Additional Amenities .....	28
<b>Section 3: Implementation, Maintenance and Sustainability</b>	
Budget Summary .....	29
Operations/Maintenance .....	30
Natural Resources Sustainability .....	31
Community Outreach & Marketing .....	32
Research Plan .....	33
Appendices .....	34



# Introduction



*See Appendix 1 for larger view of this map.*

The communities of East Gull Lake, Fairview Township, Lake Shore and Nisswa, along with the counties of Crow Wing and Cass, seek to develop a 21 mile, multi-use paved trail along and in the right-of-way of the west side of CSAH 77, wrapping around Gull Lake. The 10' wide **Gull Lake Trail** will utilize both a designated trail corridor and side-of-road design to provide safe access to resorts, golf courses and fine dining in the heart of the Brainerd Lakes Area vacationland region. While this trail will be a multi-use trail, it is anticipated that the primary usage will be by walkers, bicyclists or rollerbladers.

The Gull Lake Trail starts at the Gull Lake Recreational Area in the City of East Gull Lake, along the southeast shores of Gull Lakes. The trail travel south along Cty Rd 70, then follows CSAH 77 west along the south end of Gull Lake, traveling past Cragun's Resort and Madden's on Gull Lake, to reach Fairview Township along the west. Fairview Township's planned route will continue to follow along the west side of CSAH 77 and continue north through the City of Lake

Shore past the Gull Lake Narrows' bridge and by the Gull Lake Narrows boat access and fishing pier. Finally, the trail would follow along CSAH 77, turn north on Lower Roy Lake Road along Grand View Lodge's The Pines Golf Course, turning onto Hazelwood Drive to end at the new Nisswa Lake Park & Recreational Area (NLPRA). The NLPRA offers a safe route through a pedestrian tunnel under State Highway 371 to Nisswa's downtown district and onto the Paul Bunyan Trail, a rails to trails path that travels through downtown Nisswa. This is a critical connection to the primary trail artery through Central Minnesota, which offers 130+ miles from Brainerd to Bemidji.

An additional connection by Crow Wing County from East Gull Lake's Pine Beach Road (CSAH 77) could tie the Gull Lake trail to a southern portion of the Paul Bunyan Trail, off Wise Road just north of Brainerd, or, East Gull Lake's south-reaching trail along County Road 18 could match up with Sylvan Township and eventually, the City of Baxter, which also links to the Paul Bunyan Trail.



A Gull Lake trailhead facility at the south end of the city of Lake Shore will also offer a sanctuary-like location for those riding the complete Gull Lake Trail route, or a convenient starting point for others. Within this 80-acre site owned by Cass County, the trailhead facility will house a parking lot, restrooms, a picnic shelter, bike tune-up station and an additional trail loop.



Phase 1, the 4.3 miles in East Gull Lake, is already complete. Timing of the Phase 2 of this trail project, a 3.9 mile segment, is being led by the reconstruction of CSAH 77, which is a part of Cass County's 5-year capital improvement Plan (CIP) and is tentatively slated for 2017-18. Phases 3-5 will follow as funding becomes available.



To support various portions of the trail, yet maintain the desirable esthetics of the existing roadway, CSAH 77 may be re-aligned within the existing/current right-of-way, and within the existing utility corridor – especially within the city of Lake Shore, to minimize the removal of mature trees and/or disrupting low/wetlands while also allowing for a wide enough transportation channel to account for both the road and a new trail.



The Gull Lake Trail project aligns well with the strategic directions defined in the Parks & Trails Legacy Plan, as it is a project that:

- connects people and the outdoors
- creates opportunities for new trails to reach existing users and reach out to new customers
- takes care of what we have by providing a safe, high quality trail experience
- coordinates among partners.

In addition, the Gull Lake Trail supports initiatives that foster economic development in a region that is driven by tourism and experiencing an incredible population growth in greater Minnesota.

The multi-jurisdictional team is seeking Regional Trail (Motorize and Non-Motorized use) classification status for this unique, multi-purpose trail from the Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission with the hopes of then becoming eligible to receive a Minnesota Legacy Parks & Trails Grant.

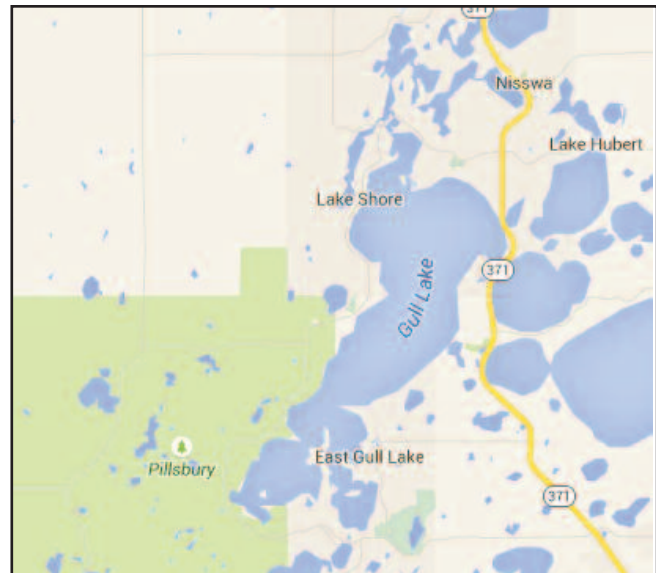


# Section 1: Planning/Vision

## OVERVIEW

In 2010, the Gull Lake region communities participated in a Gull Lake Micropolitan Community Study. *Appendix 2*. This project was initiated as a pilot to develop cooperative relationship between businesses, organization, local units of government and individuals. The goal of the project was to plan and construct the infrastructure needed to support the population growth that is expected in the Brainerd Lakes Area while also protecting the natural resources, recreation and the economy that give the region such a high quality of life. Creating an agreement to complete an interconnected trail network around Gull Lake linked to the State Paul Bunyan Trail was one of the 7 identified recommendations.

Four unique communities encompass the Gull Lake Area: the city of East Gull Lake, Fairview Township and city of Lake Shore in Cass County, and the city of Nisswa in Crow Wing County, all just minutes north of the region's hub of the cities of Brainerd & Baxter. The Brainerd Micropolitan Statistical Area (defined by the U.S. Census Bureau as including both Cass and Crow Wing Counties), was ranked as the *fourth fastest growing micropolitan area* in the Midwest, and ranked 28th in the nation.



Gull Lake is the largest lake of the Gull Lake Chain's seven interconnected waterways. The Gull Lake Chain is rated as one of the top recreational lakes not only in Minnesota, but the United States. The Gull Lake area also represents the heart of the Brainerd Lakes Area vacationland community, accounting for nearly *HALF* of the lodging rooms for the entire region. The population of Gull Lake communities increases two to three times during the summer months, with a large influx of seasonal residents and vacationers. The majority of these visitors reside in the Twin Cities metro area, with additional draws from Fargo/Morehead, Chicagoland and Iowa.

This region is also experiencing an increase in its year round population as baby boomers are reaching their retirement age and choosing to relocate or stay at their seasonal home.



# Overview

## *Planning/Vision*

### **East Gull Lake**

The city of East Gull Lake holds Gull Lake's Gold Coast, accounting for many of the lake's most luxurious homes. The population is just over 1,000, but three predominate resorts also reside in the city — Cragun's Resort, Madden's on Gull Lake, and Kavanaugh's Resort — consistently increasing the population by double or triple.

There is a municipal airport, and many golf courses. The City of East Gull Lake offers one of the area's only public tennis courts, and features boat accesses on Gull Lake and Sylvan Lake. The Gull Lake Recreational Area within the city limits offers a boat ramp, public swimming beach, campground and a Mississippi Headwater Waterway dam controlled by the US Army Corps of Engineers.



