

**ANOKA  
COUNTY**  
P A R K S

PARK  
SYSTEM  
PLAN  
2018





# ANOKA COUNTY PARKS

The intent of the Anoka County Park System Plan is to establish and guide the strategic direction of the park system over the next decade in conformance with the Metropolitan Council's adopted Policy Plans and Minnesota Statute 473.864. This Plan is the result of an 18-month long planning process, involving County staff, citizens, outside agency representatives and elected officials.

The Metropolitan Council requires local governments to submit comprehensive plans every ten years. Previous county comprehensive park plans include the 20/20 Vision in 1998 and the 2006 Comprehensive Park System Plan, both which have guided the County in the development of a remarkable park system that now totals 11,500 acres and serves nearly 5 million visitors annually. The new Park System Plan serves as a vision and planning document to guide future park development, operations and natural resource stewardship for the next 10 years, as the County responds to new opportunities and challenges related to parks and recreation. The Park System Plan will further the organization's goal of being a model park system that instills a sense of pride and enthusiasm among citizens, while furthering the standards of innovation and park excellence in Anoka County, the Metropolitan Region and throughout the State of Minnesota.

Anoka County's Park System Plan is consistent with the Metropolitan Council's Regional Parks Policy Plan which includes expanding, conserving and maintaining a regional parks system, promoting multimodal access, and strengthening equitable use.

## PARK SYSTEM PLAN CONTENTS

### MISSION, VISION AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Reaffirms and expands the mission of the Anoka County Park System, general system vision and the principles that guide decision-making.

### PARK SYSTEM HISTORY

Discusses the park system origin and how it expanded into the park system today.

### ANOKA COUNTY PARK SYSTEM AT A GLANCE

Describes overall system framework, parks and trails, recreation facilities, visitor services, department organization, funding and resources.

### TAKING AN ASSESSMENT

Assesses the current status of lands, natural resources, programming, facilities and infrastructure, visitor services.

### COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Outlines the various ways the County engages the public and other agencies during the planning process.

### INFLUENCES SHAPING OUR FUTURE

Examines various trends affecting recreation and the future of the park system.

### MISSISSIPPI RIVER CORRIDOR CRITICAL AREA

Outlines areas along the Mississippi River for conservation according to the State of Minnesota.

### VISIONING TOMORROW'S PARK SYSTEM

Discusses plans for land protection, reaching a broader audience, building and restoring the system, enhancing visitor experience and sustainability of the park system.

### PROTECTING AND RESTORING NATURAL RESOURCES

Discusses accomplishments and planning and management strategies for development, redevelopment, water quality and vegetation management.

### TRAILS AS CONNECTIONS

Examines existing regional trails and other trail types and connections between the communities and destinations.

### ENHANCING THE PARK SYSTEM

Identifies enhancements to the park system to meet the expressed desires of the public, shifting recreational trends and demographic changes.

### UNIQUE RECREATION FEATURES

Discusses improvements to Bunker Beach Water Park, Chomonix Golf Course, Wargo Nature Center, Banfill-Locke Center for the Arts, Bunker Stable and Archery Center.

### BUILDING THE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

Offers direction on enhancing accessibility and equity, education and interpretation, programming services, visitor services, and marketing and social media.

### SUSTAINING THE PARK SYSTEM

Lays out a strategic approach to system-wide management standards, maintenance support facilities, equipment, and resource inputs.

### PARK SYSTEM INVESTMENT AND FUNDING

Concludes with a discussion of existing and potential funding sources, opportunities for partnerships and sponsorships and a capital investment plan.

### APPENDIX



# MISSION, VISION AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

## MISSION

Park staff reviewed the mission statement from the 20/20 Vision Plan and the 2006 Park System Plan in the process of creating this new park system plan. The mission statement remains largely unchanged:

The mission of the Anoka County Parks and Recreation Department is to positively impact the quality of life in Anoka County by providing parks, outdoor recreation and leisure services for the public. Our mission encompasses protection of the natural environment, improving the health of citizens and supporting a strong local economy.

In furtherance of this mission, the park system plan is guided by the County Board's principles of serving our citizens in a respectful, innovative and fiscally responsible manner.

## VISION

The Vision reflects the desired future condition of the park system through the perception and experience of the park visitor. Expanding on the previous visions that were established, the new vision is as follows:

Provide stewardship of the land and water resources to continue to preserve, restore, and protect the natural resource-based park system. Park amenities will continue to be designed and managed with awareness of the natural resources, to provide sustainable recreation today and into the future.

Maintain the natural character of the park system to connect citizens to the outdoors by creating new and expanded opportunities for outdoor recreation and fulfillment. Recreational and interpretive programs will continue to focus on learning experiences which enhance an appreciation for unique natural, cultural and historical characteristics within the park system.

Expand recreation activities, facilities, and programs that allow for a more equitable use of the park system among all residents, across race, ethnicity, income and ability.

Continue development of a regional trail system that is interconnected to transit systems, businesses, schools, local trail networks and neighborhoods, that will allow ease of access to the county's regional parks.

Uphold the park system's unique architectural standards that are reflective of their surroundings. The Parks will continue to be designed to enhance and highlight those particular attributes, which provide attractive and well-maintained spaces.

Continue to engage the public as a key element of park development and programming processes to ensure parks and facilities are consistently developed, enhanced and redeveloped to reflect evolving needs in the county.

Continue to seek funding sources that eliminate barriers to increase use within the park system in which community members take ownership through volunteerism and donations. Continue cost-effective, innovative management processes throughout the system.

Over the next 10 years, the County will continue to monitor and refine the mission and vision statements to remain contemporaneous with social and organizational changes.

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

### Visitor Focus

Actively pursue visitor needs through citizen engagement to provide effective services and facilities to the community with efficiency, accountability and a caring attitude.

### Open Communication

Promote honest, open communication and easy access to information.

### Fiscal Responsibility

Provide quality services, of the best value, to effectively meet the needs of park visitors.

### Creativity

Strive to improve the quality and efficiency of park services through creative approaches with new, innovative and cost-effective technologies.

### Cooperation

Promote a spirit of fairness, trust, respect and teamwork with elected officials, County employees, residential and business communities, neighboring jurisdictions, other organizations and agencies.

### Commitment to Excellence

Strive to achieve excellence in everything we do.

### Continuous Improvement

Advocate good citizenship and actively pursue suggestions, ideas and creative approaches, leading to continuous improvements in everything that we do.

### Equity

Every visitor should be able to enjoy the same quality of public facilities and services regardless of income, age, race, ethnicity ability or geographic location.

### Sustainability

Every action and improvement of the park system, including facilities, programs, operations and management, should contribute to the economic, social and environmental prosperity of the system.



# PARKS SYSTEM HISTORY

The Anoka County Board, under the leadership and vision of Commissioner Albert A. Kordiak, began a land acquisition program to form the Anoka County Parks System in 1963. As a preface to that initiative, the County obtained statutory authority from the State Legislature for county governments to acquire, develop and operate county park systems.

In 1967, the State Legislature created the Metropolitan Council to assist local governments in the Twin Cities area with planning and funding for regional infrastructure needs. In 1974, the Metropolitan Council was given authority to establish policy objectives and coordinate planning efforts for the regional park system. In addition, the Council assisted in funding regional

parks and trails. The growth and development of the Anoka County Parks System has been significantly enhanced by the planning and financial assistance from the State, Metropolitan Council, and the Anoka County Board of Commissioners.

## ACQUISITION:

Most of the original acquisition for the park system was centered on lakes, rivers and streams, and the protection of natural resources. Since the first major comprehensive plan, more than 3,000 acres of land have been added to the Anoka County Parks System. Acquisition has included: 250 acres from the Three Rivers Park District to expand Coon Rapids Dam Regional Park, 30 acres purchased with County funds on the east side of Bunker Hills

Regional Park, acquisition of Foster and Cloquet Islands from the Department of Natural Resources at Mississippi West Regional Park, 525 acres acquired on the Rum River to establish the Cedar Creek Conservation Area, 257 acres at the Columbus Lake Conservation Area, and more than 1,500 acres purchased from the St. Paul Water Utility Commission and private owners to expand the Rice Creek Chain of Lakes Park Reserve.

An initiative from previous Anoka County Parks and Recreation Comprehensive Plans, which will be carried forward, is the potential acquisition and creation of a new regional park in the northwest corner of Anoka County preliminarily identified as "Sugar Hills" Regional Park and previously identified by the Metropolitan Council as a regional park search area.

## DEVELOPMENT:

Since the 2006 Comprehensive System Plan, the Parks and Recreation Department has placed an emphasis on restoring and enhancing park properties and infrastructure. Approximately ninety percent of the projects were funded through regional, state and federal grants. Redevelopment and enhancements were made to virtually every park and trail unit, including: Bunker Hills, Coon Rapids Dam, Lake George, Martin Island Linwood Lakes, Mississippi West, and Riverfront Regional Parks, the Rice Creek Chain of Lakes Park Reserve, and to the County Parks, such as Coon Lake, Rum River North, Rum River South and Albert A. Kordiak. Chomonix Golf Course was also enhanced with paved cart paths, greens redevelopment, and completely rebuilt sand traps.

