***Kraemer Lake - Wildwood County Park***

**MASTER PLAN**

Stearns County Parks Department

BenAnderson

Park Operations Coordinator

1802 County Road 137

Waite Park, MN,56387]

320-255-6172

benjamin.anderson@co.stearns.mn.us

http://www.co.stearns.mn.us/Recreation/CountyParks/KraemerLakeWildwood

Developed jointly with:

Stearns County

[JOINT APPLICANT 2]

[JOINT APPLICANT 3]

[JOINT APPLICANT 4]

With support from:

Other project supporters include: the City of Saint Joseph, St. Joseph Township, Stearns County Park Commission and the Stearns County Board of Commissioners, Lake Wobegon Trail Association and the Central MN Nordic Ski Club.

This Master Plan was developed with technical assistance from the Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission

***Regional Significance Statement***

Kraemer Lake-Wildwood County Park provides unique recreation and interpretation opportunities including cross-country skiing, hiking, maple syrup production, picnicking and swimming, amidst a high-quality forest landscape.

County Park

[REGIONAL DESIGNATION STATUS] as of [DATE OF DESIGNATION]

***Location Description***

Address: Kraemer Lake - Wildwood County Park 29709 Kipper Rd. St. Joseph, MN 56374 Directions: Take the St. Joseph exit (exit #160) off I-94, turn south onto County Rd. 2. Take a right onto County Rd. 51. Go approximately 2 miles on 51; the park entrance is on the left. Kraemer Lake - Wildwood County Park is located near St. Joseph, MN in St. Joseph Township and it is also situated in the Central Minnesota County of Stearns. The location of Kraemer Lake - Wildwood County Park is a short 15 minute drive from downtown St. Cloud. The greater St. Cloud area has a population base of 100,000+ and is rapidly growing. This park is also located about 1 hour and 15 minutes northwest of the Twin Cities area and thus this location makes for an easy day trip for the residents of the Metro area and people who live along the Interstate I-94 road corridor. Once developed it may also serve as a nice destination stopping point for those traveling long distances via Interstate 94.

http://dms.gmrptcommission.org/uploads/15-004D/1485290038364-kraemer\_summer\_ben\_2015.pdfhttp://dms.gmrptcommission.org/uploads/15-004D/1485290046405-kraemer\_winter\_ben\_2016.pdf

***Park Overview***

Classification: Natural Resource Based Regional Park

Total Acreage or Mileage: 265

Long appreciated for its high quality remnant forest with 300-year old trees, immersive hiking and ski trails, historic maple-syruping operation, and panoramic views perched above Kraemer Lake, the Kraemer Lake-Wildwood County Park master plan represents a shared vision that endeavors to both preserve and enhance the 265-acre park's natural and recreational opportunities for the residents of Stearns County and beyond. Several new elements have been identified through the master planning process that will increase opportunities for public use of the entire park, restore disturbed and degraded natural areas, and provide interpretation of the park's unique attributes. Development of the site has been minimized to specific areas of the park in an effort to preserve as much of the beloved 'wildness' as possible. The proposed development area is less than nine acres in size - less than 4% of the total park area - and located in areas where there has already been site disturbance. Similarly, of the park's 3,000 feet of shoreline, less than 8% will be directly impacted by proposed amenities. The primary elements include: Enhanced entry drive using the existing Kipper Road. Picnic and restroom facilities, with parking and rain gardens. Water access, via a sand beach, a canoe/kayak launch, and a fishing pier. Picnic shelter, park caretaker's station and storage, utilizing existing structures. Ecological restoration. Continued maintenance and the extension of hiking and cross country ski trails.

Acquisition and Development Status

Existing Park or Trail

**Regional Context**

Established in 2007, Kraemer Lake-Wildwood County Park is located in St. Joseph Township, in east central Stearns County, approximately two miles west of the City of St. Joseph. County Road 51 runs along the north edge of the park, and the current trailhead parking lot is located along this roadway. Kipper Road runs along the park's eastern boundary. The southern portion of the park's eastern boundary is approximately ÃÂ½ mile of frontage on Kraemer Lake. Regionally, Kraemer Lake-Wildwood County Park serves several important roles. The Park's close proximity to the Lake Wobegon Trail is advantageous because it provides close access to the regional trail system, creating the opportunity for visitors to access the park using alternative modes of transportation. The City of St. Joseph is currently in the process of extending a separated trail from the Lake Wobegon Trail to County Road 51, which brings safe and separated alternative transportation access within 1.5 miles of the park. Moreover, land cover in over half of the park is considered "core" interior forest, a rare designation that supports wildlife unique to only that habitat, providing birders a unique opportunity to participate in bird counts. Additionally, the Park is unique because of its partnership with the Wildwood Ranch Maple Syrup operation, which provides opportunities for interpretation that make the park a special recreation feature. As such, Kraemer Lake-Wildwood County Park provides unique opportunities that are not available at other Stearns County parks or parks in the region.

http://dms.gmrptcommission.org/uploads/15-004D/1482503747127-Regional Map.JPG

**Existing Facilities**

Maple Syrup Shack, Two Storage Out Buildings

Picknicking and picnic shelters

Hiking Trails (natural)

Cross-country Skiing Trails

Restrooms/sanitation building

Roads and Parking Areas

**Proposed Facilities**

Group campsites

Picknicking and picnic shelters

Walking Trails (paved)

Hiking Trails (natural)

Biking trails (paved)