### **Fairview Township**

With a population of less than 600 residents, Fairview Township is the smallest of the Gull Lake communities, but holds tremendous recreational assets. Fairview Township is home to Pillsbury State Forest, Minnesota's first state forest. Pillsbury State Forest offers more than 25,000 acres with trails throughout the heavily forested lands that are dotted with small lakes and ponds. The trail system in this state forest is especially popular with equestrians and mountain bikers during the summer and cross-country skiers in the winter. Land ownership within this forest includes state, county, municipal, and private holdings. Recreational facilities in the forest include the Walter E. Stark Horse Assembly Area, Shafer Lake, Green Bass Lake, and Rock Lake Campground and Day-Use Area.



Fairview Township is also home to Mount Ski Gull, a downhill skiing, snowboarding and tubing attraction, several commercial horse stables and a popular shooting range.

CSAH 77 is the primary transportation artery through the city.



# Overview

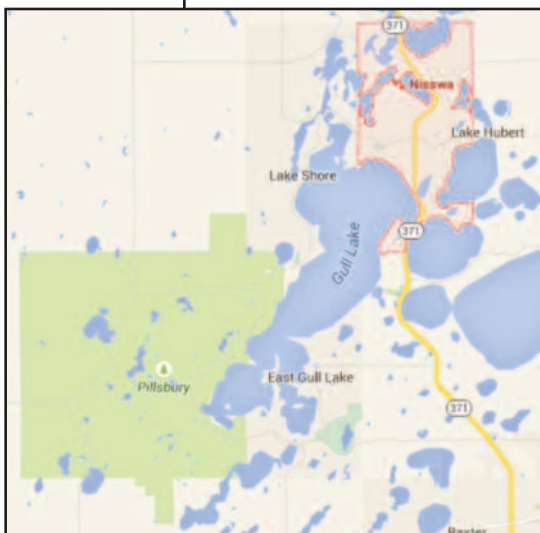
## *Planning/Vision*

### **Lake Shore**

The City of Lake Shore is home to 1,037 full-time residents making it the largest city in Cass County. The City of Lake Shore is only 18 square miles and covered by approximately 1/3 water and the remaining 2/3 of forestland, intermingled with non-forested wetlands. Lake Shore is home to several premier dining establishments, as well as a handful of lodging facilities and service businesses.

The City of Lake Shore has an 80-acre park, Fritz Loven Park, and multiple public water accesses, including a major boat access coordinated by the Minnesota DNR at the Gull Lake Narrows that includes a year round fishing pier. Fritz Loven Park offers 3 kilometers of nature trails with several spectacular outlook sights, accessible fishing pier, a picnic pavilion with picnic tables, electrical outlets and outdoor grills, a playground, and restrooms. The dirt and mowed trails are available for hiking, snowshoeing and cross country skiing. Stony Brook, a Minnesota DNR designated trout stream, runs through the park and along side the trail in several spots.

CSAH 77 is also the primary transportation artery for this city. Efforts should be made to preserve its aesthetic and rural character while providing a safe road for the community.



### **Nisswa**

The city of Nisswa is known throughout the Brainerd Lakes vacation area for its unique shops and dining options, as well as world-class resorts and lakes. Home to more than 1,900 year round and seasonal residents, the Paul Bunyan Trail travels in the heart of the downtown business district, connecting it to its neighboring communities to the north and south.

In addition to youth recreational activities, the City of Nisswa offers a community park with two baseball fields, two outdoor hockey rinks, warming house with bathrooms, a large playground area and a community center.



# Overview

## Planning/Vision

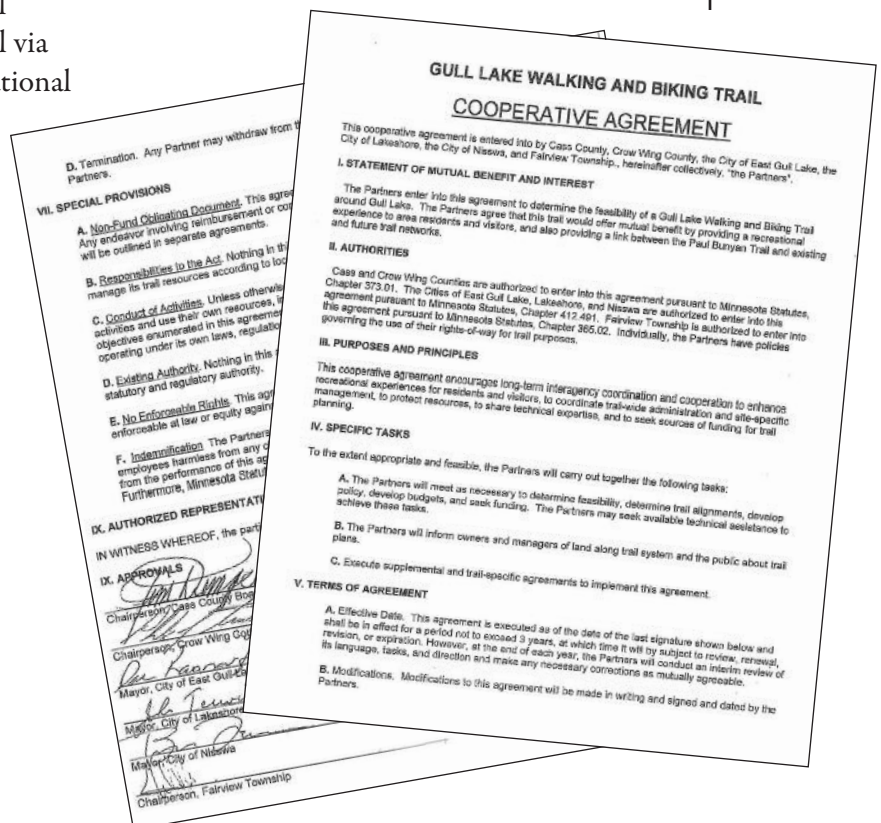
A new “pocket park” ties the downtown business district to a new pedestrian tunnel under Hwy 371 and to the future Nisswa Lake Park & Recreational Area (NLPRA), a 2.1-acre park is adjacent to a planned MN DNR boat access on Nisswa Lake. The NLPRA property will offer some amenities, such as (proposed) a biking and/or walking trail, interpretative signage, observation areas, a gazebo, restroom facilities, benches, a pier, a swimming area and boat docking facilities. Non-motorized watercraft access will also be provided complimenting the new DNR public boat access adjacent to NLPRA.

### Regional Cooperation

A cooperative agreement was signed in 2010, and renewed in 2015, with Cass & Crow Wing Counties, Fairview Township, Nisswa, Lake Shore and East Gull Lake to encourage interagency coordination and cooperation to enhance recreational experiences for residents and visitors. *Appendix 3*

The culmination of this partnership is the realization of a trail around the entirety of Gull Lake – The Gull Lake Trail – East Gull Lake Trail through Fairview Township and the city of Lake Shore to Nisswa, with a final connection to the Paul Bunyan Trail via the new Nisswa Lake Park & Recreational Area and pedestrian tunnel under the Hwy 371.

This interconnectivity among residential and vacation hot spots would be unprecedented in the region.





# Comprehensive Plans

## *Planning/Vision*

Development of a regional trail is noted in each jurisdiction's comprehensive plan, as well as the plans of each counties.

### **City of East Gull Lake**

The city of East Gull Lake's Comprehensive plan notes that the city should "work to improve recreation opportunities for residents and visitors throughout the City." With an extensive amount of shoreline, a campground, and proximity to the Paul Bunyan Trail, East Gull Lake draws residents and visitors who enjoy outdoor recreation.

The plan also states that "residents would like a local, year-round, multi-purpose trail system that connects to area systems."

The city of East Gull Lake has a park dedication fee which assesses a 5% fee on any new development proposed in the city. A developer also has the option of donating land for a trail right-of-way, if appropriate.

### **Fairview Township**

In 2006, Fairview Township residents completed a survey that became a basis for the formulation of a Comprehensive Plan. One of the most definitive findings from that survey was residents desire for a safe walking and biking trail within the township.

Therefore, Fairview Township strives to increase safe pedestrian travel through the inclusion in the Gull Lake Trail project. Specifically, Fairview Township will "Coordinate area trails into Fairview Township and establish connections with East Gull Lake, Lake Shore, Pillager, Sylvan Area, and other adjacent areas . . ."