The Department has also enhanced the park system with new facilities. Examples from the past ten years include a new disc golf course at Riverfront Park, dog parks at Bunker Hills and Locke Parks, the public access of Mississippi West Regional Park, establishment of a new day camp and nature play area at the Wargo Nature Center, expansion of Bunker Beach Water Park to include a lazy river, and a new visitor center at Rice Creek Chain of Lakes Park Reserve. In addition, the department acquired and opened Cedar Creek and Columbus Lake Conservation Areas for hunting and nature enjoyment. There were also several hallmark trail developments resulting from partnerships with municipal, regional and federal agencies.

## SUMMARY:

The evolution of the System over the past decade has yielded success in the areas of parkland acquisition, asset preservation, new development, natural resource restoration, program enhancements and marketing innovations. Many priorities identified in the 2006 Comprehensive System

## UNIQUE RECREATION FEATURES:

Throughout the evolution of the park system, a broad variety of recreation features have been incorporated throughout Anoka County. In the 1980's and 1990's unique recreation features were added which included Bunker Beach Water Park, Bunker Park Stable and the Archery Complex at Bunker Hills Regional Park, Banfill-Locke Center for the Arts at Manomin Park, which is part of the Rice Creek West Regional Trail, and Chomonix Golf Course and Wargo Nature Center at Rice Creek Chain of Lakes Park Reserve.

As most parks were developed near or adjacent to water, Bunker Beach Water Park, originally known as the wave pool, was incorporated into Bunker Hills Regional Park to help provide water related recreation. The archery complex at Bunker Hills Regional Park, one of only two in the county, provides an opportunity for people of all ages to learn about and practice archery. The complex is heavily used by the public and local schools on a regular basis and more than 5,500 people participate in the activities offered through Rapids Archery Club annually. Bunker Park Stable provides a rare opportunity for trail rides and lessons in the region and adds a unique dimension to Bunker Hills Regional Park.

At Manomin Park, the Banfill-Locke Center for the Arts developed out of a partnership with the North Suburban Arts Center. The Banfill Tavern, previously a historic interpretive center, became the permanent facility for the Banfill-Locke Center for the Arts.

Chomonix Golf Course, originally a privately owned 9-hole course, was acquired by the County and expanded to the 18-hole course it is today. The

Wargo Nature Center opened in 1993 and was funded in part by a generous land and monetary gift from Judge Joseph E. Wargo and Edith Wargo. The nature center provides valuable nature based educational and recreational programs for the community.

The Anoka County Park System also includes hunting in two conservation areas that are open to the public. The hunting areas are located at the Cedar Creek and Columbus Lake Conservation areas.

## SERVICE EVOLUTION:

High quality customer service is one of the top priorities of the Anoka County Parks Department. Technological advances with the point of sale system, on-line reservation system, web site, and social media platforms have enhanced the customer experience and increased efficiency. The technology upgrades have created department-wide cost savings and has elevated the annual volume of business generated by the department.

## MUNICIPAL ROLE:

20 cities and one township make up the municipalities located within Anoka County. The County works with the local communities to preserve natural resources areas, develop local trail connections and partner on special events and recreation programming. The local municipalities play a pivotal role in working together to provide a comprehensive suite of recreational opportunities that enhance the quality of life for the residents of Anoka County and the metropolitan region through additional parks, trails, conservation offerings and programs.

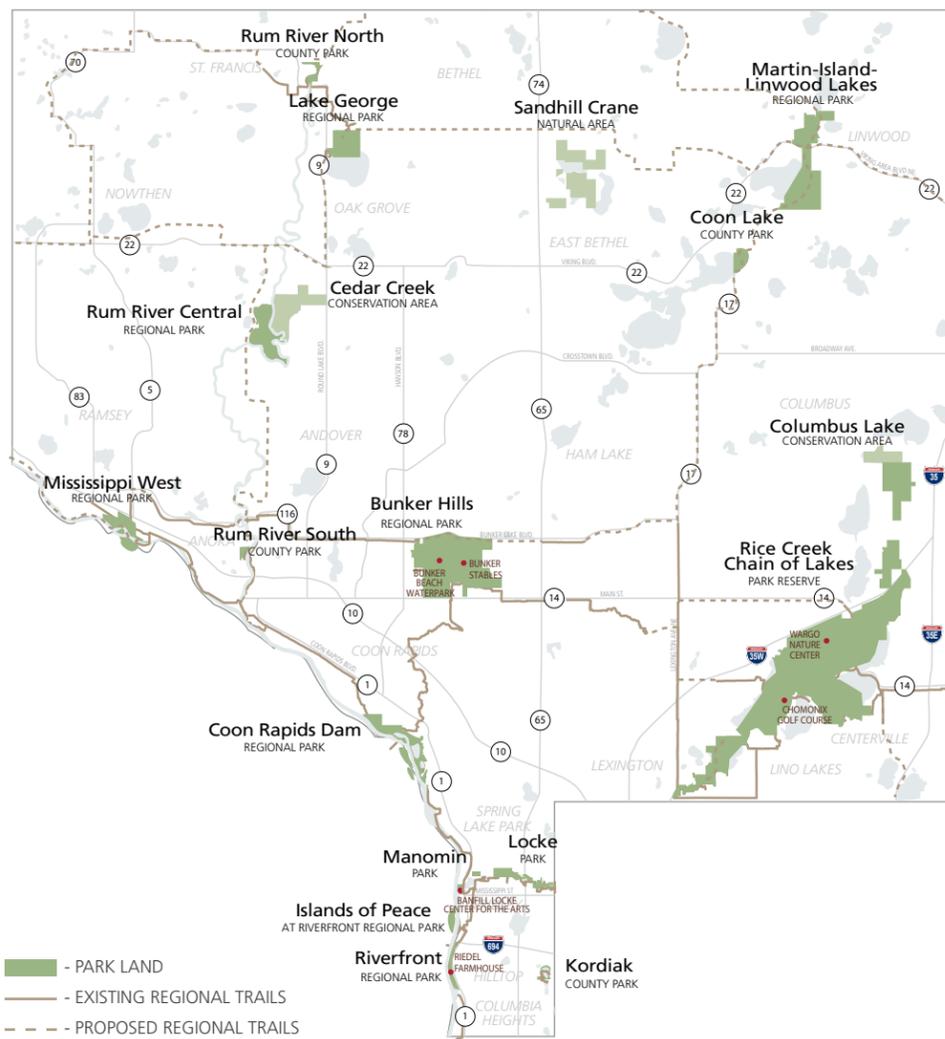
Plan were completed. The 11,500-acre park system now consists of seven regional parks, one park reserve, four county parks, ten regional trails, two conservation areas, one natural area, and six unique recreation features. Moving forward, the County will continue to leverage all available

funding sources through collaborative partnerships with federal, state, regional, and local agencies to implement the new Park System Plan.



# ANOKA COUNTY PARK SYSTEM AT A GLANCE

# 11,500 ACRES OF OPEN SPACE



- 10**  
REGIONAL TRAILS

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- 7**  
REGIONAL PARKS

---

- 4**  
COUNTY PARKS

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- 2**  
CONSERVATION AREAS

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- 1**  
PARK RESERVE

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- 1**  
NATURAL AREA

<b>14</b> MEETING SPACES	<b>33</b> PICNIC PAVILIONS	<b>150</b> CAMPSITES	<b>100</b> MILES OF PAVED TRAIL	<b>10</b> BOAT LAUNCHES	<b>7</b> ACRES FOR OFF LEASH DOGS
<b>4.2 MILLION VISITS ANNUALLY</b>					
<b>6</b> UNIQUE RECREATION FACILITIES	<b>11</b> FISHING PIERS	<b>48</b> KM OF SKI TRAILS	<b>14</b> PLAYGROUNDS	<b>570</b> ACRES OF NATIVE PRAIRIE	<b>1,400</b> FT OF SWIMMING BEACH

PROVIDING PARKS, OUTDOOR RECREATION AND LEISURE SERVICES FOR THE PUBLIC

Anoka County has consistently incorporated new philosophies and best management principals in establishing the park system as it is today. The vision of the park system has focused on sustaining natural resources, while providing

opportunities for all to experience recreational opportunities. The Anoka County park system continues to evolve and is a mixture of 10 regional trails, 7 regional parks, 4 county parks, 2 conservation areas, one natural area, and 1 park reserve

that house hundreds of recreational amenities and special recreation facilities. With more than 4 million visits annually, these facilities are heavily used and public demand for increased access, facilities, programs and education continues to grow.



*“The Anoka County Parks system is large and very diverse, offering our users many opportunities to enhance their recreational enjoyment. Careful review and planning is critical to properly address the long-range needs of our system.”*

*Jim Kordiak, Anoka County Commissioner, Parks & Recreation Committee Chair*

SERVING OUR GUESTS

To best serve the large number of visitors to the park system on an annual basis, the parks department has been structured to be efficient and customer service focused.

marketing/community engagement and administration. These work units focus on specific areas of park operations. Through utilizing the human and operational resources, the department collaborates to provide a wide array of services such as prairie management, educational opportunities, facility maintenance and visitor services.