Swimming

Canoeing Facilities

Fishing Piers

Nature Center/Interpretation Trails

Play Areas, with an outdoor theme

Restrooms/sanitation buildling

Roads and Parking Areas

Kayaking Facilities, Caretakers Station, Natural Resources Restoration

**General Site Characteristics**

Park Access Road Early in the master planning process, it was determined that to safely accommodate two-way vehicular traffic and dedicated bicycle access to the park, a new or modified entry drive would be needed. Two access points into Kraemer Lake-Wildwood County Park currently exist: the trailhead parking lot where the trails can be accessed, and Kipper Road, a narrow, wooded, winding road, both accessed from County Road 51. Existing Trailhead Parking Lot The trailhead parking lot is a large gravel area, with a dilapidated outbuilding, an outhouse, a trail kiosk, and a solar-powered overhead light. Existing Park Buildings A building condition assessment was conducted based on visual observation of the existing garage and barn, both located in the park development area. A rough, bituminous driveway leads from the chained entrance from Kipper Road to the garage that sits near the northeastern edge of the property. The building is constructed of single layer of concrete block walls and overhead doors, and is in fair condition. The assessment report describes measures for renovating the structure and accommodating accessibility.The single story barn is similarly in fair condition. The wood post wall construction and siding was likely milled from the site. The integrity of the structure is sound, but renovations are necessary to make the building usable. Kraemer Lake Shoreline During the master plan analysis phase, the shoreline qualities were characterized by three zones, from north to south respectively: Bay, Point, and Wetland Edge. Slopes of varying grades are present along the shoreline, along with a water line ledge two-to-four feet in depth that is the result of shifting ice heaves in the winter. This phenomenon will continue to sculpt the shore's edge on an annual basis. A south facing exposure and south winds in the summer will benefit sunbathers and swimmers alike. Based upon observations from a field visit to analyze the three zones for beach suitability, it was found that pebbles and stones are found between six to ten feet from the shoreline, and a silt and weed line begins about twenty to thirty feet from the shoreline. Existing Trail Infrastructure Presently, Kraemer Lake-Wildwood County Park has an extensive trail system that accommodates hikers all year round and cross-country skiers in the winter. The summer trail system includes a large and small trail loop through the hardwood forest and around wetlands, as well as the full network of ski trails. Nearly 8 kilometers of ski trails are maintained, in a variety of abilities, from easy to more difficult. Maple Syrup Operation Maple syrup production has been a part of the history of Kraemer Lake-Wildwood County Park for decades and likely longer. Extending a longstanding tradition, the current operators of Wildwood Ranch Maple Syrup continue syruping through an agreement with Stearns County. The maple syrup operation currently utilizes the sugar shack, as well as a smaller building that collects the sap from the lines. This is the only Stearns County park that has maple syrup production on site, covering a 40-acre area, with 1,000 taps. This one-of-a-kind amenity provides a unique recreational destination in the late winter/early spring months, as they offer tours and demonstrations to visitors. Wildwood Ranch Maple Syrup is sold at the St. Joseph Farmer's Market. User Groups Today, the park is primarily utilized by trail users. Individuals, families and small groups frequent the park for hiking and cross-country skiing in the winter. Visitors are also drawn to the park in late winter/early spring to tour and learn about the Wildwood Ranch Maple Syrup operation. Residents along the lake are frequent users of Kraemer Lake. Otherwise, there is no public access of the lake. St. Joseph Rod and Gun Club does offer boat access to Kraemer Lake for a fee. Ecology & Land Resources East Central Stearns County lies in the Temperate Deciduous Forest biome of Minnesota. Within the boundary of Kraemer Lake-Wildwood County Park the predominant land cover is deciduous forest. According to the MnDNR, "half of the site is identified in the MN County Biological Survey as significant remnant natural community with trees 300 years old". Also referred to as "core" interior forest, this type of habitat is only found deep within woodlands away from the forest edge and open habitats, and is a marker of good woodland health. It is an increasingly rare habitat, and as such has become a refuge for certain wildlife that require such conditions. A list of birds identified in Zimmerman's (2014) thesis on old growth characteristics of the park's forest has been compiled and birds assigned to the four identified habitats: mature oak/hardwood forest, mature to young mixed hardwood forest, riparian or wetland habitat, and grassland. Surrounding the park is a diversity of land cover: Kraemer Lake, agriculture, rural residential and additional areas of core interior forest. Land Type and Cover Kraemer Lake-Wildwood County Park, at 265 acres in size, is situated in a part of Stearns County with rolling topography and numerous small lakes and wetlands, indicative of a landscape shaped by glaciers. In spite of the terrain, agriculture is the dominant land use in the area. Uncultivated land within the park is predominantly covered by a hardwood forest of maple, oak and basswood, with patches of grassland and an aspen, maple, oak forest. The park's most unique feature, its "core interior forest", makes up half of the park's area, and extends further southwest outside of the park's borders. In addition to the park's agricultural neighbors, the site also shares borders with a number of residents along Kraemer Lake. Ecological Restoration and Management Plan Kraemer Lake, Wetlands and Streams Kraemer Lake is 191 acres in size, and borders the park on ÃÂÃÂ½ mile of its eastern shoreline. Kraemer Lake offers opportunities for fishing, swimming, and both motorized and non-motorized boating. A water line ledge two-to-four feet in depth traces the shoreline. The ledge is the result of shifting ice heaves in the winter, sculpting the shore's edge; a phenomenon that will affect the shore on an annual basis. There are also several wetlands within Kraemer Lake-Wildwood County Park. The park's wetlands are mostly shallow marsh or wet meadow ecosystems that range in quality from good to poor. Issues include invasion by hybrid or narrow-leaf cattail and reed canary grass, and nutrient loading. Small forest streams found in the park are exhibiting signs of erosion where culverts exist. The most visible stream is located at the current gate entrance off of Kipper Road. One unique feature of this park is that at least two of the wetlands found here are known to contain wild rice.