# Comprehensive Plans

## *Planning/Vision*

### **The City of Nisswa**

The Nisswa Park & Recreation Advisory Commission serves to advise the Parks & Recreation Director and the City Council regarding park facilities and available programs. To prepare for the re-evaluation of Nisswa's Comprehensive Plan, the Park & Recreation Advisory Commission drafted a 10-year park project list, which includes "develop connecting trails to the Paul Bunyan Trail."

The City of Nisswa worked with MN DOT to build a tunnel under Hwy 371 to connect Nisswa's lakeside park & rec area to the downtown Nisswa community. In doing so, the tunnel also provides safe connection for the Gull Lake Trail. A "pocket park" was created at the east base of the tunnel, providing a handicapped assessable path to the tunnel, as well as establishing a gateway to the new Nisswa Lake Park & Recreational Area -- another project on the 10-year project list (acquire land to develop a beach and/or passive recreation offerings).

### **The City of Lake Shore**

In an efforts to protect its resources, the city of Lake Shore completed a Comprehensive Plan in April of 2006. Their Plan includes references to this trail in many ways. The development and use of walking trails throughout the city that connect with adjacent communities was identified as one of the "Community Character" strategies. A Parks and Recreation strategy is establishing a recreational trail system throughout the city, including a trail along CSAH 77 and adjacent communities, as well as connecting with Fritz Loven Park. A Transportation & Infrastructure strategy identified developing a "multi-modal transportation" system and noted that by providing for alternate modes of transportation for it's residents, such as walking and biking, that the City would be helping to protect the air quality and preserving the character of the community.

### **County Partners**

Both county partners in this project are driven by the need to promote outdoor recreation by maintain and enhance parks, recreation, and open space for residents and visitors by providing diverse recreational opportunities that are accessible to people of all ages and abilities, while preserving the county's high quality natural areas and open spaces.



# Regional Significance

## *Planning/Vision*

Development of the Gull Lake Trail meets the criteria established by the Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission for special use, multi-purpose trails under the Special Recreational Feature Regional Park Classification. It will provide a desirable setting and offer high-quality opportunities and use by residents and visitors. It will connect to the Paul



*The Gull Lake Trail will pass by several of the region's best lakeside restaurants and encircles several lake events, including the largest ice fishing tournament in the country, a classic wooden boat show, an fall Oktoberfest and winter golf, the Gull Lake Frozen Four.*

Bunyan Trail, with options for even more trail and park connections. And, its length is ideal for seniors and new trail users. The Gull Lake Trail will become a critical destination point within the popular Brainerd Lakes Area.

### ***Criteria #1 – Provides a High-Quality “Destination” Trail Experience***

The Gull Lake Trail design, utilizing both a designated trail corridor and side-of-road route along the west side of CSAH 77, will maintain the rural and scenic aesthetics that bring residents and visitors alike by the thousands to the area. The paved, 10' wide trail will travel aside mature trees and feature a wide variety of birds and wildlife, while also providing convenient connections to great dining and lodging.

The popularity of Gull Lake already makes the existing roadway a favorite drive, especially during peak fall colors. The route connects everything from a stately log structure that is on the National Registry of Historic Places to unique natural features, such as wetlands, to magnificent lakeside homes. The trail encompasses forests, lakes, vistas and rolling topography.

In some sections of the trail, the utility right-of-way will be used, which is already cleared of trees, rather than removing the canopied trees – a feature that has made this road famous and well photographed. It is also the intent of the trail design to add features such as landscaping and flowers that enhance the beauty of the region.



# Regional Significance

*Planning/Vision*



*The Gull Lake Trail is on a “must see” fall colors travel route, with legendary canopied trees.*

A Gull Lake trailhead facility at the south end of the city of Lake Shore will also offer a sanctuary-like location for those riding the complete Gull Lake Trail route, or a convenient starting point for others. Within this 80-acre site owned by Cass County, the trailhead facility will house a parking lot, restrooms, a picnic shelter, bike tune-up station and an additional trail loop.

Benches and picnic tables will be strategically placed along the trail, providing shady resting spots and scenic views – sharing the character and beauty of the region to all travelers. Trail route signage will direct trail users to historical locations, archeological features and point out public water access points on Gull Lake and Lake Margaret, with picturesque overlooks.



# Regional Significance

## *Planning/Vision*

### *Criteria #2 – Well-located to Serve a Regional Need and/or Tourist Destination*

Four communities and 2 counties encompass the Gull Lake area: the city of Nisswa in Crow Wing County, the city of East Gull Lake, Fairview Township and city of Lake Shore in Cass County. The Brainerd Micropolitan Statistical Area (defined by the U.S. Census Bureau as including both Cass and Crow Wing Counties), was ranked as the fourth fastest growing micropolitan area in the Midwest, and ranked 28th in the nation.

Gull Lake is the largest lake of the Gull Lake Chain's seven interconnected waterways. The Gull Lake Chain is rated as one of the top recreational lakes not only in Minnesota, but the United States. The Gull Lake area also represents the heart of the Brainerd Lakes Area vacationland community, accounting for nearly *HALF* of the lodging rooms for the entire region. The population of Gull Lake communities *increases two to three times* during the summer months, with a large influx of seasonal residents and vacationers. The majority of these visitors reside in the Twin Cities metro area, with additional draws from Fargo/Morehead, Chicagoland and Iowa.

This region is also experiencing an increase in its year round population as baby boomers are reaching their retirement age and choosing to relocate or stay at their seasonal home.

The Gull Lake Trail offers safe access to the popular tourist town of Nisswa, the State Paul Bunyan Trail -- adding an additional 100+ miles of potential trails to walk or ride, Pillsbury State Forest, and the Gull Lake Dam Recreational Area – complete with boat ramp, public swimming beach, campground and a dam controlled by the US Army Corps of Engineers.





# Regional Significance

## *Planning/Vision*

### ***Criteria #3 – Enhances Connectivity to Other Trails and Connects to Regional Destinations***

The Gull Lake Trail will start at the Gull Lake Recreational Area in the City of East Gull Lake, along the southeast shores of Gull Lakes, wrapping along the south, west and north shores of Gull Lake and reaching to Nisswa at the new Nisswa Lake Park & Recreational Area (NLPRA). The NLPRA offers a safe route through a pedestrian tunnel under State Highway 371 to Nisswa's downtown district and onto the Paul Bunyan Trail.

An additional connection by Crow Wing County from East Gull Lake's Pine Beach Road (CSAH 77) could tie the Gull Lake trail to a southern portion of the Paul Bunyan Trail, off Wise Road just north of Brainerd, or, East Gull Lake's south-reaching trail along County Road 18 could match up with Sylvan Township and eventually, the City of Baxter, which also links to the Paul Bunyan Trail. The Gull Lake Trail would create a scenic 20+ mile loop off the Paul Bunyan Trail.

The Gull Lake Trail offer safes, a natural and scenic access to this popular tourist region, as well as making critical connections to forests and parks, golf, and water.