In addition to the in-park experience, visitor services focus heavily on educating the public on the park system and making connections within the community. Partnerships and collaboration with agencies that have a similar objective supports the parks department focus of connecting people to the outdoors and introducing recreational opportunities to new populations.

The parks department is made up of 9 work units; maintenance, natural resources, planning, recreation services, park services, Chomonix Golf Course, Bunker Beach Water Park,



FUNDING AND RESOURCES

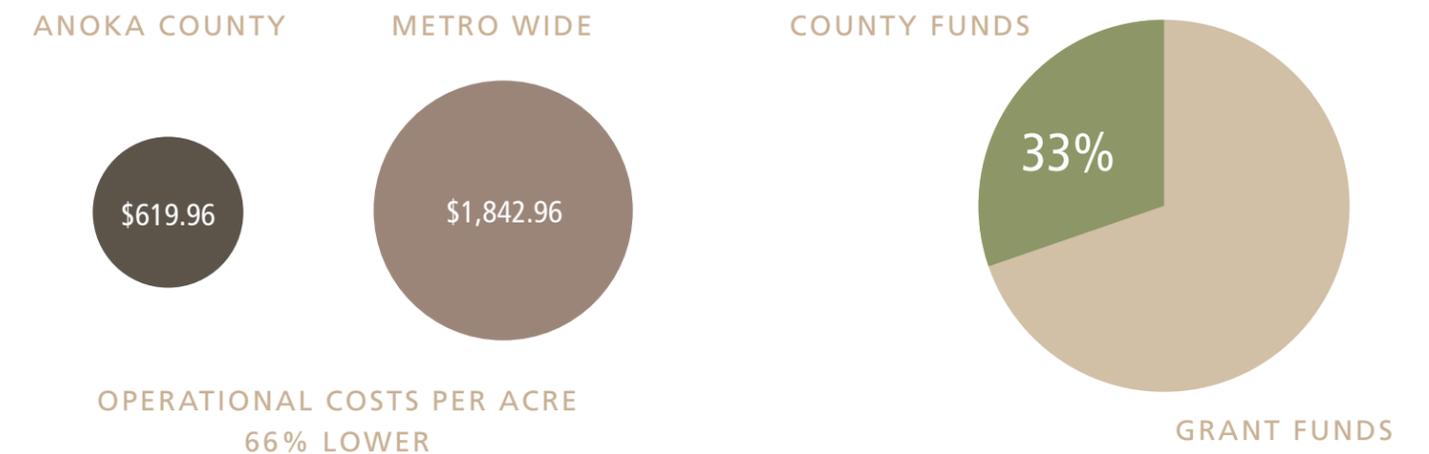
As the oldest county park system in the state with a desire to continue to attract and retain park users, investment in programs, infrastructure and equipment are needed on a continual basis. The park system operates extremely efficiently by leveraging a combination of county, state, and federal funds.

invested in the County park system, a third comes from Anoka County and two thirds come from grants or state and federal allocations. The annual operational costs per acre of park land is only \$620 in Anoka County compared to the metro region average of \$1,843.

the future. Facility assessments and master plans are currently available or being developed for all parks, maintenance facilities and special recreation facilities to ensure that the Anoka County Park System remains the high quality, community amenity for the public to enjoy.

Fiscal responsibility is a core value for Anoka County. For every dollar that is

It is important to take an assessment of the resources that are currently within the park system to be able to plan for





# TAKING AN ASSESSMENT

## LANDS

Since the birth of the Park System in 1963, the land base has grown to a robust 11,500 acres of conservation properties that are geographically distributed across the landscape of Anoka County. The varying park properties are classified as Regional Parks, Park Reserves, Regional Trails, County Parks, Conservation Areas and Natural Areas. In addition to the County's park system, there are state and municipal lands that add to the outdoor recreational land base in the County. Refer to the map in appendix for further information. The current distribution and composition of the park properties function well, however, there are few remaining gaps identified for acquisition and property transfers that are worthy of further consideration to strengthen the overall

parks system. The areas identified for future acquisition include the Northwest Anoka County Search Area or "Sugar Hills", Rice Creek Headwaters in-holdings at Rice Creek Chain of Lakes Park Reserve, and small in-holdings at Rum River Central Regional Park. Sugar Hills was identified as a search area for a new Regional Park in the original Metropolitan Regional Park System Plan in 1974 and continues to be identified as a high priority due to the geographical void of parks in the northwest corner of the county and the unique natural resources on more than 3,500 acres of the property. In addition, in-holdings located at Rice Creek Chain of Lakes Park Reserve and Rum River Central Regional Park

continue to be a priority for acquisition. Another initiative that the county has been working on in the past has been transferring smaller county park properties that primarily serve local residents to municipalities. To date, the parks transferred are Golden Lake, Ham Lake, East Twin Lake County Parks, and Wickstrom County Forest. The last remaining property transfer priorities include Bass Pickerel County Forest in Nowthen, Goose Lake County Wetlands in East Bethel and Kordiak County Park in Columbia Heights. These last remaining transfers, if implemented, will incur savings to the Department's operating budget and avoidance of future capital expense.

## REGIONAL PARKS AND PARK RESERVES (REFER TO APPENDIX FOR MORE INFORMATION)

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 1. Bunker Hills Regional Park          | 6. Rice Creek Chain of Lakes Park Reserve            |
| 2. Coon Rapids Dam Regional Park       | 7. Riverfront Regional Park                          |
| 3. Lake George Regional Park           | 8. Rum River Central Regional Park                   |
| 4. Martin-Island-Linwood Regional Park | 9. "Sugar Hills" Northwest Regional Park Search Area |
| 5. Mississippi West Regional Park      |  |

## NATURAL RESOURCES

Anoka County harbors the highest concentration of ecologically unique native plant and animal habitat in the seven-county metropolitan area. There are abundant occurrences of rare native plants and animals that have evolved and persist today. The Mississippi River and Rum River are two major river systems that flow through the County and are complemented with numerous fresh water lakes, streams and wetlands. The expansive 11,500-acre park system provides a diverse web of wildlife species and natural areas with intact forest systems, deciduous woodlands, oak savannas, prairies, and wetlands.

In accordance with the previous two system plans, Anoka County has been focused on establishing and growing the Natural Resources Management Unit. This has resulted in inventorying and mapping, rare species preservation, ecological restoration, corridor protection, forest health management, invasive species control, land protection opportunities, water quality enhancement, riverbank stabilization, wildlife management and inter-agency cooperation. Building further upon these efforts, an emphasis will be placed in the following areas over the next decade:

### Water Quality

Anoka County will continue to maintain and improve water quality in lakes, rivers, streams and wetlands by implementing best management practices in storm water design, riparian bank stabilization, winter salt use, vegetation management, buffer management and non-point pollutants. This will include working closely with federal, state and local agencies to partner on projects that provide water quality benefits.

### Invasive Species

Both terrestrial and aquatic invasive species threaten the biological diversity, function, and sustainability of plant and animal communities and aquatic ecosystems. Accordingly, Anoka County will continue to inventory, map, treat and monitor invasive species infestations in an effort to eliminate, reduce, minimize and slow the spread of invasive species.

### Forest Management

The forested landscapes in the park system strongly influences the physical and biological environment by moderating micro climate; conserving energy and water, improving air quality, controlling storm water and flooding, buffering noise, providing wildlife habitat, providing fuel wood and timber, and enhancing the overall experience for all park visitors. The primary emphasis regarding forest management will include applying scientifically valid principles and practices relating to pruning, removals, plant selection, soils analysis and amendments, wildlife habitat, inventory, timber cruising, silvicultural prescriptions and forest health management.

### Ecological Restoration

For the purposes of this plan, ecological restoration will be a science-based process to ensure ecological integrity in the management of the natural resources within the park system. A focus of ecological integrity will be placed on sustaining biological diversity, ecological processes, historical context and sustainable cultural practices. Some of the key ecological concepts that will be considered when planning and implementing restoration projects are succession, disturbance and historical range of variability. A priority emphasis will be placed on restoring and conserving the native prairie and oak savanna communities across the Anoka Sandplain.

### Fisheries and Wildlife

Working with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, concerted efforts will focus on operating and maintaining winter lake aeration systems on Centerville Lake, Coon Lake, Martin Lake and Peltier Lake which are all subject to winter kills of game fish. Accelerated priority must be placed on riverbank stabilization efforts at severely eroding sites along the Mississippi River and Rum River which are contributing excessive soil and nutrient loading that degrade water quality and fisheries habitat. Monitoring and prescribed control measures will be implemented to sustain healthy local white-tailed deer and Canada Goose populations.

*"We, collectively, have the privilege and duty to be entrusted stewards of the rich natural resources and park facilities that are merely under our ephemeral safe keeping for future generations."*

*Jeff Perry, Parks Director*



## PROGRAMMING

The Program Services Unit reaches more than 40,000 annual participants through a variety of environmental education, cultural and recreational public programs as well as special events. Programming occurs throughout the entire county but is based at the Wargo Nature Center, located in Rice Creek Chain of Lakes Park Reserve. Through evaluations, comments and program requests, program participants and staff have identified that the programming unit would benefit from the following:

### Elimination of Program Barriers

- As the population of Anoka County changes, there is a need and desire to expand programming to reach underserved populations.
- Wargo Nature Center is in the far eastern portion of Anoka County. A staffed programming facility on the western side of the county would help reach more people.
- Increased equipment and/or program storage areas at more parks will make it easier to establish sustainable programming throughout the County.