***Public Values, Trends, and Demographics***

**Public Involvement Summary**

Stearns County values public input for park master planning, especially for a park like Kraemer Lake-Wildwood County Park that has special meaning for the local community. A Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) made up of Stearns County staff and Commissioners was established to guide the master planning process. The TAC met three times throughout the master planning process to provide input and to review concepts developed by the consulting team. Three public open house meetings were held at the Kennedy Community School and at the Stearns County Public Services Building during the planning process. The first open house was held on February 10, 2016 at the Kennedy Community School where two options were presented for the park development area, and three concepts were developed for the integration of a beach. Over 100 people attended the open house and provided important feedback about the park and ideas for its future. Several themes were identified at the open house, including: Maintaining the existing quietude of the park by not including camping or motorized boats. Improving and adding more trails. Maintaining the syruping operations. Concerns about negatively impacting the lake quality through development along the shoreline. Based on input from the community after the first Open House, the County added an additional Open House as well as a separate Community Advisory Committee (CAC) that met one time. The CAC was made up of volunteers from Stearns County residents. The Parks Department requested volunteers to serve on the committee, and members were chosen according to representation of a variety of interest groups. A second Open House, held on May 5, 2016 at the County Public Services Building, with 39 people in attendance. The public was presented with an updated concept plan, a new beach concept, a plan for the trailhead parking lot, and a projected phasing plan. An on-line, non-scientific questionnaire was also developed and administered through the County's website, to receive input from a broader spectrum of county residents and park users. The survey results showed support for developing the park, but also identified concern about negatively impacting the natural resources of the park and Kraemer Lake.

http://dms.gmrptcommission.org/uploads/15-004D/1482505300056-Public Engagement Dates.JPGhttp://dms.gmrptcommission.org/uploads/15-004D/1482508397498-Open House Graphics.pdfhttp://dms.gmrptcommission.org/uploads/15-004D/1482508413271-On-line Questionnaire.pdf

**Local and Regional Demographic Information**

Stearns County is a rural county in central Minnesota that covers an area of 1,394 square miles with a population of 150,642 (2010 census). Stearns County has more farms than any other county in Minnesota, with over 80% of the County in agricultural production. The largest city in Stearns County is St. Cloud, which has a population of 65,946 (2010 census) and is located 12 miles east of Kraemer Lake-Wildwood County Park. The 2008 Stearns County Comprehensive Plan noted that this area of Stearns County, along the edge of the St. Cloud Metro area, the Mississippi River corridor and the I-94 corridor, is in the midst of substantial growth. The study also revealed that the primary geographic area for non-white population growth is the St. Cloud metro area, with rural areas also seeing a growth in non-white population (County, Stearns. Stearns county, Minnesota. 2016. Web. 21 June 2016). According to studies in the Minnesota's State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, non-whites and/or Hispanics have consistently lower involvement in nature-based outdoor recreation than whites/non-Hispanics. This trend, coupled with the increasing growth rates of non-white populations, could create "significant obstacles to expanding nature-based recreation both in Minnesota and around the nation". Creating opportunities for all cultures at Kraemer Lake-Wildwood County Park is an important consideration in the master plan process. Stearns County is also home to many learning institutions. Kraemer Lake-Wildwood County Park is within 15 miles of St. Cloud State University, and within 5 miles of St. John's University and the College of St. Benedict. With population and development increasing in the county, Kraemer Lake-Wildwood County Park will become a destination for the surrounding communities and continue to be an important resource to protect and preserve natural resources for future generations.

http://dms.gmrptcommission.org/uploads/15-004D/1482505882412-Demographics.JPG

**The following Public Health Values are addressed by this facility:**

[Checked radio buttons for PUBLIC HEALTH VALUES]

The Federal Centers for Disease Control estimates that in 2006, 20-24 percent of Minnesota adults were obese. Obesity is a key predictor for many future health problems, including diabetes. Lack of adequate exercise - partially resulting from inadequate outdoor recreation facilities or opportunities - is often cited as a contributor to obesity. Many young people are not getting enough exercise and face future health risks as a result. The study identifies that outdoor recreation can be a part of a solution to this problem. The economic health of the state relies on continued use and enjoyment of our outdoor recreation resources. Availability of a wide range of outdoor recreation opportunities is one of the factors most often cited as contributing to the state's perceived high quality of life. Participation in outdoor recreation may correspond to a greater interest in and support for measures to protect land, facilities and resources necessary to ensure those same activities are available for future generations.

http://dms.gmrptcommission.org/uploads/15-004D/1482505967486-Public Health Values.JPG

**Economic Development and Tourism Opportunities**

Stearns County Parks has the potential to explore revenue generation opportunities at Kraemer Lake-Wildwood County Park, including renting picnic shelters. Stearns County currently has other rental shelters at several other parks that it already manages through an on-line reservation system. There is a daily charge for rental, with an additional surcharge for weddings. Canoe, kayak and paddle board rentals could also be a source of income for the park. The maple syrup operation is a highly-unique park activity that attracts both residents and visitors from outside the county. Educational classes could be developed for individuals and groups more interested in learning about the practice of maple syrup production.

http://dms.gmrptcommission.org/uploads/15-004D/1482506026523-Economic Benifits.JPG

**Relevant Recreational Trends Information**

Stearns County Parks is the primary natural resource recreation provider for County residents. The fifteen parks and numerous trails offer a variety of recreation activities for Stearns County residents and visitors. County residents are looking for more opportunities to engage in active recreation to improve health and to experience the high quality lakes and natural resources that the county offers. Parks such as Kraemer Lake-Wildwood County Park serve important roles in providing access to outdoor recreation. Planning for future recreation activities and providing state-of-the-art facilities that meet current demand is important so that current and future county residents have access to the type of recreation opportunities that they seek. Current recreation trends involve cross-country skiing, hiking and trail running, bird and wildlife watching, paddle sports, and "destination" play areas. This master plan will provide opportunities for Stearns County to modify trail use for current and future park use trends. Periodic updates to the master plan will allow the County to evaluate park uses and to make adjustments to recreation activities, based on user interests and needs. One amenity that park users appreciate is a public beach with restrooms. The current location for public beaches in Stearns County is shown in one of the attachements, and illustrates how a beach at Kraemer Lake-Wildwood County Park would fill a gap in service in a rapidly-growing area.

http://dms.gmrptcommission.org/uploads/15-004D/1482856299458-Public Beaches.JPGhttp://dms.gmrptcommission.org/uploads/15-004D/1482856438522-Park Visitors.JPGhttp://dms.gmrptcommission.org/uploads/15-004D/1482856540963-What People Want.JPGhttp://dms.gmrptcommission.org/uploads/15-004D/1482856552173-Beach Distances.JPG

***Classification Details***

This section describes how the facility aligns with the Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission’s criteria associated with the selected classification.