*The Gull Lake Trail will connect with the State Paul Bunyan Trail.*



# Regional Significance

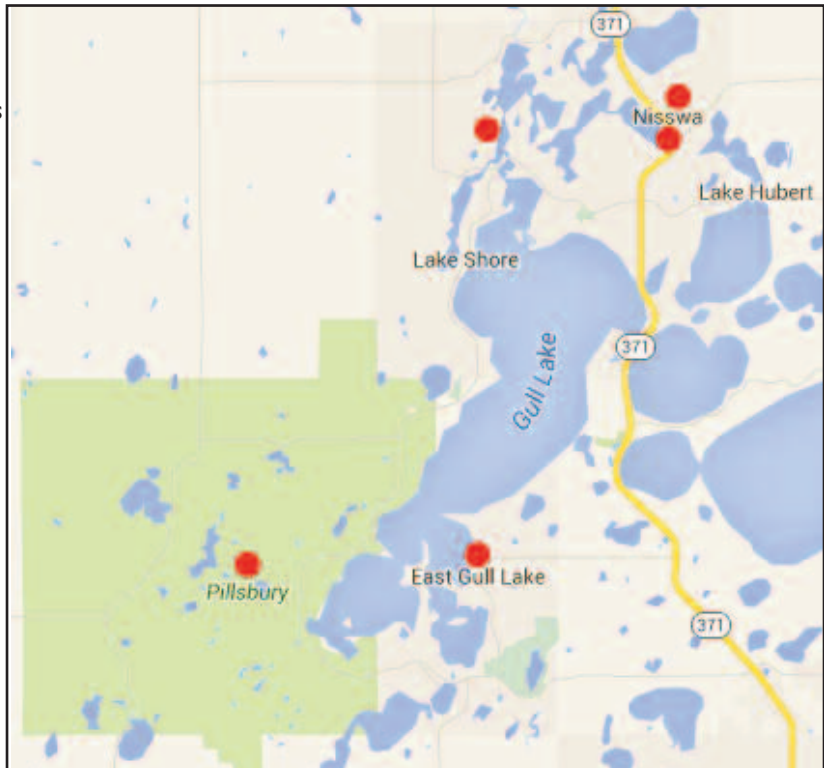
## *Planning/Vision*

- **Connections to Forests and Parks**

The Gull Lake Trail will weave along the edge of Pillsbury State Forest, a more than 25,000 acre site that offers trails in the heavily forested lands which is dotted with small lakes and ponds. The trail system in this state forest is especially popular with equestrians and mountain bikers during the summer and cross-country skiers in the winter. Land ownership within this forest includes state, county, municipal, and private holdings. Recreational facilities in the forest include the Walter E. Stark Horse Assembly Area, Shafer Lake, Green Bass Lake, and Rock Lake Campground and Day-Use Area.

The Gull Lake Trail will also end at the Paul Bunyan Trail, which runs parallel to the Nisswa City Park. In addition to youth recreational activities, the city of Nisswa's community park offers two baseball fields, two outdoor hockey rinks, warming house with bathrooms, a large playground area and a community center.

Though this initial plan does not include a dedicated trail to connect to the city of Lake Shore's park, Fritz Loven Park, the local street which connects to the park is not heavily traveled. Additional "share the road" signage will added to provide identification that the road is also a pedestrian/bike trail, while leading travelers to the park.



*The Gull Lake Trail will pass directly in front of Mount Ski Gull, a downhill skiing, snowboarding and tubing park.*



# Regional Significance

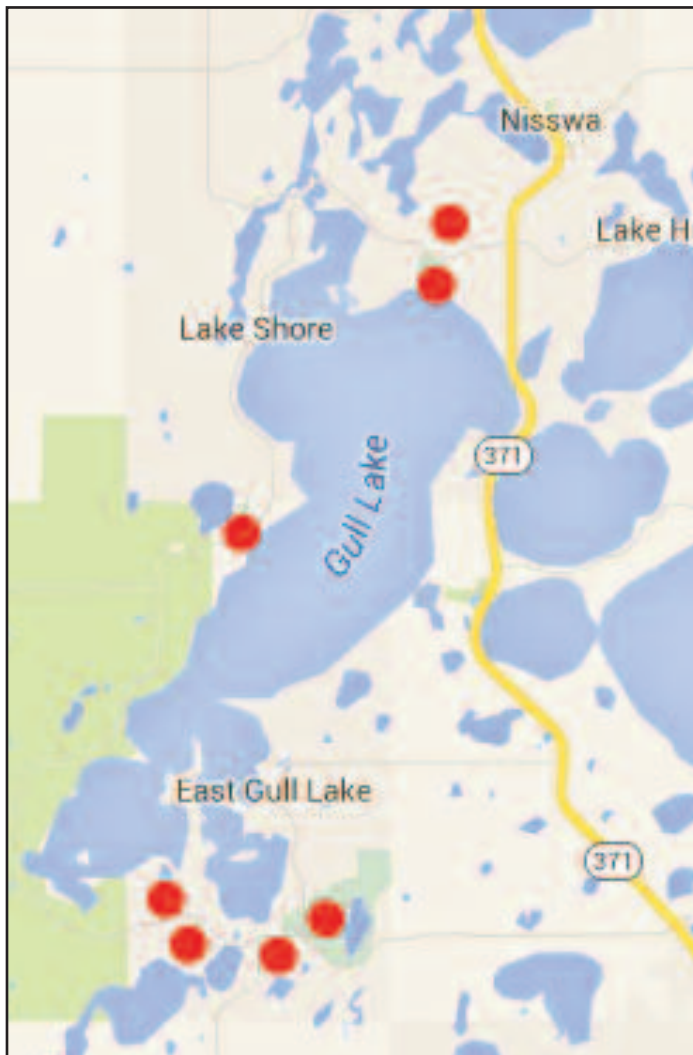
## *Planning/Vision*

- **Connections to Golf**

The Gull Lake area is home to some of the best golf courses not only in the state, but in the nation. Collectively, the Brainerd Golf Trail is known as one of the “World’s Top Golf Destinations.”

Grand View Lodge’s courses are the most awarded golf course in Minnesota. The Pines course offers 27 holes designed as three 9-hole landscapes. The Garden course offers 9 holes of leisurely play with 6” cups and kid’s tee boxes to encourage a family friendly game.

Madden’s offers three stunning 18-hole courses along with a 9-hole executive course, Golf Week has named The Classic as the top public course in Minnesota and Golf Digest has ranked our course as 33rd on the list of the best public courses in America.



Craugh’s Certified Bronze Audubon International Signature Sanctuary courses, the Legacy Courses, provide an additional 45 holes of golf. The course also houses a beautiful 35,000 square foot clubhouse and event pavilion.

• THE HISTORIC •  
**GRAND VIEW LODGE**  
• ON GULL LAKE •

**Madden's**  
on Gull Lake  
Minnesota's Classic Resort

  
**CRAGUN'S  
LEGACY  
COURSES**



# Regional Significance

## *Planning/Vision*

- **Connection to Water**

In addition to abundant birds, plants and wildlife, the Gull Lake Trail offers users many public connections to water, with the most notable connections at the Minnesota DNR's Gull Lake Narrows Boat Access and Fishing Pier and the new Nisswa Lake Park & Recreational Area on Nisswa Lake in the north, and the Gull Lake Dam Recreational Area in the south.



*The future Nisswa Lake Park & Recreational Area*

The Gull Lake Narrows Boat Access and Fishing Pier is a handicapped accessible, year-round fishing pier is only a few feet away from the paved parking lot and experiences a high level of usage.

The Nisswa Lake Park & Recreational Area (NLPRA) will offer a swimming area, fishing pier, and mooring docks that will be connected to a permanent boardwalk along the water's edge. Additionally, the NLPRA will have bike racks that will offer bikers a spot to take a break from their ride. The NLPRA will also provide an opportunity for area residents and visitors to participate in a variety of educational/recreational based program such as kayaking, canoeing, and wildlife identification.



*The Gull Lake Recreational Area*

The Gull Lake Recreational Area offers a boat ramp, public swimming beach, campground and a dam controlled by the US Army Corps of Engineers.

The city of Lake Shore also offers additional public water access points that are undeveloped, but some spots have usable lake frontage, perfect for scenic picnicking spots. Trail route signage will be added to direct trail users to more than a dozen public water access points on Gull Lake and Lake Margaret.



# Regional Significance

## *Planning/Vision*

### *Criteria #4 – Fills a Gap in Recreational Opportunity within a Region*

Based primarily in a rural setting, the communities around Gull Lake do not offer any sidewalks, and southern Cass County currently does not have any regional trails. Southern Cass County is an un-served part of Greater Minnesota. By supporting the Gull Lake Trail, the surrounding communities of Sylvan Township and the city of Pillager in Cass County would also be in close proximity to a safe trail that connects to provide many miles of recreational opportunities.