### Increased Funding

- Reduced budgets have resulted in fewer programs delivered, programming supplies, recreational equipment and program mileage.
- Funding shortfalls impact the care of a variety of animals necessary for educational programming.

### Investment in Programming Staff

- Programming is limited at current staffing levels. An increase in programming staff will increase the number and locations of programs the County can offer. For example, the Recreation Coordinator teaches most of the recreation programs along with logistical coordination. This situation limits the amount of recreational program offerings, due to the availability of staff.
- Current part-time positions result in consistent staff turnover. This limits continuity of and long-term programming objectives and partnerships. Investment in additional full-time programming staff will help alleviate this issue.

### Partnerships

- Continue to explore and increase the number of partnerships with local schools, libraries, arts centers and other park and recreation agencies.

- A “Friends of Wargo” group would be helpful to support and fundraise for the nature center.
- A stronger volunteer program would provide much needed help and community support.

### Connectivity and Improvements

- Wargo should be a destination where people from around the region visit and enjoy. However, improvements to the interactive interpretive displays, trail signage, nature play area and the canoe/kayak area are needed.
- A trail connection to the west of George Watch Lake is needed to allow community members easy access to Wargo Nature Center.
- A boardwalk and observation learning platform is needed to enable access to the lake and marsh for both school programming and visitors.



## FACILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE

The Anoka County Parks and Recreation System offers a wide variety of facilities and supporting infrastructure to meet the evolving recreational demands of the public. At various intervals over the past 20+ years, many of the original facilities and infrastructure have been replaced with new and more modern facilities. However, there are still older facilities and infrastructure that need replacement, undeveloped parks that need to undergo new improvements and the life cycles of many redeveloped facilities will need to be maintained or replaced over the next decade.

Most all park facility and infrastructure assets are inventoried and inspected on an annual basis. This information informs the various scheduled maintenance and replacement plans. The primary maintenance and replacement plans include buildings and pavilions, bituminous surfaces (roads, trails, and parking lots), well and septic systems, bridges, culverts, and playgrounds. These maintenance and replacement plans help to inform the 5-year capital

improvement program, the 10-year project forecast, and on-going operations, maintenance planning and budgeting. Over the next decade, the greatest facility and infrastructure needs include the following:

- Funding to support the County Parks (non-regional) such as Rum River North and South, Coon Lake, and Kordiak. The top priority needs include bituminous repairs and replacement, well and septic systems, playground replacements, pavilion repairs, boat launch repairs, bank stabilizations and natural resources management.
- Increased funding for maintaining and replacing park facilities, infrastructure and equipment throughout the Regional Park System.
- Well and septic system repairs and replacements will be needed system-wide due to the original infrastructure installation dating back to the 1960's and 70's. Many of these systems are failing and will need to be replaced

over the next 10-years. Where city services are available, the County should look at connecting into those facilities.

- Extensive culvert and bituminous repairs and replacements will be needed system-wide in response to the aging infrastructure.
- Maintenance facility development and enhancements are based on the Maintenance Facility Assessment that was conducted in 2016. The assessment examined the long-term system-wide needs for maintenance support buildings and infrastructure within the system to optimally support maintenance operations.
- Technology related infrastructure will need to be upgraded and implemented to accommodate the fast-changing technological trends in the parks system. This work would include making additional connections to the existing fiber optic lines connecting county facilities and adding technology services throughout the park system.

## VISITOR SERVICES

Visitor services focus on the direct customer interactions that guests experience with the park system and parks staff. With approximately five million visits to the park system annually, these services are essential in providing guests with safe, convenient and educational opportunities. Current visitor services have been evaluated

in the areas of reservations, public education, in-park assistance and ordinance enforcement. As the visits to the park system continue to increase, current staffing levels will need to be evaluated. Through customer surveys completed in 2017, two main areas of focus emerged. Those include, gaining a better understanding of expectation

of park guests when they visit the park system and creating a system to provide efficient, highly responsive service delivery. Use of technology, public outreach, equity engagement and best practices assessments will continue to guide how visitor services will be provided in the next 10 years.





# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Community engagement is a critical component in planning the future of the Anoka County Parks System and any master planning process. An approach to public participation was developed to create an inclusive and accessible means for input that helps guide the park system planning efforts.

The key goals for public participation were:

1. Provide opportunities to connect with the public and gather feedback on multiple platforms, including in-person and online, and offer user preference surveys.
2. Seek feedback from non-park users or infrequent park users.
3. Engage with underrepresented or inequitably represented communities (including communities of color, seniors, teens, veterans and people with disabilities).

4. Build and strengthen positive relationships with the community.
5. Foster community ownership and understanding of the Anoka County parks and regional trails.
6. Ensure the public is aware of and has a solid understanding of the Anoka County Park System and the recreational amenities and opportunities available to the public for their enjoyment.

With these goals as a framework, the County recognizes that several of these objectives will be more difficult to measure. For instance, it will take time to see what relationships are strengthened or built from engaging with the public and it often requires more time than allotted for the planning process. Despite this challenge, it is important to create opportunities for open and honest dialog to build trust with the public. Trust between the park

system and the community will be built if the public recognizes their feedback is shaping the direction of the Park System Plan.

The community engagement process was conducted using several different approaches including 16 “pop-up” engagement or listening sessions and informal “static” user preference surveys placed in key locations. The County also created multi-lingual surveys available on several online platforms including the County’s website, the Anoka County Parks website and surveys were promoted on social media. These methods have resulted in participation from communities of color that do not normally participate.

## FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overall, the community engagement process reached more than 5,000 people and about 1,000 people were actively engaged in the process providing input. These engagement numbers are substantially higher than in the past and therefore, the County believes the community engagement process will be a valuable tool to use over the next ten years.

Some of the results from the engagement were anticipated, while others were not. Those results have been incorporated into the Park System Plan for the future planning processes. Some of the anticipated results include:

1. How information about the Anoka County Parks is accessed. As anticipated, most respondents use online searches and/or social media to access parks information, which relates to the continued increase in digital technologies and connectivity.

2. The top four park activities for survey respondent’s correlates to what has occurred in previous surveys for top activities in the parks:

- Walking/biking
- Rest/relaxation
- Playgrounds
- Swimming

A few of the notable results include:

1. Approximately half of respondents were unaware of Wargo Nature Center, which illustrates the need for better outreach and engagement for diverse communities.
2. About 60% of respondents bring their dogs when they visit the parks and trails, which relates to the trend of dog parks and facility development for people and their dogs.

3. Trail development and improving existing facilities, followed closely by natural resource restoration and conservation were the top areas respondents felt the department should focus on in the next 10 years.

The results of the engagement process were used to help guide the County for the next ten years to meet the needs of the public. Many of the proposed facilities and amenities in the system plan are a direct result of the engagement process. For example, an overwhelming amount of support and desire for playgrounds with modern equipment was the impetus for the County proposing a destination playground for the system, discuss elsewhere in this plan.

The County sought further public input from municipal agencies, regulatory agencies and other regional agencies to ensure support for the plan prior to seeking official plan approval.



# INFLUENCES SHAPING OUR FUTURE

There are many factors that influence and shape the future of Anoka County. The biggest influences on the Parks and Recreation System are population growth, demographic and socio-economic trends, longevity, outdoor recreation trends, technology and social media, and partnerships with other agencies.

## DEMOGRAPHIC & SOCIOECONOMIC EQUITY TRENDS

The Metropolitan Council's Thrive 2040 regional forecast estimates that the Twin Cities metropolitan area will become more racially and ethnically diverse over the next 30 years and that by 2040 the region's population of color will double to about 40% of the total population.

The Thrive forecast also estimates that by 2040, one in five people in the metropolitan region will be age 65 or older and there will be more people in that cohort than in the K-12 population for the first time in history. This trend shows that people are living healthier longer lives and that parks and trails play an important role in practicing a healthy lifestyle.

According to the American Fact Finder, approximately 20% of the population under age 65 has a disability. That percentage increases to 50% for those

over the age of 65 and a majority of the disabilities are non-visible. After age 65, the number of people with more than one disability also increases. This trend influences how the County plans, develops and provides easily accessible services for parks, trails and amenities.

Income and poverty play a role in who uses parks on a regular basis. According to a study done for the Metropolitan Council by ISG in 2016, the majority of park users make \$60,000 or more in household income. That means there is a significant amount of the population that do not participate in outdoor recreation. Poverty levels for minority populations in the State are anywhere from two to four times higher than the poverty levels for whites alone. In Anoka County, the rates for minorities are three to four times higher than those of the poverty levels for whites

alone. As the County moves forward, it will need to focus increasingly on engaging the part of the population that is in the lower income and poverty level brackets.

In Anoka County, 7.2% of the population is foreign born and 10.4% speak a language other than English. With an influx of immigrants and a variety of languages spoken, the County must increase engagement efforts to reach that portion of the population that does not speak English.

These trends require changes to the way the County plans, operates and manages the park system and its amenities to ensure outdoor recreation participation from a complete cross-section of the population.