Criteria #1: Provides a High-Quality Outdoor Recreation Experience

Kraemer Lake - Wildwood is located on a highly scenic and natural setting that appeals to visitors because of the interspersed rolling hills, prairies, wetlands, bogs, and ephemeral streams. This rolling hill topography is what draws people to the park for hiking, biking and cross country skiing. The addition of a swimming beach, board walks, observation points, a picnic shelter, picnic tables, informational signage, camping and educational activities will only make the park more relevant to a variety of user groups and also broaden the appeal of outdoor recreation to new and expanding populations. Even though Kramer Lake - Wildwood County Park is minimally developed, with their only being recreational trails available, this park is still a destination unto itself. This has been proven from the variety of visitors that have signed in on the 2014 survey sheet. This leads the Stearns County Parks Department to believe that with the previously mention additions, that Kraemer Lake - Wildwood is only going to become more popular and an even more sought out destination. The Stearns County Parks Department strives to provide top notch facilities that keep visitors wanting to come back time and time again. Educational opportunities, a multitude of trails and trail uses, the landscape, and the beach will encourage and entice visitors to return time and time again. The idea is to provide an experience to which the visitors are always learning or finding something new within the park.

http://dms.gmrptcommission.org/uploads/15-004D/1482856752486-Aerial View.JPG

Criteria #2: Preserves a Regionally-Significant and Diverse Natural or Historic Landscape

Kraemer Lake - Wildwood County Park is a regionally important landscape because it consists of 265 acres and contains the unique features of rolling hills, wetlands, lake access, bogs, prairies and ephemeral streams. This area was also identified in the Minnesota County Biological Survey as a significant remnant natural community and only 2% of the land area, within Stearns County, remains in a natural state. This site also contains about 7.5 acres of restored prairie and another approximately 10 acres that can be restored into prairie habitat. Thus this area exhibits ecological diversity, unique plant communities and high quality wildlife habitat. This park will offer an opportunity for people to enjoy one of Minnesotans favorite past times; swimming at a lake and other water activities. But this is not the only water feature that is present at Kraemer Lake - Wildwood; it also contains a unique mosaic of wetlands, bogs and ephemeral streams. One of the wetlands has been restored by placing a man-made dike with a water control structure which maintains a water level suitable for wild rice, waterfowl and other water dependent species. With Stearns County being Minnesota's largest dairy producer, preservation and protection of our lake shores, wetlands, bogs, streams, remnant forests and prairie habitats is all that more important.

http://dms.gmrptcommission.org/uploads/15-004D/1482856816683-Ecology.JPGhttp://dms.gmrptcommission.org/uploads/15-004D/1482856802793-Existing Land Cover.JPG

Criteria #3: Well-located and Connected to Serve Regional Population and/or Tourist Destination

Kraemer Lake - Wildwood County Park is located within 20 minutes of the greater St. Cloud Area that consists of a population of over 100,000 and is continuously growing. In fact the whole Interstate 94 corridor has been identified as a population growth center for the State of Minnesota and Kraemer Lake - Wildwood falls in a very appealing and accessible location for both the local and regional populations. The site is located approximately 10 miles from St. Cloud; less than 2 miles from Interstate 94 (St. Joseph exit); 1 hour from the Twin Cities; 3 miles from the college of St. Benedict; and approximately a ÃÂ½ mile from St. Johns University. Future plans have the Park connecting to the Lake Wobegon Trail and the City of St. Joseph has already constructed part of this trail.

http://dms.gmrptcommission.org/uploads/15-004D/1482856842924-Regional Map.JPG

Criteria #4: Fills a Gap in Recreational Opportunity within the Region

Currently, there are no State Parks located within Stearns County and thus Kraemer Lake - Wildwood will fulfill the need that these facilities provide for a high quality outdoor recreation opportunity for both local and regional residents. The number of public beaches located within Stearns County is lacking. The addition of the swimming beach in a serene natural setting would complement and not duplicate Quarry Park and Nature Preserve. The swimming facilities at Quarry Park are not very family friendly and appeal almost exclusively to the teen aged crowd. Whereas the facilities at Kraemer Lake - Wildwood would consists of a family friendly environment by having a gradually sloping sandy beach and not rock ledges to jump off of to enter the water. Also, the location of the beach at Kraemer Lake - Wildwood would be much closer to parking facilities in comparison to the ÃÂ½ mile hike to the two swim quarries at Quarry Park.