*The Gull Lake area also represents the heart of the Brainerd Lakes Area vacationland community, accounting for nearly HALF of the lodging rooms for the entire region. Photo of Grand View Lodge's main historic lodge.*



# Section 2: Development of a Master Plan

*The Gull Lake Trail will be developed in phases, segmenting the route by each jurisdiction. Each jurisdiction will take the lead on securing dollars for their portion of the trail, and thus, each jurisdiction's approach to public involvement and timing will be driven by that jurisdiction.*

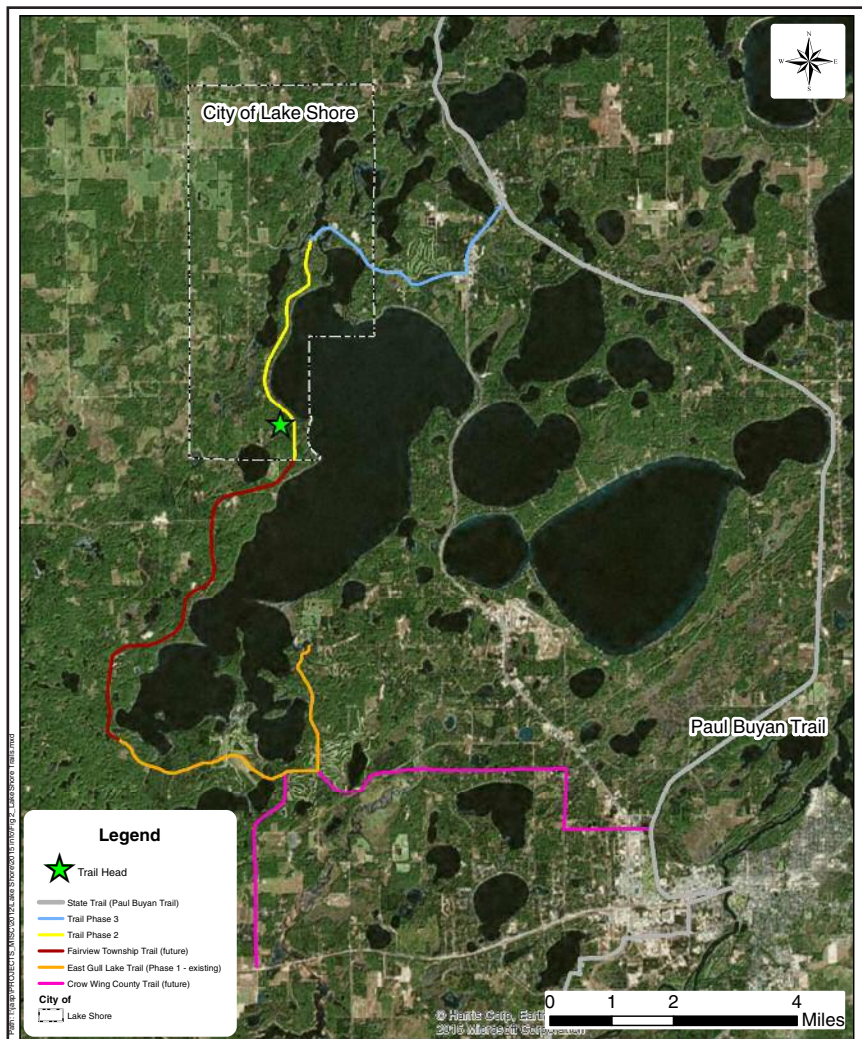
## OVERVIEW

The Gull Lake Trail will be a 21-mile, multi-use paved trail on the right-of-way along the west side of CSAH 77 and the southern part of County Road 70. The 10' wide trail will utilize both a designated trail corridor and side-of-road design to provide access around Gull Lake –connecting the Paul Bunyan State Trail in Nisswa to the north to the Gull Lake Dam

Recreational Area in East Gull Lake in the south. Crow Wing County also has the potential to connect the easterly side of the existing East Gull Lake Trail to a southern point of the Paul Bunyan Trail or to future and existing trails in the city of Baxter and Sylvan Township.

While this trail will be a multi-use trail, it is anticipated that the primary usage will be by walkers, bicyclists or rollerbladers.

*See Appendix 1 for larger view of this phased trail map*





The trail will be constructed in five phases. The style and funding for each phase will be driven by that jurisdiction. East Gull Lake has already completed Phase 1. Timing of Phase 2, 3.9 miles in Lake Shore, is being led by the reconstruction of CSAH 77, which is a part of Cass County's 5-year capital improvement Plan (CIP) and is tentatively slated for 2017-18. To support various portions of the trail yet maintain the desirable esthetics of the existing roadway, CSAH 77 will be re-aligned within the existing/current right-of-way, and within the existing utility corridor, minimizing the removal of mature trees and/or disrupting low/wetlands while also allowing for a wide enough transportation channel to account for both the road and a new trail.

Phase 3 will connect the remaining portions of Lake Shore to Nisswa, and connect the route in the north to the Paul Bunyan Trail at the Nisswa Lake Park & Recreational Area and the pedestrian tunnel under Hwy 371. This will make the first vital connection with the State Paul Bunyan Trail, a rails to trails route.

Phase 4 providing the final linkage between East Gull Lake and Lake Shore through Fairview Township, while Phase 5 add a parking and rest facilities at the mid-point of the Gull Lake Trail route.

The entire trail will adhere to ADA requirements, and take into account material, slope and width. No more than 30 percent of the total length of the trail will have a running slope steeper than 1:12, and the running slope of any segment of the trail shall not be steeper than 1:8. The surface of the trail will be bituminous, which meets the State's firm and stable requirements.

The majority of the off-road trail will be a minimum of 24' from the edge of the drive lane. The trail is brought back in closer to the road in Lake Shore, and probably one spot in Fairview Township. The speed limit along CSAH 77 in Lake Shore will be maintained at 35 mph. Speeds are higher along the trail in East Gull Lake, Fairview Township and Nisswa.



*The majority of the Gull Lake Trail will utilized an off-road trail corridor to make traveling safe for the young bikers.*



# Phase 1: East Gull Lake

## *Development of a Master Plan*

**4.3 miles – East Gull Lake 4.3 miles**

### **Site Info**

The primary route begins at the Gull Lake Recreational Area at Gull River Road. The route travels south on the east side of County Road 70, before crossing the road north of the Legacy Courses at Cragun's golf complex. There, the remaining of the County Road 70 route travels on the west side of the road, turning at the CSAH 77 intersection, and then proceeding to cross CSAH 77. The route follows CSAH 77 on the south and west, traveling past County Road 18 and Madden's Classic Golf Course, Cragun's Resort, the East Gull Lake Airport and Kavanaugh Drive, Madden's and Madden's Pine Beach East & West Golf Courses. The trail extends west, just .7 miles short of the city limits.



Additional trails expand off this primary corridor, offering more than 8.5 miles of paved trails. Much of the trail has been designed to utilize private permanent easements as well as city property to minimize the amount of trail to run on Cass County road right-of-way. The speed limit is 15 mph.

### **Public Involvement**

The East Gull Lake trail segment was kick-started with a large donation to the city's park dedication fee fund related to the Kavanaugh's redevelopment. The Kavanaugh family inspired the initial trail concept for the city, and worked to develop a plan to utilize Fund 73 dollars. Fund 73 is a program of non-tax dollars from Cass County. A fund was created when the state of Minnesota exchanged their leased land lots with the county for forest land. The county sold these lots and invested the proceeds. The principal cannot be used, but the interest associated with this fund are to be allocated for recreational projects.

A small group of citizens worked together to develop the initial plan for the Fund 73 request. Since then many, many residents have commented about the trails' tremendous asset and hope for the extension of the route. One resident commented: "Trails are a great community source of getting to know ones neighbors. Regular users see people on the trails and get to know each other. Our trails are joining neighborhoods together like never before."