## POPULATION GROWTH

According to the Metropolitan Council's 2040 Regional Forecasts, the population for the Twin Cities region exceeded three million in 2015 and is forecast to be 3.7 million by 2040. Anoka County is anticipated to grow by 33% between 2010 and 2040 to a population of 440,000. Following those trends and the past 10 years of park visitor use estimates conducted by Anoka County in partnership with the Metropolitan Council, it is anticipated that the number of park visitors to the Anoka County Park system will continue to increase to more than 6.0 million annually in the next ten years.



ANOKA COUNTY  
POPULATION  
ANTICIPATED  
TO GROW  
**33%**



MAJORITY OF  
PARK USERS MAKE  
MORE THAN  
**60K**



AVERAGE POPULATION  
OVER 65 WITH A  
DISABILITY  
**50%**

## OUTDOOR RECREATION

The biggest trend related to outdoor recreation is social equity and how that influences what the park system offers and how it is offered. The changing population demographics significantly transforms trends in outdoor recreation. For example, the Metropolitan Council's "Regional Park Use Among Select Communities of Color" study found that participants prefer larger group gatherings, so additional large group pavilions should be added to the park system as development and redevelopment occurs.

Other trends illuminated through the community engagement process include:

- Increase and diversify programming; more family-oriented programming; more event programs.
- More free programming.
- More variety in camping accommodations.
- Safe walkable destinations/parks, which relates back to the changing demographics and generational differences
- Mobile recreation or recreation on the go; mobile programs conducted at various locations throughout the County; programs brought to where the people are instead of people having to go to the program.
- Interactive Water Play
- Mountain biking/fat tire biking
- Dog Parks
- Geocaching

## PARTNERSHIPS

The County continues to partner with a variety of agencies on projects, amenities and funding. Project related partnerships include working with the Conservation Corps of Minnesota on natural resource restoration throughout the regional system. Facility related partnerships include the Rapids Archery Club, as well as Banfill-Locke Center for the Arts. Funding related partnerships will continue as agencies compete for various funding sources. These partnerships have been with a variety of local, regional, state and federal partnerships, such as the following:

- Minnesota Department of Natural Resource
- Minnesota Department of Transportation
- State of Minnesota
- Metropolitan Council
- Watershed Districts and Watershed Management Organizations
- Conservation Districts
- Local Cities
- National Park Service
- Federal Highway Administration
- University of Minnesota
- Other County departments, such as Recycling and Resource Solutions and the County Highway and/or Community Health Department.

In competition for other needed public services such as education, human services and public safety, these partnerships will continue to become more important as outdoor recreation providers face continued budget challenges.

*"Our households are changing. We would love to see more programs for working parents and for active adults throughout the county."*

*Survey Response*



# MISSISSIPPI RIVER CORRIDOR CRITICAL AREA

## OVERVIEW

The Mississippi River Corridor Critical Area (MRCCA) is a land corridor along the Mississippi River in the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area governed by special land development regulations that protect and preserve the unique natural, recreational, cultural, and transportation features of this section of the Mississippi River. It comprises 72 miles of river and 54,000 acres of surrounding land in 30 local jurisdictions.

The MRCCA was designated in 1976 by Executive Order following passage of the Minnesota Critical Areas Act of 1973. The Critical Areas Act (Minn. Stat., §116G) provides a general regulatory framework for protecting specific areas of the state that possess important historic, cultural, or aesthetic values or natural systems through a defined local-regional planning and regulation process. The MRCCA was the first and remains the only critical area in the state. The MRCCA protects these resources through local governments land use plans and zoning ordinances that regulate structure placement, height, vegetation clearing, land alteration and subdivision of land.

The MRCCA contains many significant natural and cultural resources, including: water, navigational capabilities, scenic views, geology and soils, vegetation, minerals, flora and fauna, cultural and historic resources and land and water-based recreational

resources. The MRCCA is home to a full range of residential neighborhoods and parks, as well as river-related commerce, industry and transportation. Though the river corridor has been extensively developed, many intact and remnant natural areas remain, including bluffs, islands, floodplains, wetlands, riparian zones and native aquatic and terrestrial flora and fauna. The MRCCA also shares the same border as the Mississippi National River & Recreation Area (MNRRA), a unit of the National Park Service.

In 1988, the U.S. Congress established the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area (MNRRA), a unit of the National Park System. The MNRRA shares the same boundary as the MRCCA, and the park's Comprehensive Management Plan (CMP), signed by the Governor and Secretary of the Interior, incorporates by reference the MRCCA program for land use management. Rather than institute a separate layer of federal regulations, the MNRRA largely relies on the MRCCA to manage land use within the park. This reliance establishes a unique partnership and framework for land use management amongst the local, state and federal governments to protect the intrinsic resources of the Mississippi River Corridor.

The purpose of the rules, adopted by the State in January 2017, is to establish districts and minimum

standards and criteria to guide land use and development within the MRCCA, consistent with the purpose of Minn. Stat. § 116G.15 (2015), which are:

- (1) protect and preserve the Mississippi River and adjacent lands that the legislature finds to be unique and valuable state and regional resources for the benefit of the health, safety, and welfare of the citizens of the state, region, and nation;
- (2) prevent and mitigate irreversible damages to these state, regional, and natural resources;
- (3) preserve and enhance the natural, aesthetic, cultural, and historical values of the Mississippi River and adjacent lands for public use and benefit;
- (4) protect and preserve the Mississippi River as an essential element in the national, state, and regional transportation, sewer and water, and recreational systems; and
- (5) protect and preserve the biological and ecological functions of the Mississippi River corridor.

The rules are the result of extensive collaboration with local governments, business and environmental groups, and property owners to hear concerns, gather ideas and balance interests for rules that:

- Improve protections for water quality, habitat and scenic views;

- Protect existing development and allow redevelopment while protecting key resources; and
- Provide clear standards for landowners and simplify local government administration.

The major items addressed in the new rules include:

- Responsibilities and duties of state, regional and local government
- Preparation, review, approval and adoption of local plans and ordinances
- How nonconformities, conditional/

interim uses and variances are addressed

- Establishment of six districts, each with dimensional standards for water and bluff setbacks, and building height

- General development standards for roads and other transportation facilities, recreational facilities, stairways and signs

- Standards for protecting bluffs and steep slopes

- Standards for vegetation management and land alteration in sensitive areas

- Standards for protecting key resources as part of new development and redevelopment

Since the previous Comprehensive System Plan for Anoka County Parks, the County has redeveloped Coon Rapids Dam Regional Park and Riverfront Regional Park within the MRCCA corridor.

These projects provided a balanced approach to the redevelopment that allowed the County to provide the necessary improvements without impacting the corridor. In addition, several new areas have been identified along the river for restoration and repair.

## MRCCA DISTRICTS

The rules identify parts of the MRCCA that have similar characteristics and group them into six common districts. The districts are based on the natural and built character of different areas of the river corridor, and reflect existing conditions, as well as current development trends and land uses. Each district has specific dimensional standards and structure setbacks from the OHWL and bluffs, building height limits, and the amount of open space required for subdivisions/ redevelopment vary by district. These are the only standards in the MRCCA rules that vary by district. All other standards apply uniformly throughout the corridor. The four districts within Anoka County's jurisdiction are:

- Rural & Open Space District (CA-ROS) Rural undeveloped and developed low density residential land that is riparian or visible from the river, often contains tracts of high quality ecological resources. This has the lowest level of development of all the districts.

Height restriction and setbacks are intended to keep structures from being seen above the tree line.

- River Neighborhood District (CA-RN) Developed residential lands and existing/planned parkland that are visible from the river, or that abut riparian parkland. The height limit and setbacks are to maintain a river neighborhood feel.

- Separated from River District (CA-SR) Land that is separated from and not visible from the river. The intent is to ensure that structure height and setbacks are compatible with the existing tree line and surrounding development.

- Urban Mixed District (CA-UM) Commercial, institutional, and industrial mixed-use areas as well as existing/planned parklands. Height restrictions and setbacks are used to minimize the effects of future growth and protect views, bluffs and floodplains.

These districts are important in guiding land use along the river that allows for development and redevelopment while protecting and preserving the unique characteristics of the river and are administered through the cities of Anoka, Coon Rapids, Fridley and Ramsey's local zoning ordinances and/or regulations. These parks within the corridor have a variety of restrictions and covenants that prohibit the parks from changing uses and require the parks to remain as parks and open space for recreational purposes. Plans for these parks does include development and redevelopment, but the dimensional standards of the different MRCCA districts will impact how the County goes about planning, developing and redeveloping these parks. Maps depicting the MRCCA Districts within each Anoka County Park are shown in the appendix.

Below is an example of the differing dimensional standards for each district.

Table 1: Dimensional Standards for Districts

DISTRICT	CA-ROS Rural and Open Space	CA-RN River Neighborhood	CA-RTC River Towns & Crossings	CA-SR Separated from River	CA-UM Urban Mixed	CA-UC Urban Core
Height	35'	35'	48'*	Underlying zoning	65'*	Underlying zoning
River Setback	200'	100'	75'	NA	50'	Underlying zoning
Bluff Setback	100'	40'	40'	40'	40'	40'

\*Greater height may be allowed with a local conditional use permit.