http://dms.gmrptcommission.org/uploads/15-004D/1485290237961-Regional Map.JPG

***Development and Acquisition***

**Acquisition Plan**

N/A

**Development Plan**

Long appreciated for its high quality remnant forest with 300-year old trees, immersive hiking and ski trails, historic maple-syruping operation, and panoramic views perched above Kraemer Lake, the Kraemer Lake-Wildwood County Park master plan represents a shared vision that endeavors to both preserve and enhance the 265-acre park's natural and recreational opportunities for the residents of Stearns County and beyond. Several new elements have been identified through the master planning process that will increase opportunities for public use of the entire park, restore disturbed and degraded natural areas, and provide interpretation of the park's unique attributes. Development of the site has been minimized to specific areas of the park in an effort to preserve as much of the beloved 'wildness' as possible. The proposed development area is less than nine acres in size - less than 4% of the total park area - and located in areas where there has already been site disturbance. Similarly, of the park's 3,000 feet of shoreline, less than 8% will be directly impacted by proposed amenities. The primary elements include: Enhanced entry drive using existing Kipper Road. Picnic and restroom facilities, with parking and rain gardens. Water access, via a sand beach, a canoe/kayak launch, and a fishing pier. Picnic shelter, park caretaker's station and storage, utilizing existing structures. Ecological restoration. These elements, discussed in more detail in the following sections, will provide a framework for establishing the Kraemer Lake-Wildwood County Park as a premier natural resource-based regional park in Stearns County.

http://dms.gmrptcommission.org/uploads/15-004D/1482507087762-Development Plan Overhead.JPGhttp://dms.gmrptcommission.org/uploads/15-004D/1482507078623-Development Plan.JPG

**Development Features**

Kipper Road

Kipper Road will serve as the official park entry road to Kraemer Lake-Wildwood County Park. In order to accommodate two-way traffic, as well as a paved bicycle lane, the road will need to be widened. Two road profiles concepts have been developed, one that incorporates widened shoulders to accommodate bicycle traffic, and a second that creates a separate paved trail. Impacts on vegetation will be mitigated by carefully aligning the proposed road with consideration given to neighboring structures, large, healthy trees and vegetation, adjacent wetlands, drainage needs and requirements.

http://dms.gmrptcommission.org/uploads/15-004D/1482507127506-Kipper Road.JPG

Parking and Green Infrastructure

The parking lot is flexibly designed to be built in two phases, with a turnaround and drop-off, guided by the programmatic and parking needs of the park. In addition, the parking lot is also designed to capture, store, and infiltrate any stormwater runoff from the lot, through the use of rain gardens, trees and permeable pavers. The shape and the location of the parking lot were guided by the need to keep it as far from the lake as possible, the desire to avoid tree loss, and the close proximity to the proposed picnic shelter and sugar shack. Parking needs were determined based upon the size of the shelter, as well as programmatic elements within the park. The existing sugar shack for maple syrup processing, which is located just west of the parking lot, is the site of public tours and demonstrations during the short but busy spring season. Parking also needed to be accounted for those using the smaller picnic shelters and play area, as well as those enjoying the lake through the swimming beach, the fishing pier, and those on the water in a canoe or kayak. The first phase of parking lot development consists of approximately 54 permeable, parking stalls, a linear rain garden, trees, a drop-off area for passengers and a turnaround, large enough to accommodate an emergency fire truck, with a large central rain garden. The second phase of parking lot development would include approximately 54 additional permeable stalls, a linear rain garden, and more trees. Trees will be planted in and around the parking lot to assist with water absorption, as well as to provide shade and screening. A vegetated buffer of trees and shrubs will also be integrated along the north edge of the property, as it runs along neighboring residential property to the lake, in order to maintain privacy and dampen sounds from one property to the other. At the park entrance, just inside the park boundary from Kipper Road, a gate could be located to help enforce the park's hours of operation.

http://dms.gmrptcommission.org/uploads/15-004D/1482507577457-Parking.JPG

Main Picnic Facility

The existing barn acts as a curtain, providing the framework to guide placement of the parking lot, play and open turf area. Its vernacular quality, overall condition and views to the lake make it an ideal structure to re-purpose into a large picnic shelter with restrooms, and storage on the west end. While the full programmatic capacity of the building has yet to be determined, a detailed concept of the shelter will be developed during the concept and design development phases. The design currently allows for access to the picnic shelter on the northeast side of the barn, directly adjacent to the drop-off area of the parking lot. In addition to serving as the architectural focal point of the site, and the primary picnic shelter in the park (though smaller shelters are planned in later phases), the picnic shelter area also serves as the node for several other elements: future hiking trail connections to existing trails and the lake, the sugar shack, a paver patio for additional seating, and an open turf and play area.

http://dms.gmrptcommission.org/uploads/15-004D/1482509091308-Future Picnic Shelter.JPG

Play Area

A "destination" play area, a larger play area with unique, often nature-based, exploratory features that appeal to a broad range of users, is planned for the area south of the main picnic shelter. The location of the play area is intended to allow families with small children easier access to parking and restrooms, and better visibility from the picnic shelter, patio and open turf area.