# Phase 1: East Gull Lake

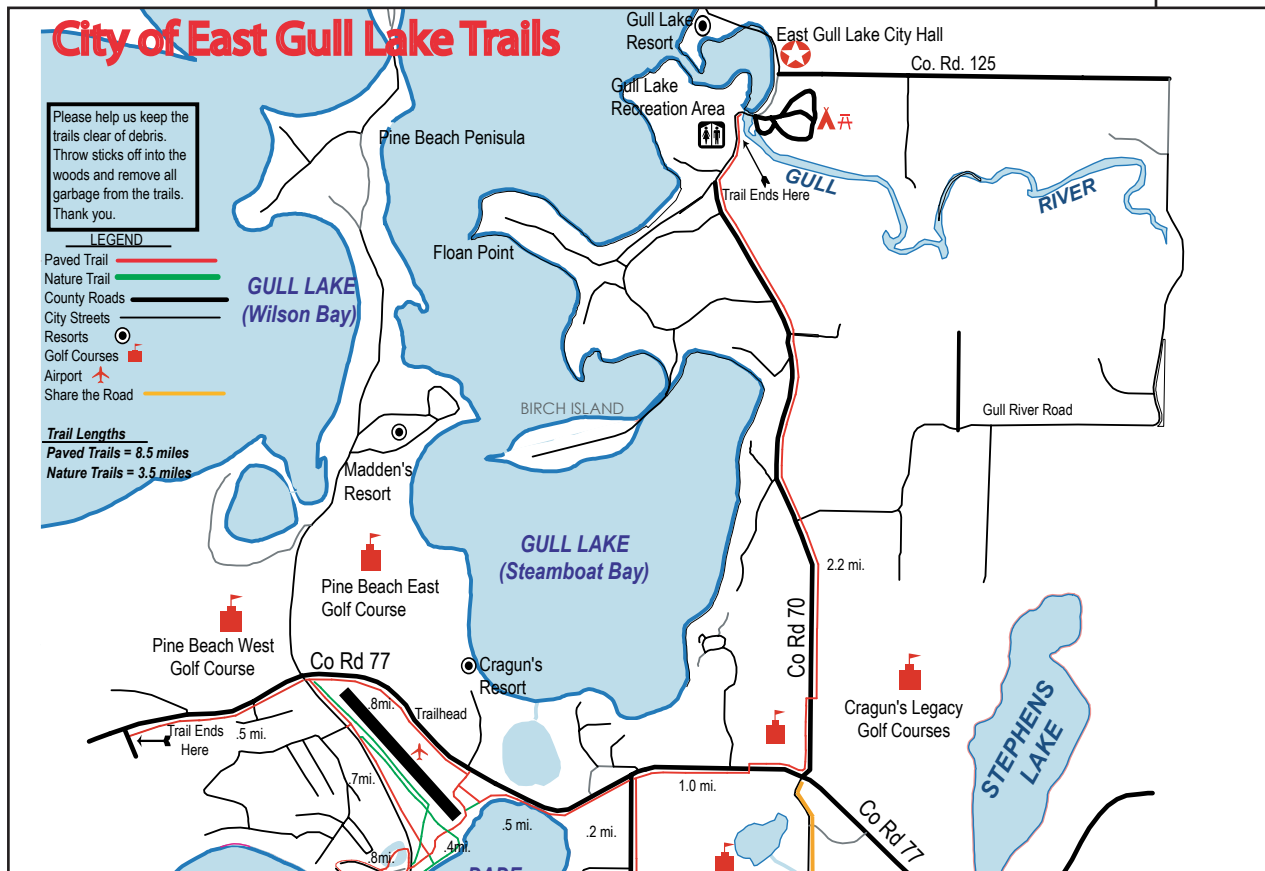
## *Development of a Master Plan*

### Budget

Phase 1 of the trail in East Gull Lake was supported by a Federal Recreational Trail grant, the Project 73 Fund via Cass County, the US Army Corps of Engineers, and private donations, as well as the City of East Gull Lake's Park & Trails Dedication Funds.

Design, Planning & Final Engineering	\$91,560
Construction	<u>\$748,357</u>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$839,917</b>

*See Appendix 4 for larger view of this map*





# Phase 2: Lake Shore

## *Development of a Master Plan*

3.9 miles – Lake Shore 3.9 miles

### Site Info

This segment of the trail —CSAH 77 road right-of-way and utility right-of-way, is owned by Cass County. Ownership and maintenance of the constructed trail will be the responsibility of the City of Lake Shore.

At the southern most point within the city of Lake Shore to Rocky Point Road, the trail will be 20-50' off the road. From that point traveling north, the trail would move closer to the road, with a 3' barrier between both surfaces. Then, at Agate Lake Rd to Pebble Beach Rd, a 10' divider will be maintained between the trail and road.



See Appendix 5 for larger view of these maps on pages 21-22.



# Phase 2: Lake Shore

## *Development of a Master Plan*

From Pebble Beach Rd to Cobbanwood Way, at 6' barrier will be maintained. Beginning at this point north, the trail will run along side the roadway as a wider shoulder path — est. 6' wide, along the western side of the road.





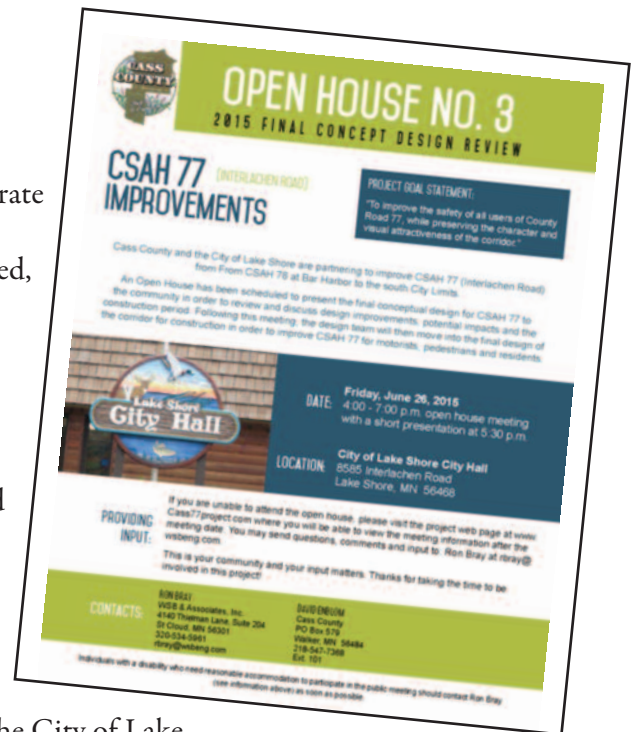
# Phase 2: Lake Shore

## *Development of a Master Plan*

### **Public involvement**

A community trail survey was conducted by the city of Lake Shore in the spring of 2007 to generate interest and obtain feedback on various aspects related to the trail, including the type, (motorized, non-motorized, walking, biking, etc.), location, and opportunities of a trail. 92 out of 105 respondents, or 87.6%, indicated they were in favor of a trail.

In 2011, the Trail 77 Team (T77T) was formed to help carry out Lake Shore's vision of a multi-use trail and fulfill their obligation of the Cooperative Agreement. The committee's mission was to "establish a multi-use recreational trail system along the CSAH 77 corridor, providing a safe environment within the City of Lake Shore that may save lives and prevent serious injuries."



Goals of the trail were outlined as:

- Provide a safe, alternative mode of exercise, recreation, and transportation
- Provide an economic enhancement to Lake Shore by drawing additional tourists to the area
- Recreational enhancement to the community
- Interconnection with adjacent communities
- Health benefits by providing an opportunity for increased activity (walking, biking, roller-blading, etc.)

Initial trail planning, design, and construction administrative services for the city of Lake Shore were contracted with Short Elliott Hendrickson, Inc. (SEH). A feasibility study was conducted. Financial grants from Cass County and the Initiative Foundation supported these early efforts.

Open Houses were held on May 2012 and August 2012. A final public viewing of Phase 2 (Lake Shore) is scheduled for late June 2015. Numerous phone calls, personal conversations and emails have also been received and answered throughout the exploration process. Citizens have had an opportunity to learn more about the trail project, share concerns and excitement, and generally participate in the planning process.