## PRIMARY CONSERVATION AREAS

Primary Conservation Areas (PCAs) are defined as key resources and features that are to be protected through the MRCCA plans and ordinance requirements. These resources and features include shore impact zones (SIZ), bluff impact zones (BIZ), floodplains, wetlands, gorges, areas of confluence with tributaries, natural drainage routes, unstable soils and bedrock, native plant communities, cultural and historic properties, significant existing vegetative stands, tree canopies and “other resources” identified in local government MRCCA plans. PCAs are important to ensure that important resources and features in the MRCCA are given priority consideration for protection by every level or government. Maps for PCAs can be found in the Appendix.

### Shore Impact Zones (SIZs)

The shore impact zone is defined as the land located between the ordinary high-water level of public waters and a line parallel to it at a setback of 50 percent of the required structure setback, i.e., it is a buffer area between the water’s edge and the area where development is permitted, based on the structure setback for the MRCCA district. As illustrated in the Shore Impact Zone map in the appendix, the shore impact zone varies by park and MRCCA district but can be up to 100 feet.

### Wetland, Floodplains and Areas of Confluence with Tributaries

Most of the parks under Anoka County jurisdiction that are within the MRCCA corridor contain a variety of wetlands and floodplain areas. These areas include islands in the Mississippi River or lowland areas immediately adjacent to the river. Mississippi West Regional Parks contains two islands, Foster and Cloquet, which contain wetland habitat and fall within the floodplain as do some of the lower-lying areas at the bottom of the bluff. The southern half of Coon Rapids Dam Regional Park contains wetlands and is located within the floodplain, as are the river islands. Approximately a third of Manomin Park is within an identified wetland area and only a small portion of the park is within the floodplain. The islands that make up Islands of Peace, Chases, Durnum and Gil Hodges islands all contain wetland habitat and are located in the floodplain as is a small portion of the low-lying areas within the main use area. The majority of Riverfront Regional Park, which sits atop the river bluff does not contain wetlands and is not within the floodplain. Only the low-lying areas along the toe of the bluff are within the floodplain. These areas are important in that they provide storage for storm and flood waters as well as function as a filter to help improve water quality.

### Natural Drainage Routes

Within the MRCCA corridor, there are four main drainage routes within the Park System; the Mississippi River, which flows through the cities of Ramsey, Anoka, Coon Rapids and Fridley; Coon Creek and Pleasure Creek within Coon Rapids Dam Regional Park in the City of Coon Rapids and Rice Creek within Manomin Park in the City of Fridley.

### Bluff Impact Zones (BIZs)

The bluff impact zones were established to protect bluffs within MRCCA to reduce erosion and prevent slope failure. Depending on the MRCCA district, the setback distance could be 40 to 100 feet. The Bluff Impact Zone map illustrates the bluff impact zones within Anoka County’s jurisdiction. The bluffs located within Mississippi West Regional Park are a known risk area. Due to sandy soils and varying river flows, some areas have eroded and the bank/bluff continues to slough. Coon Rapids Dam Regional Park contains bluff impact zones immediately adjacent to the river north of the dam, while south of the dam the bluff is set back away from the river and provides the transition between parkland and residential homes within the Separated from the River District. Manomin and Islands of Peace both have small areas of bluff impact zones, while the majority of Riverfront Regional Park’s bluff line is included within the Bluff Impact Zone but is relatively stable.

### Native Plant Communities and Significant Existing Vegetative Stands

Due to the large amount of residential homes along the river, land outside of Anoka County jurisdiction within the MRCCA corridor consists mostly of managed turf and woody vegetation. Within the county’s jurisdiction of the corridor, there are many different vegetation stands within the parks, but only one identified significant native plant community, which is the “Silver Maple (Virginia Creeper) Floodplain Forest”. This community is located on Foster Island within Mississippi West Regional Park and Durnam Island within Islands of Peace Park. Anoka County has restored a variety of native plant communities within the corridor including prairie and oak savannas.

### Cultural and Historic Properties

The Mississippi River and the Coon Rapids Dam are both culturally and historically significant. The river, originally called “Father of Waters” by Native Americans, was used for trade by Native Americans, frontier explorers, fur traders, and loggers. With the development of the railroad and transportation network, the river was seen less and less as a means of transportation and as farm and crop lands along the river were converted to residential housing and urban development occurred, the river was seen more and more as an amenity. Today, the river provides a great

source of enjoyment and MRCCA rules will help conserve the scenic, environmental, recreational, cultural and historic character and functions of the river corridor.

During 1913, the Coon Rapids hydro-electric dam was completed. Once completed, the dam raised the level of the river 15 feet behind the dam, creating a recreational pool. The dam produced electricity until the late 1960s and became a part of the regional park in 1969. A walkway was constructed atop of the dam for pedestrian and bicycle use which connected Anoka and Hennepin County’s. Currently, Three River’s Park District owns and operates the dam, but the MN Department of Natural Resources is responsible for management of the dam as a fish barrier and for setting the pool operation parameters.

The other culturally significant and historic property within Anoka County’s jurisdiction of the MRCCA boundary is the Banfill Locke Center for the Arts Building. Historically known as the Banfill Tavern, this building is a two-story Greek Revival house built in 1847. The building served as a primary stopping point on the Red River Trails for fur traders and travelers<sup>1</sup>. Since then, the house has functioned as a post office, general store, summer home, dairy farm, day camp for children, museum, and today as a community art center referred to

as Banfill-Locke Center for the Arts (BLCA). Property of Anoka County, the house serves the community with a mission to inspire, enrich, and educate through the lenses of both writing and visual arts. The house is located within Manomin Park in the City of Fridley.

1. McGaffey, W. (1937, June) Historic Sites Survey. Minnesota Historical Society.

### Gorges

There are no identified gorges within the Anoka County jurisdiction of the MRCCA corridor.

### Unstable Soils & Bedrock

The majority of soils within Anoka County’s jurisdiction of the MRCCA boundary are relatively stable. Areas where there is high soil erosion susceptibility are along the steeper bluff lines of the river and its tributaries, as well as man-made embankments, such as along Highway 610 at Coon Rapids Dam Regional Park.

Primary Conservation Areas should be protected and the County will follow the local municipality ordinances to ensure their protection. Native vegetation within the MRCCA corridor will be managed to ensure health and vitality and encourage native wildlife habitat.



**PUBLIC RIVER CORRIDOR VIEWS (PRCVS)**

Public River Corridor Views are those view-sheds determined to be of high value within the MRCCA boundary. Identifying and documenting these views will guide future development in a way so that the scenic resources along the river are protected. Since most of the river corridor through Anoka County is privately owned with single family homes backing up to the river, these views are important to protect to ensure the existing unique character and aesthetic of the districts are maintained. Maps and images for the PRCVs can be found in the Appendix.

**Views Toward River from Public Places**

Mississippi West Regional Park  
View looking south from the Mississippi West Regional Park observation point just south of the boat launch to Foster Island and the eastern oxbow of the river.

View looking north from the Mississippi River Trail’s observation point in the southern portion of the park to river, and Cloquet Island, which also has an active eagle’s nest.

View from Cloquet Overlook Park south across river to Foster Island.

Coon Rapids Dam Regional Park  
View from observation deck to the large island in the river.

View from the Dam walkway looking north.

Manomin Park  
View from the “island” bluff looking south to the Rice Creek and Mississippi River confluence.

Islands of Peace  
At the informal canoe launch area on Chases Island, views include the river and Durnam Island.

Riverfront  
From the Mississippi River Trail near Riedel Farm House south across the river.

Views toward identified bluffs in Anoka County from the opposite shore are minimal. Due to the sandy soils of the Anoka Sandplain, bluff areas are heavily vegetated and do not provide highly desirable views.

The County acknowledges that surrounding cities and counties have also identified PRCV’s within Anoka County park property in their comprehensive plans and acknowledges that all identified views should be protected from impact.

PUBLIC ACCESS TO THESE VIEWS IN THE PARKS IS AN IMPORTANT WAY TO KEEP PEOPLE CONNECTED TO THE RIVER.

**PRIORITIES FOR RESTORATION**

Restoration measures are needed to maintain the character and integrity of the corridor, as well as maintain and/or improve water quality. Priorities were established using a GIS-based process that identified the wetlands, bluff impact zones, shore impact zones, floodplains and unstable soils/bedrock primary conservation areas and native plant communities and significant vegetation stands.

While the bluff and shore impact zones are priorities for vegetation restoration, a few segments within Mississippi West, Coon Rapids Dam and Manomin parks have been identified as additional high priority areas. Although most of

the formerly fallow agriculture fields at Mississippi West have been restored to a native prairie grassland habitat, the shoreline/bluff just south of the boat launch to just north of the Rivenwick development area has been identified as a priority because of the steep bank which is continuing to erode. Another priority restoration area is north of the dam at Coon Rapids Dam Regional Park where the bank is rather steep and at Manomin Park on the south bank of the confluence of Rice Creek with the Mississippi River. Even though, the bank at Riverfront is rather steep, the current vegetation is keeping the bank in place and reducing erosion. This section is not necessarily a restoration

priority because it is relatively stable; it is a restoration priority for the invasive species (Buckthorn) that makes up the vegetation stabilizing the bank. The County will be actively managing the buckthorn and anticipates the native vegetation to eventually start to flourish and out-compete the buckthorn.