http://dms.gmrptcommission.org/uploads/15-004D/1482509286305-Play Area.JPG

Water Access

Opportunities for enjoying Kraemer Lake are plentiful, and the master plan process has revealed that the park should offer a variety of options including passive forms, like viewing from the trail or bench, to more active forms, like swimming, fishing and canoeing or kayaking. As the park undergoes its phased development and funding is available, these opportunities will be realized.It has been suggested that early phases of development should provide access to the lake for all abilities. Constructing the fishing pier and a paved trail to provide access to the lake will allow visitors to get down to the waterfront. Lake access will be further enhanced later in park development when the existing driveway to the caretaker's station and a soft gravel trail to a canoe launch are installed. Mowed sections on the edges of the trail will allow for canoes and kayaks to be carried to and from the lake. Canoes may also be available to rent, with a rack located at the launch. Stearns County reviewed two alternatives for providing swimming access to the lake, including a swim deck and a beach. A beach was identified as the preferred option with a design that will provide swimming access and tiered, turf seating that closely follows the existing terrain. ADA accessible trails to the lake are proposed to take visitors within view of the "Eagle Tree" - a distinctively shaped, hollowed tree known for serving as an eagles perch - as well as several large old oak trees.The beach is planned on the southeast portion of the property, at the toe of the grassy slope extending to the lake. An ADA accessible trail will take visitors to the sand beach, which will be approximately 150 feet wide and 20 feet deep. Facing southeast, it will provide ample sunshine along on the shore. A turf slope will be terraced into the hillside, providing three grassy ledges for people to lounge on blankets, and recline against the slope. Much of the existing vegetation and ice ledge along the shoreline will be preserved, in order to maintain slope stability along the shoreline.During the planning process, Stearns County Parks staff met with Minnesota Department of Natural Resources staff and Soil and Water Conservation District staff to discuss the feasibility and options for developing a beach. In addition to these meetings, staff conducted investigations of the lake depth and quality of the lake bottom in the area of the proposed beach. Stearns County will be required to adhere to all state and local regulations for developing the beach including obtaining permits for shoreland and water use.The activities proposed along the shoreline may cause impacts to the lake and existing shoreline. In order to ensure that appropriate environmental standards are met, the DNR, Stearns County Environmental Services and the Stearns County Soil and Water Conservation District will also be consulted.

http://dms.gmrptcommission.org/uploads/15-004D/1482509343181-Beach Section.JPGhttp://dms.gmrptcommission.org/uploads/15-004D/1482509407843-Water Access.JPGhttp://dms.gmrptcommission.org/uploads/15-004D/1482857419974-Water Access (Canoe).JPG

Small Picnic Shelters

Two additional smaller picnic shelters, with the capacity to hold up to 25 people each, will be placed in relative proximity to the parking lot, but situated to have more privacy within their surroundings. However, inasmuch as they will have views to the lake, they will remain partially screened when seen from the lake. ADA accessible trails leading from the east end of the parking lot will extend to the first shelter, and a spur trail will lead to the second shelter, located at the old homestead site. As access to restrooms was stressed as a significant feature needed in the park, an additional vault restroom is planned to better accommodate these shelters, hikers on the trails, and those enjoying the lake. Similarly, the structure is tucked into existing trees and vegetation, and along a low lying area of the trail, to remain unseen from the lake.

http://dms.gmrptcommission.org/uploads/15-004D/1482509460608-Small Picnic Shelters.JPG

Caretakers Station

The existing garage, which is in adequate condition to be re-purposed, will house the park Caretaker's Station and vault restroom. Similar to the barn, a detailed concept of the garage will be developed during the concept and design development phases to determine the full programmatic capacity of the structure. In addition, the driveway leading to the caretaker's station will be reconstructed, as well as two additional parking stalls with area to turnaround if dropping a canoe or kayak off at the top of the soft trail.

http://dms.gmrptcommission.org/uploads/15-004D/1482509535475-Caretakers Garage on Left.JPG

Site Restoration in the Park Development Area

There are opportunities for ecological restoration within the developed site area of the park. Northwest of the beach are several acres of grassland that will remain undeveloped. This area will be planted as a low-profile prairie, which would not have the typical tallgrass prairie grasses and tall forbs. After three years of establishment mowing and spot applications of herbicide to control weeds, a controlled burn is recommended, which typically accelerates the development of prairie. Thereafter, the prairie can be hayed (with all thatch removed) or burned every three years. Inasmuch as possible, the site of the old homestead would also be returned to a prairie through a similar treatment. A vegetation buffer is proposed along the park boundary behind the caretaker's building to provide a buffer between the park and residents.

http://dms.gmrptcommission.org/uploads/15-004D/1482509590507-Prairie Resto Site.JPG

Universal Design and Special Needs

The implementation of barrier-free design principles should be integrated wherever possible to meet the needs of all park visitors utilizing site and building amenities proposed for the park. All hard surface trails and paving areas should strive to meet ADA design requirements to provide access to all recreational amenities and activities. Some limitations may be present for making all trail systems accessible because of their remote location, proximity to existing steep terrain or unsuitable surfacing for accommodating wheelchair use.

Hiking and Ski Trail Network

Many visitors to Kraemer Lake-Wildwood County Park come to enjoy the natural surface trail system either by hiking, or in the winter by cross country-skiing. The current trail network consists of nearly 8 kilometers of trails, currently accessible by the existing trailhead parking lot, off of County Road 51. Several new trails were constructed in 2015. Proposed trails will build upon the existing network, including a designated "easy" ski trail and a winter hiking trail, to create better connections to the proposed developed site. As mentioned, a paved trail is proposed along Kipper Road to connect to County Road 51. Additional analysis will be completed during the design phase to determine whether a separated paved trail, or a dedicated lane along the side of the road is more feasible.

http://dms.gmrptcommission.org/uploads/15-004D/1482509644813-Proposed Trail Network Additions.JPG

Trailhead Parking Lot

The master plan process revealed a desire to maintain the existing trailhead parking lot off of County Road 51. The current parking lot consists of a large, gravel surface with an outbuilding, an outhouse, a solar-powered overhead light, and a trail kiosk. Future phases of development include plans to downsize the parking lot and remove the outbuilding, while still accommodating up to twelve cars. Removal of the outbuilding and nearly half of the parking lot will also create opportunity for additional restoration efforts in disturbed areas.

http://dms.gmrptcommission.org/uploads/15-004D/1482509687187-Trail Head Parking.JPG

[DEVELOPMENT FEATURE NAME 11]

[DEVELOPMENT FEATURE DESCRIPTION 11]

[DEVELOPMENT FEATURE SUPPORT MATERIAL 11]

***Implementation***

**Acquisition and Development Strategy Summary**

The implementation of park improvements identified in this master plan will primarily rely on the County's ability to secure funding sources needed to construct park improvements. Additional considerations for managing the park's natural resources and providing operations and maintenance services will also play a role in determining overall funding needs. Future improvements will be financed through a variety of funding sources. The time frame for implementing these improvements will be long term and involve many phases of construction to realize all improvements identified for the park. The following provides an overview of the total potential investment needed to implement and operate all components of the master plan. This section also considers Stearns County's approach to operations and management and how those resources will be allocated at Kraemer Lake-Wildwood County Park. It is anticipated that additional public involvement will be needed to implement many of the initiatives identified in this master plan.