# Phase 2: Lake Shore

## *Development of a Master Plan*

### **Geotechnical Studies**

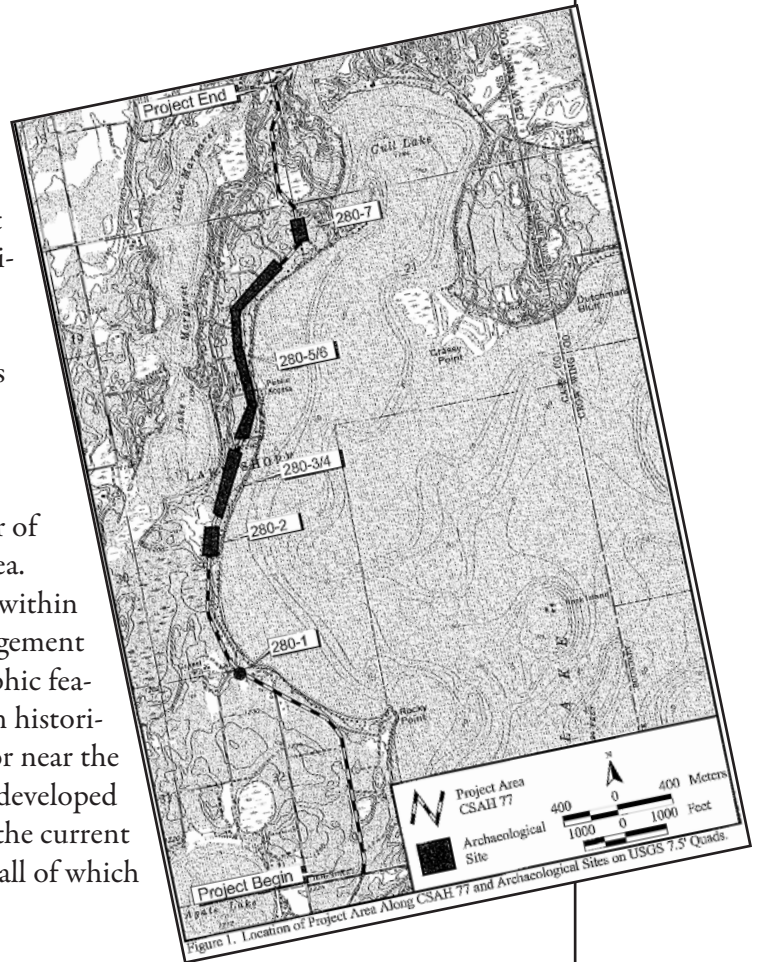
An archaeological survey was conducted by Florin Cultural Resources Services in 2014, with results reported to MNDOT's Office of Environmental Stewardship. An evaluation of five sites was also provided. The width of the survey corridor along CSAH 77 was 100 feet in the rural sections and approx 66 feet in the urban sections. The area includes a mixture of woods and rural residential yards.

None of the five sites were found to be eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion D due to the integrity issues and lack of research potential. The report noted that there are no eligible or potentially eligible buildings or structures within the area of potential effect of the project. There will be no historic properties affected by the project as it is currently proposed.

### **Environmental Review**

There are no known endangered, threatened, or of special concern fish or wildlife in the project area. This segment of the Gull Lake Trail is also not within close proximity to a state or local wildlife management area. There are no fragile geologic or physiographic features known to this site and there are no known historical or archeological significant features within or near the proposed trail. The trail is along or adjacent to developed land – the current CSAH 77. Along this road, the current use is a mix of residential and commercial uses, all of which are suitable to co-exist with a trail.

There will be intermittent and temporary noise and air disturbances during construction, none of which will be long-lasting. Measures will be taken during construction to mitigate these impacts. This road/trail project could result in temporary traffic increases. These increases can be safely managed within existing county or local roadway systems in and around the project site.





# Phase 2: Lake Shore

## *Development of a Master Plan*

### **Budget**

Phase 2 would be supported by the Cass County Fund 73 fund,, a TAP grant via MNDOT, and allocated dollars by the City of Lake Shore's Park Dedication Fees Fund, as well as other grant sources.

Design, Planning & Final Engineering	\$100,000
Construction	\$500,000
Benches, Initial Signs	<u>\$10,000</u>
proposed TOTAL	\$610,000

If **NOT** coordinated with planned road construction (2017-18):

Design, Planning & Final Engineering	\$175,000
Construction	\$700,000
Benches, Initial Signs	<u>\$10,000</u>
proposed TOTAL	\$785,000

### *Dollars already secured*

The Initiative Foundation	\$3,000
Cass County Fund 73	\$20,000
private donations of time, services, and materials	
MN (TAP) Grant	\$327,840
Cass County Fund 73	\$82,000
City of Lake Shore Park Dedication Fee Fund	<u>\$60,800</u>
To-date sub-TOTAL	\$493,640



# Phase 3: Fairview Township

## *Development of a Master Plan*

**7.7 miles** – Fairview Township 7 miles,  
East Gull Lake .7 miles

### **Site Info**

This segment of the Gull Lake Trail follow the course of CSAH 77, around the west side of Gull Lake. Complicating the trail development along this proposed route are several wetland areas and steep road right-of-ways that prone to erosion.

This phase also includes a .7 mile extension of the existing East Gull Lake Trail to the city's western boundary, Timber Ridge Drive, to meet up with Fairview Township line.

### **Public Involvement**

In 2006, Fairview Township residents completed a survey that shared residents desire for a safe walking and biking trail within the township. Once residents saw and experienced the trail segment in East Gull Lake, the Parks, Trails and Recreation Taskforce took a "tour" of the proposed trail route and identified the pros and cons of the route, as well as the merits of "non-motorized" versus "motorized" or multi-use.

Over the past 5 years, the trail has been discussed by the Board of Supervisors and with residents at the Annual Meeting. The Board has had conversations with the Bolton & Menk engineering firm concerning the trail, and a "Community Projects" CD account has been designated as seed money for the planning phase of the trail process.

### **Budget**

Design, Planning & Final Engineering	\$225,000
Construction* (Fairview)	\$1,225,000
Construction* (EGL)	<u>\$175,000</u>
est TOTAL	\$1,625,000

*\* estimating \$175,000/mile*





# Phase 4: Nisswa

## *Development of a Master Plan*

**4.8 miles** – Lake Shore 1.5 miles,  
Nisswa 3.5 miles

### **Site Info**

The northern trailhead of the Gull Lake Trail will be located at the start of the Nisswa Lake Park & Recreational Area on Hazelwood Drive adjacent to State Hwy 371. The trail will travel south west from the park down Hazelwood Drive to Lower Roy Lake Road, eventually connecting to CSAH 77 and westerly section of the City of Lake Shore's segment.

### **Public Involvement**

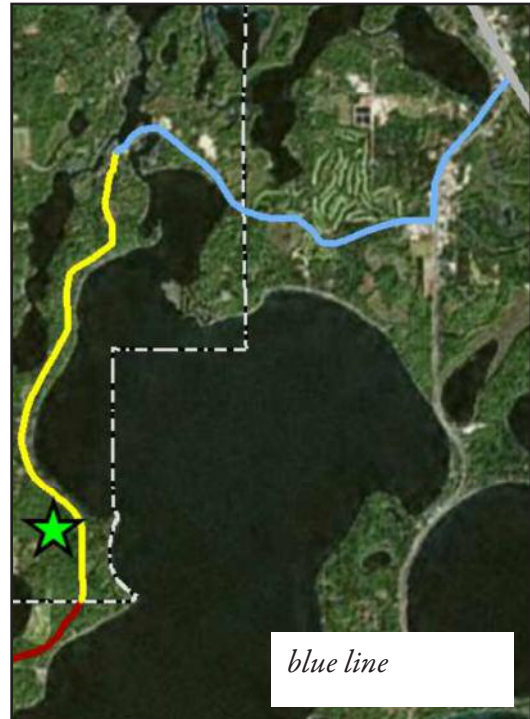
A community trail survey will be conducted to generate interest and obtain feedback on various aspects related to the trail, including type, location, and opportunities on the trail. This process will work in conjunction with the evaluation and evolution of the Hazelwood Drive bridge as it is in need of repair. Following the survey, the City of Nisswa Park and Recreation Advisory Commission will inventory all of its recreational assets, including possible trail routes and the city's public lake accesses. Assuming Hazelwood Drive is selected as the most appropriate route for the trail, an engineering firm will be contracted to conduct a feasibility study. The City of Nisswa will then enter into a contract with an engineering firm to conduct initial trail planning, design, and construction administrative services in conjunction with the road repairs of Hazelwood Drive. Open Houses will be held and a final public viewing as part of the planning process.