The County has a Natural Resource Unit that actively manages the vegetation within Anoka County’s parks within the MRCCA corridor.

A map of the restoration priorities is provided in the Appendix.

**OPEN SPACE & RECREATIONAL FACILITIES**

Open space and recreational facilities add to the quality of the community and provide access to the river. The parks within Anoka County’s jurisdiction within the corridor were acquired with the river as the central feature and include facilities, such as trails, overlooks, fishing piers and boat launches.

The Coon Rapids Dam and Riverfront Regional Parks have each seen redevelopment recently, so no new recreation facilities are planned, but there are additional maintenance

facilities planned for these parks in the future. These maintenance facilities will serve as a point of central maintenance and operations for the parks.

At this time, the only recreational facilities at Mississippi West Regional Park are some trails and a public boat launch, with a few canoe campsites located on the islands. Since the park falls into the Rural and Open Space District, the dimensional setbacks for the district will inform the future development plans, which include a visitor center, maintenance

facility, picnic pavilions, restrooms, playgrounds, trails, river overlooks, roads and parking lots.

Repaving of existing parking lots and trails are anticipated to occur at Manomin and Island of Peace parks in the near future.

The County currently coordinates with the local agencies on trail connections throughout the County, whether it pertains to the MRCCA corridor or not.

**SURFACE WATER/WATER-ORIENTED USES**

Surface water uses on the Mississippi River are primarily boating, canoeing and kayaking in the Anoka County stretch and barges and riverboat tours south of Minneapolis. Water-oriented uses occur on the land adjacent to the river and include boat launches, docks, barge terminals and marinas.

Since the MRCCA corridor within Anoka County consists mainly of residential homes and public parkland,

there are no water-oriented uses or surface water uses other than recreational motorized and non-motorized boating. Motorized boating is provided for at the public accesses within Mississippi West, Coon Rapids Dam and Riverfront Regional Parks, at a few local municipal launches, as well as the private docks at the riverfront homes in the corridor. Non-motorized boating is provided for at any of the public parklands along the river and at

the private docks at riverfront homes.

Anoka County Parks has plans to add additional docks at the public access at Coon Rapids Dam Regional Park, but does not anticipate this to impact or cause a disruption to the river. These docks, when built properly, can allow more opportunities for public access to the corridor while minimizing its impact to the river.

## TRANSPORTATION & PUBLIC UTILITIES

The relation of transportation and utilities to natural resources has always been a double-edged sword. Transportation facilities can have a negative impact on scenic views, habitat and native vegetation, but they also provide access to those natural resources. Future development of these facilities should be designed to minimize impacts and disruption to the MRCCA corridor and its resources.

Transportation facilities within the MRCCA corridor outside Anoka County jurisdiction include Interstate 694, Highway 610 and city streets. Transportation facilities under Anoka County jurisdiction are limited to County State Aid Highway (CSAH) 1 (East River Road) in Fridley, which serves as the eastern boundary of the corridor; two sections of CSAH 1 in (Coon Rapids Blvd.) in Coon Rapids, which provide the eastern corridor boundary and a small portion of CSAH 57 at Highway 10 in Ramsey. Most of these roadway segments serve as the easternmost boundary of the corridor and have relatively little impact on the river and corridor as there are mostly residential areas between the traffic and river that serve as a buffer for the corridor. Other transportation facilities within corridor that are under Anoka County jurisdiction include paved trails,

parks roads and parking lots at each of the parks. The Mississippi River Trail, (MRT) a state and nationally designated bike route, also runs through the length of the MRCCA corridor, while Rice Creek West, Coon Creek and Central Anoka County Regional Trails connect to the corridor.

CSAH 1 (East River Road) is a minor arterial road that carries traffic in a north-south direction along the river. Anoka County developed a master plan for the CSAH 1 corridor in conjunction with the Cities of Coon Rapids and Fridley in 2012. Recommendations for the corridor include the addition of trails and transitioning certain connector streets to cul-de-sacs, which would help minimize traffic impacts on the corridor. There are no current planned construction projects at this time.

While there are no current plans for improvements to the Highway 10 and CSAH 57 intersection, the MnDOT's Highway 10 Management Plan proposes a grade separated interchange at some point in the future which will improve access to the corridor.

Transportation related facilities, such as roadways, parking lots and trails will be included as part of the Mississippi

West Regional Park development which is expected to occur 2023. These facilities will be located and constructed in such a manner to minimize the impacts to the corridor, while still providing access. There are no plans for additional transportation facilities at Coon Rapids Dam Regional Park and recent redevelopment at Riverfront Regional Park provided additional bicycle/pedestrian facilities (trails) from CSAH 1 into the park and to the MRT. Therefore, no new transportation facilities are proposed for that park. Manomin and Islands of Peace parks are both anticipated to have existing parking lots reconstructed in the next 5-10 years.

Public utilities can impact PCAs and PRCVs along the corridor. There are approximately five electrical transmission lines within the MRCCA corridor in Anoka County jurisdiction. Four are located within Coon Rapids Dam Regional Park and one is near Pavilion #2 at Riverfront Regional Park. There are several storm-water outlets within the corridor under Anoka County jurisdiction located at Mississippi West, Coon Rapids Dam and Riverfront Regional Parks. Most of these facilities are owned by the city of jurisdiction. At this time, there are no known plans for additional future public utilities.

## POLICIES

Since the County does not have land use authority, land use zoning and enforcement is implemented through the local municipalities. The County will work with the local municipalities to help ensure any changes in land use and development within the corridor are consistent with the management purpose of the corresponding MRCCA District. Policies to ensure development compatibility with PCA's, PCRV's, restoration priorities, open space and recreation facilities, water-oriented uses and transportation and public utilities were developed and are listed in the Appendix. These policies will be implemented through on-going capital improvement plans and updated master planning for the parks within the corridor.

## IMPLEMENTATION ACTIONS

It is the intention of Anoka County to implement actions within the corridor that are in compliance with the new MRCCA rules. Anoka County played an active role throughout the rule-writing process (hearings, meetings and written reviews) and is committed to carrying out management and planning activities in a manner consistent with the spirit, intention and restrictions contained in the new MRCCA rules.

To that end, Anoka County will:

- Conduct future development and redevelopment within the parks in accordance with the rules and regulations of the MRCCA.

- Continue to work with local agencies and local communities, if there is an interest in establishing surface water regulations north of the Coon Rapids Dam.
- Conduct feasibility study/research to address bluff erosion issues at Mississippi West Regional Park and Coon Rapids Dam Regional Parks
- Coordinate with regional, state and national planning efforts within the MRCCA.
- Manage natural resources and conduct land alterations activities consistent with MRCCA regulations.



# VISIONING TOMORROW'S PARK SYSTEM

## PROTECTING LANDS AND RESOURCES

As a natural resource based park system, conservation and stewardship of the natural environment, as well as, the cultural heritage is essential for the County's thriving park system. Public ownership ensures these resources and habitats are protected and provides access for all. As shown through the community engagement process, natural resource restoration and conservation is one of the top three areas the County should focus on for the next 10 years. The County has protected approximately 11,500 acres in regional park and trail lands, natural areas, county park lands and conservation areas. Public ownership of this acreage helps preserve the open space and the natural environment while the County continues to grow and develop.

As the County population continues to grow, parks and open space becomes even more important. The County currently contains extensive wetland habitats, native prairies and woodland habitats, as well as lakes, rivers and stream habitats. To provide additional open space as the County continues to grow, the County has identified an area in the northwest corner of the county, as previously mentioned, for regional parkland and open space protection. The area contains up to 3,500 acres of varying habitat and topography, which would provide an excellent foundation for a new regional park or park reserve.

Stewardship, using sustainable conservation practices, will provide the key to balancing the preservation,

restoration and enhancement of the park system along with the development and redevelopment needs required for a functional and enjoyable park system.

The system would not be as robust as it is today without the generous funding provided through the Metropolitan Council, the Parks Acquisition Opportunity Fund, which is comprised of funding from the LCCMR and Parks and Trail Legacy program, and the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources Conservation Partnership Grants. Active pursuit of new and existing funding sources will be imperative over the next decade.

## REACHING A BROADER AUDIENCE

Reaching a broader audience will require the County to address the issue of equity within the park system. Current demographics show that approximately 85% of the County population is Caucasian and park studies indicate that the overwhelming majority of park users are Caucasian. That leaves a significant portion of the population that does not use the park system at all. The County proposes to focus engagement on a full cross section of the population, while specifically targeting those populations not currently using the park system

during its planning processes. This will include not only master planning of the parks and trails system, but engagement in the educational and recreational programming planning processes as well.

By concentrating on engaging non-park users, the County can work to determine what barriers they face to use the parks, what would make them feel more welcome within the park system and what amenities they would want to see installed in their park system.

In addition to engaging the public, the County will work to provide a more welcoming atmosphere for the park system. This will include examining how people access information on the park system, ensuring information is easy to find and easy to understand. Simple changes can be made, such as including multiple languages on the signs visitors see when they are first entering the parks and multi-lingual options on the County's website.