**Acquisition and Development Costs to Date**

Stearns County purchased the property that is today known as Kraemer Lake - Wildwood County Park in 2007. The purchase price was $2,489,457 and consist of 265 acres, including a half mile of lake shore along Kraemer Lake. There were several out buildings and a house located on the property and many of them were removed at an approximate cost of $10,500. When the buildings were removed there was also a need for an electrical upgrade to the buildings that remained, estimated cost of $5,500. A well that was no longer needed was sealed at an estimated cost of $3,000. The parking lot directly off of County Road 51 had a solar light added for security reasons and cost approximately $5,000 to install.

Current Investments to Date:

$2,513,457.00

**Acquisition and Development Cost Projections**

The vision for Kraemer Lake-Wildwood County Park that is outlined in this master plan is expansive and will not happen overnight. Phasing improvements over time and as funding is acquired will be necessary to fully develop the park. Stearns County plans to develop the park in at least three phases. Each phase may be broken down into smaller elements, or these elements may be adjusted, depending on available and new funding. Master planning-level cost estimates have been prepared for each of the following development phases. It is important to note that the estimates reflect 2016 pricing and inflation needs to be factored when determining actual costs for development, which will vary depending on when items are constructed. The total estimated cost for development is $3,108,000 which has been broken into the following phases: Phase One estimated cost: $1,604,000 Phase Two estimated cost: $852,000 Phase Three estimated cost: $300,000 Future Phases estimated cost: $352,000 Total Estimated Development Cost : $3,108,000

http://dms.gmrptcommission.org/uploads/15-004D/1482511511409-Estimates.pdf

**Acquisition and Development Phasing Plan**

The phases below were identified through public and committee discussions. In phase one it was recognized that the first priority must be to create safe pubic access into the park, via Kipper Road. Along with safe access the restoration of an old outbuilding into a picnic shelter with restrooms is also proposed. It was deduced that access to the lake should also be included in the initial development stage and thus a paved path and the fishing pier were included. Phase One: Park entry drive/Kipper Road Parking lot (~54 spaces) & turnaround Picnic shelter with restrooms & storage Fishing pier and paved trail access Phase One estimated cost: $1,604,000 The purpose of phase two is to finish developing most of the user amenities. Items such as picnic shelters and restrooms will be added along with a Caretaker station. In addition, a play area is also proposed to be added near the large picnic shelter and additional access to the lake via a canoe launch and soft surface trail to the canoe landing. The establishment of turf play areas will also be included in phase two. Phase Two: Turf areas Small picnic shelters Caretaker station renovation with vault restroom Canoe launch and soft-surface access trail Play area Phase Two estimated cost: $852,000 Phase three of the development of Kraemer Lake - Wildwood County Park includes the addition of the beach along with the remainder of the parking spaces which will accommodate the anticipated increase in park usage due to the addition of a beach. More trails and another restroom may also be added during this phase. Phase Three: Parking (~54 spaces) Vault restroom Beach Trails Phase Three estimated cost: $300,000 A future phase of development was also considered and it was concluded that ecological restoration, restoration of the parking lot on County Road 51, and the new/additional hiking trails would all be apart of this phase. Future Phases: Ecological restoration Restoration of trailhead parking lot New hiking trail Future Phases estimated cost: $352,000 It is important to recognize that all of these amenities are significant to the parks development and that this "phasing" does not represent, necessarily, the exact order these amenities will be added. Rather this phasing schedule is to be used as a guiding tool. Ultimately, it will come down to the availability funding sources on what gets developed and when.

http://dms.gmrptcommission.org/uploads/15-004D/1482858949432-Development Phasing.JPG

**Total Cost Projection for Acquisition and Development**

Acquisition: $0.00

Development: $3,108,000.00

Projected Total: $3,108,000.00

***Operational Plan***

**Joint Organizations Responsibilities**

None

**Maintenance and Operations Plan**

Site management at Kraemer Lake-Wildwood County Park will be important to maintaining a high quality experience. Stearns County will not have staff on-site at all times but will provide daily and routine inspections of the main elements of the park. Several members of the community have expressed the desire for park operating hours to be limited to closing at sunset for safety and noise reduction reasons. A County Sheriff patrol will also regularly monitor the park. Maintenance including mowing, trail upkeep, cleaning of restrooms and picnic shelters and trash collection will be done on an ongoing basis. Kipper Road access will be coordinated with St. Joseph Township. County staff will be responsible for maintaining park buildings and restrooms to high levels of cleanliness and will be responsible for opening the buildings for groups before rentals. Stearns County has in place ordinances and regulations for park use, and these will be in effect at Kraemer Lake-Wildwood County Park.

http://dms.gmrptcommission.org/uploads/15-004D/1482864685799-Operational Costs Estimates.pdfhttp://dms.gmrptcommission.org/uploads/15-004D/1482866082273-2015 Estimated Operational Cost.JPG

**Ecological and Land Resources Plan**

The level of effort needed for the restoration and management of natural systems within the park, which are outlined in the natural resource management report, (see attached Ecological Plan) will require additional field work to more accurately assess the quality of the natural resource amenities and their management needs. Based on the known overall quality of some natural resource amenities within the park, adequate funding should also be secured to ensure management of these resources are addressed and coordinated with the implementation of park site improvements. In addition to the natural resource areas to be restored within the park, there are high quality natural resource areas to be protected and managed within the park boundary.