### **Budget**

Design, Planning & Final Engineering	\$200,000
Construction	
Cty Rd 78 to Zorbaz+ (Lake Shore)	\$300,000
Zorbaz to Fernmont Road (Lake Shore)	\$250,000
Fernmont Road to NLPRA (Nisswa)	<u>\$700,000</u>
est TOTAL	\$1,450,000

+ includes a bridge-like structure across from Bar Harbor

\* estimating \$175,000/mile





# Phase 5: Trailhead Facilities

## *Development of a Master Plan*

### Site Info

A Gull Lake Trail trailhead facility will offer a mid-point spot for those riding the complete Gull Lake Trail route, or creating a convenient starting point for others. Within this 80-acre site owned by Cass County, the trailhead facility will house a parking lot, restrooms, a picnic shelter, bike tune-up station and an additional flat trail loop along wooded land.

### Budget

TBD



## Additional Amenities

To be developed at the completion of all phases:

• Trail Name Signage (with mile markers)	\$10,000
• Printed maps and brochure holders	\$5,000
• Research (first cycle of visitor count and intercept survey)	\$25,000
	<u>\$40,000</u>
est TOTAL	\$80,000



# Section 3: Implementation, Maintenance and Sustainability Plan

The jurisdictions along the Gull Lake Trail will solicit a variety of funding agencies with a goal of securing as much grant funding as possible. Local contributions from residents, business owners, and other interested parties may also be included. Each jurisdiction may also need to provide a portion of the funds, but all funding would be approved by each City Council/Township Board.

The group is also exploring the establishment of a 501c3 status organization to allow for tax-exempt donations for the Gull Lake Trail.

Each jurisdiction will maintain their portion of trail for its life, a minimum of 20 years, via a new line item in each of their parks budget.

## BUDGET SUMMARY

<b>Phase 1: East Gull Lake</b> (4.3 miles of trail)		\$839,917
<b>Phase 2: Lake Shore</b> (3.9 miles of trail, plus signage/benches/picnic tables)	est	\$785,000
<b>Phase 3: Fairview Township</b> (7.7 miles)	est	\$1,625,000
<b>Phase 4: Nisswa</b> (4.8 miles of trail; + access across from Bar Harbor)	est	\$1,450,000
<b>Phase 5: Trailhead Facilities</b> (parking, restrooms, picnic shelter, additional trail loop)		TBD
<b>Additional Items</b>	est	\$80,000



# Operations/Maintenance

## *Implementation, Maintenance and Sustainability Plan*

Each jurisdiction will maintain their portion of the trail for the life of the trail, a minimum of 20 years. Materials selected for use in construction will require a low level of maintenance. Each jurisdiction will have a committee for overseeing and improving the trail facility. These committees will annually evaluate the conditions and operations of the trail. Seasonal maintenance (ie: mowing, spraying weeds, sweeping, etc.) is estimated to be \$500-1,000/mile (based on City of Baxter's costs). Newer trail segments will require less maintenance, but it is anticipated that the maintenance costs will increase over time.

Furthermore, it has been recommended that a fog seal and crack fill management program be adopted. This process involves a fog seal being applied in year two, followed by an application every seven years thereafter. Additional crack sealing may be needed outside of the seven-year fog cycle. This cost is included in the annual maintenance estimate. This cost will be a line item in each jurisdiction's annual budget.

Area snowmobile clubs will be contacted regarding an agreement to groom the entire trail for the winter season.





# Natural Resources Sustainability

## *Implementation, Maintenance and Sustainability Plan*

Protecting the environment is a priority for all of the Gull Lake communities.

Contamination of ground or surface waters would have widespread impact on the economic and recreational aspects of the community. The entire potable water supply of the community is drawn from the ground water aquifers by private wells. Protection of this resource throughout the community is critical. Wetlands, wastewater and water quality all play a vital role in our community and our environment.

In most locations along the Gull Lake Trail, vegetation offers a naturalized buffer. Actual buffer widths will vary in response to a number of conditions, including the location of road within road right of way, and the physical and biological characteristics of the buffer area (e.g., soil erodibility, slope, density of vegetation).

Additionally, to ensure that all new plantings will be native to the local ecotype, the city of Lake Shore, for example, will consult with Ron Faust, Environmental Committee Chair. He is extremely knowledgeable on native plants to the area and has supported many projects within the City using native plantings, including shoreline restoration and rain gardens. He has also worked with Cass and Crow Wing Counties' Soil & Water Conservation Districts, as well as MN DNR staff on various projects using native plants.

Each jurisdiction's staff will monitor the plantings and vegetation while maintaining the trail.





# Community Outreach & Marketing

## *Implementation, Maintenance and Sustainability Plan*

To engage the educational process for road safety, each jurisdiction has begun investing in/installing “share the road” signs to increase awareness of biker/pedestrian traffic along the route. Local police and county sheriff’s offices are leading the effort to show how vehicles and pedestrians can co exist safely on a roadway.

Each jurisdiction and both counties will promote the Gull Lake Trail by:

- Developing printed materials – creating a folded map and including information on the trail in each jurisdiction’s newsletter/mailed correspondence with residents
- Creating electronic communication – updating information on each jurisdiction’s website
- Delivery public relations – provide information about the trail to local media outlets
- Establishing signage – additional “share the road” signs, trail name and mileage markers, Map signage with trail map and other regional amenities noted (water access, fishing pier, park)





# Research Plan

## *Implementation, Maintenance and Sustainability Plan*

The Gull Lake Trail team will implement an ongoing research plan. The plan will include:

- Resident Feedback — target launch within first year of trail's completion
  - o responses from residents questions asked in printed newsletter, website and/or via social media
  - o responses from residents at any other public forum/open house type event
- Visitor Counts – target launch two years after of trail's completion, every 3 years thereafter
  - o Collect info on the number of visitors, where they came from, what activities they are participating in (walking, biking, rollerblading, etc.)
  - o Implement prescribed methodology
    - Counts will be completed between Memorial Day and Labor Day
    - Fifty, 2-hour samples will be randomly selected at select segments of the trail
    - Annual use estimates will be based on the summer counts of trail users that start the trail at pre-defined locations
    - The site intercept surveys will also provide seasonal multipliers to determine annual use based upon the summer counts
    - Sample survey tool provided by GMRPTC will be used
- Site Intercept Survey – target launch two years after trail's competition, every 10 years thereafter
  - o Collect info documenting uses and preferences of visitors
  - o Implement prescribed methodology
    - Conducting on-site in-person interviews between Memorial Day and Labor Day
    - Surveys will be conducted in conjunction with visitor counts to gain efficiency
    - Trail respondents will be randomly selected at pre-determined sites, with individuals 12 years of age and older being interviewed
    - Interviews will focus on the authorized uses
    - Minimum of 30 surveys will be conducted, with a target of 100 completed surveys
    - Sample survey tool provided by GMRPTC will be used

This plan will in part be driven by availability of partners and resources. Central Lakes College's Marketing Department could execute the Visitor Count and Site Intercept Survey projects, involving students for a real-world experience. Since summer months are not typical classroom session times, this project would be coordinated as an internship experience for students. Or, Bemidji State University's MARS (Marketing Assistance & Research Solutions) program or St. Cloud State's Travel & Tourism department could be utilized for this research effort.



# Appendix

- 1 - The Gull Lake Trail (1 page)
- 2 - Gull Lake Micropolitan Project Survey Report
- 3 - Gull Lake Walking and Biking Trail Cooperative Agreement (4 pages)
- 4 - Trail segment: City of East Gull Lake (1 page)
- 5 - Trail segment: City of Lake Shore Road Views (3 pages)