http://dms.gmrptcommission.org/uploads/15-004D/1482509921842-Ecological Restoration & Management Plan.pdfhttp://dms.gmrptcommission.org/uploads/15-004D/1482865100750-Present\_Future Land Cover.JPG

Annual Routine Maintenance and Operation Cost Projection**:**Over the next three years - $50,000

***Programming, Marketing and Evaluation***

**Programming Plan**

Natural and Cultural Resources The wide variety of natural resource and cultural amenities at Kraemer Lake-Wildwood County Park offers many opportunities for interpretation and education along trails throughout the park, as well as in the park development area. Interpretation and programming efforts are intended to raise the curiosity of visitors to encourage additional experiences and exploration of the park. A uniform signage theme should be developed throughout the park for orienting visitors to facility locations, trail circulation, and understanding the rules and regulations for park use. The design and implementation of signage should be integrated with wayfinding signage to create an attractive and unobtrusive appearance throughout the park. It will be important to tell the story of the unique and rare natural resources that the park has to offer, from glaciation that sculpted the area, to the 300-year old trees that live in its deep forest. Interpretive signage that identifies common and rare birds of the park, wildlife foraging habitats, and sensitive areas, as well as "before and after" comparisons of restored habitat can be used to educate the public about the importance of maintaining and enhancing threatened ecological communities. Programming to engage amateur birders through implementing point count censuses is another way to involve the public. Measuring the bird community is a valuable method of assessing any changes in the park's ecology. The history of the site's maple syrup operation is also a significant theme to address. The ritualistic practice that demonstrates the capacity of humans working with "nature" is a valuable learning opportunity for park visitors. While some engagement already occurs during the maple syrup production season, other methods of interpretation could include sign-age and classes. Under special circumstances, by the discretion of the County Park Department, there will be an opportunity for non-profit youth groups to utilize the developed part of the park. Green Infrastructure Integration of stormwater best management practices within the parking area, including permeable pavers and rain gardens, the park will be able to capture and treat all of the stormwater runoff before it reaches the lake. Interpretation of these methods of treatment, as well as plant species used in the rain gardens will demonstrate to visitors the importance of a sub-watershed approach to prevent further damage of runoff and nutrient loading that can be adopted by landowners in a rural setting. Park Fees and Revenues During the master planning process, park access fees and other revenue generating options were reviewed. It was determined that for the foreseeable future, no park entrance fee would be charged to gain access to Kraemer Lake-Wildwood County Park. Initiating an entrance fee would require a gate, staff or a fee box and costs associated with an armored security service to collect fees from the fee box. This determination may be revisited in the future as user numbers and access options are reviewed. Park users who use the ski trails in the winter are required to purchase a Minnesota Ski Trail Pass. Stearns County receives revenue from this state-run system of trails that includes Kraemer Lake-Wildwood County Park and other trails in the County park system. Rentals Canoe, kayak and paddle board rental could be available to visitors for a fee. Exploration of the park's shoreline will provide opportunities for birding and exploring the wetland on the southern edge of the park. Once picnic shelters are developed, these structures could be added to the facilities that are available for fee-based reservation.

http://dms.gmrptcommission.org/uploads/15-004D/1482510251373-Maple Syrup.JPGhttp://dms.gmrptcommission.org/uploads/15-004D/1482510304050-Pervious Pavers and Rentals.JPG

Annual Programming Cost: $1,000

Annual Program and Fee Revenue: 0

**Outreach and Marketing Plan**

Currently the Stearns County Parks Department uses the counties social media networks thus these are used for outreach and marketing events at Kraemer Lake - Wildwood County Park along with event and activity announcements through local media outlets. Fliers and brochures are created by Parks Department staff and distributed to these outlets. In addition an email highlighting events/activities/unique sightings are sent to the Parks Department subscribers list, which includes approximately 800 emails. Currently, the Stearns County Parks Department in conjunction with Wright County has received a grant that is specifically related to "Connecting People to the Outdoors". There are events planned in conjunction with the maple syrup operation. Kraemer Lake - Wildwood has its own webpage that highlights park features. County Park signs are placed in strategic locations to hopefully catch passerby's. There is a possibility of placing a Kraemer Lake - Wildwood County Park sign along Interstate 94. Overall the outreach and marketing plan for Kraemer Lake - Wildwood County Park includes: websites, social media outlets, brochures, maps, and local media sources. As the digital world is ever changing the Parks Department will continue to use outreach and marketing methods that reach the most people. One outreach and marking opportunity that exists less than 15 miles from Kraemer Lake - Wildwood County Park is the prospect of reaching out to the local Somali population to try and get them interested is visiting Kraemer Lake - Wildwood County Park. This will require contacting local leaders of the Somali population to see what the best outreach and marketing tools would be for this user group.

http://dms.gmrptcommission.org/uploads/15-004D/1482867386274-MapleSyrup16.pdfhttp://dms.gmrptcommission.org/uploads/15-004D/1482867427544-kraemer\_winter\_ben\_2016.pdfhttp://dms.gmrptcommission.org/uploads/15-004D/1482867445143-kraemer\_summer\_ben\_2015.pdf

**User Metrics and Research Plan**

Stearns County is interested in making Kraemer Lake-Wildwood County Park an exciting and interesting place for visitors. It will be important to know how many people use the park and what they do when they are in the park. County staff will continue to maintain records of vehicle counts. Periodic trail and park visitor counts and surveys will be done by park staff or volunteers that will provide important information about visitation. Park management, including hours of operation for the visitor center may be adjusted depending on the trends that the research provides, as well as input from the community. This information will also be useful in determining if the programming is suitable or if adjustments need to be made to meet visitor expectations.

http://dms.gmrptcommission.org/uploads/15-004D/1482866390705-Visitor Use Survey.pdf