“The pressure of urbanization and development threatens the most valuable remaining large recreational open spaces in the metropolitan area at the same time as the need for such areas is increased. Immediate action is therefore necessary to provide funds to acquire, preserve, protect and develop regional recreational open space for public use.”

Minnesota Statue 473.302

## BUILDING AND RESTORING THE SYSTEM

As a park system with more than 11,500 acres, providing investments to the existing infrastructure and amenities within the parks and trails system is key to ensuring a continually viable and adaptive park system in the future. The County has made significant investments to restore the system over the last several years. In the last five years, about \$14.0 million has been spent on redevelopment and improvements in the system. Such investments can be as small as replacing a light fixture or as large as a park redevelopment project, which includes picnic pavilions, road, trail and parking lot reconstruction, as well as, natural resource restoration. While most of the parks have been redeveloped, there will always be a need for reinvestment in the system.

Since most existing regional parks have been redeveloped, the County is looking forward to the development of Mississippi West Regional Park, one of the few parks that is not fully developed. While a boat launch and trail has already been constructed at the park, other proposed plans call for a visitor/interpretive center, picnic pavilions, trails, playgrounds, restrooms, roads and parking lots. The County will engage with the public to ensure that the local and regional communities needs will be met with this project.

Building and restoring the system also entails being adaptive to changing needs and demographics of the community. To do this, the County will engage with the community on

a regular basis to ensure community needs are being met with future development and redevelopment projects.

Building and restoring the system will remain dependent on the continued financial support of Anoka County, through the County's annual operating budget and the Metropolitan Council through their operations & maintenance grants as well as the lottery-in-lieu of grant program, which helps to support the regional system.

## ENHANCING THE VISITOR EXPERIENCE

Enhancing the visitor experience not only includes enhancing the tangible parts of the system, but it also includes the intangible items. Tangible parts of the system include not only bricks and mortar items, such as making sure the existing facilities are functional and in good repair, but it also includes smaller items such as providing labeled photographs of prairie plants on an interpretive sign along a prairie's edge, so users can see the plants out in the field and then identify what they are on the sign.

To enhance intangible item of visitor experience, the County should perform an ongoing review of services and facilities to meet or exceed visitor expectations, i.e. friendly staff, clean restrooms, safe facilities, nature-based experiences, convenient access, and affordable opportunities. The objective is to create a memorable and meaningful experience through a program, class, activity, campsite, or location that will remain with the visitor for decades. What can the County change to meet or exceed those expectations and create memorable experiences? Tools to measure

expectations and experiences include after visit surveys, general surveys, social media, and general observations.

To further enhance the visitor experience, the County should review annually what the system offers and develop new ideas on what the County can do to attract new visitors and keep current visitors coming back. For example, are there programs the County can offer outside the park system by partnering with the local municipalities in their park system?

To build trust and lasting relationships with our customers, the County must authentically engage the public and create a dialogue of how Anoka County can meet customer needs, requests, and expectations as well as how we can show our customers loyalty and appreciation. The County must also seek to reach people that are unaware of the County's offerings and seek to understand why some of the public may not use our parks, i.e., what barriers do they face, lack of recreational opportunity know-how or cost of programs.

## SUSTAINING CAPACITY AND SERVICES

By 2040, the metropolitan region is projected to be home to almost 3.7 million people. Accommodating population growth poses challenges for sustaining capacity and services in the parks system. While the County has open space and parks throughout the county, the anticipated population growth will make expanding and/or preserving space for parks and trails more challenging. Sustainability seeks to protect our system's vitality for generations to come by preserving our capacity to maintain and support our system's well-being and productivity over the long term. The County's investments in our parks and trails system will fall short over the long term if we exhaust our resources without investing in the future.

Therefore, to sustain and expand the capacity of the system and services, not only does the County need to continue to invest in the parks and trails system, but the Metropolitan Council must as well. Since the regional parks system falls under the jurisdiction of Metropolitan Council, the Met Council should continue to provide funds to the regional park agencies as well as expand the amount of funds available.



## PROTECTING AND RESTORING NATURAL RESOURCES

Since 1963, Anoka County has created and fostered a strong commitment to establishing, protecting, preserving, and restoring natural resources throughout the evolving Parks System. Today, the County's natural resource based park system contains a diverse and inter-connected network of natural areas including upland forests, deciduous woodlands, upland prairies, oak savannas, forested wetlands, shrub wetlands, open wetlands, and an abundance of wildlife.

In 1996, a Natural Resources Management Unit was established and charged with the continued stewardship and management of the natural resources. Through the previous two parks system planning processes, an emphasis was placed on inventorying and describing the resources, defining a restoration and management framework, identifying issues, strategies and goals to begin actively managing those resources. As the Natural Resources Unit has evolved over the past 22 years, many of the previous plan's goals have been achieved.

### NATURAL RESOURCES ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Completed an open space study, in partnership with the University of Minnesota, of the last remaining high quality natural areas and established priorities for future protection. This led to the acquisition and protection of approximately 2,000 additional acres in the Rice Creek Headwaters Area and the Columbus Lake Conservation Area.
- Implemented a two-phase Cedar Creek Greenway study that led to the acquisition and protection of the 525-acre Cedar Creek Conservation Area.
- Created a unique four-agency collaboration at the Sandhill Crane Natural area to collectively protect and manage 500 acres of some of the region's last remaining rare habitat. This has led to on-the-ground resource management projects and conservation easements on private lands that will protect the natural resources in perpetuity. The Anoka County Parks Department will continue to work cooperatively the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, the City of East Bethel, and surrounding residents to protect and conserve the high quality natural communities within and surrounding the Sandhill Crane Natural Area. In addition, joint efforts will continue to pursue public access enhancements, low-impact natural surfaced trails, and natural feature interpretive nodes in accordance with the master plan.
- Began active restoration of more than 3,500 acres of prairie, wetland, and forest habitat through prescribed burning, mechanical disturbance, grazing, invasive species removals, seeding and planting native species.
- Established a county-wide Aquatic Invasive Species Program that targets every public boat launch throughout the county to prevent and reduce the spread of aquatic invasive species.
- Established an Emerald Ash Borer Response Plan to combat the invasive insect and increase the biodiversity of tree species within the park system.
- Stabilized more than 4,000 linear feet of riverbank along the Rum and Mississippi Rivers to improve water quality and fisheries habitat.
- Established safe and effective deer and goose management programs that have led to sustainable wildlife populations throughout the parks system.
- Successfully secured more than \$10,000,000 in grant funds to protect and restore natural resources throughout the parks system.

### PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

General natural resources management strategies include identifying and assessing remnant plant and animal communities, monitoring rare species, controlling invasive species, ecologically restoring native plant and animal habitat, controlling detrimental insects and disease, wildlife management, enhancing water quality, erosion control and cooperative land stewardship.

A sustainable development framework is utilized in all new park and trail development and redevelopment to ensure ecologically sound land stewardship.

The following natural resource management components are an integral part of Anoka County's planning and management efforts:

- Anoka County's Natural Resources Unit will be directly involved with the design, construction and monitoring of the proposed development. A concerted emphasis will be placed on avoiding and minimizing any adverse impacts to the plant and animal habitat, as well as lake and river habitat. In addition, Anoka County will incorporate local native seed and plant materials that will complement the ecology and function of the surrounding native plant communities.

- Protection of surface water resources will be a top priority. Anoka County will work very closely with watershed districts, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources and the Metropolitan Council to ensure the standards and requirements for resource protection are consistent with the Council's model ordinance for storm water management.

- The overall vegetation management goal for Anoka County is to identify restoration needs and to define and implement adaptive management strategies that will sustain the biological diversity, production, and function of native plant communities. Vegetation management within the park system will focus on preserving native plants, introducing local native plants, eradicating invasive species, maintaining water quality and providing for plant and wildlife corridor connections. The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources reference "Guidelines for Managing and Restoring Natural Plant Communities Along Trails and Waterways" will be used as part of the park system's long-term management plan.

Considering that ecosystems are dynamic and continually changing over time and location; an adaptive

management approach and framework fits very well with the County's practice of ecological restoration and stewardship.

In summary, the overarching strategic direction for protecting and restoring the natural resources across Anoka County's Park System will be achieved through maintaining, restoring, and rehabilitating biological diversity, function and production of interconnected ecological systems and processes across the landscape. An emphasis will be placed on valid scientific principles and practices designed to achieve future desired conditions that will enhance ecological health and that will provide quality outdoor recreational experiences for all park visitors.

In addition, integrating conservation education and awareness, as well as, providing interpretive information about natural resource issues to the public will provide an opportunity for the public to practice conservation at home.



# TRAILS & CONNECTIONS

During the last 30 years, Anoka County has worked closely with the federal, state, and local agencies to ensure that the County plans for and constructs a cohesive and functional trail system that links the regional parks and provides recreational opportunities for all ages and abilities. These trails also provide connections to other community facilities and amenities and serve as alternative transportation routes to those destinations.

The County has previously identified ten regional trail routes that traverse along rivers, creeks, wetlands, residential areas, farm lands and roads throughout the county. Approximately 100 miles of the proposed 246 miles of regional trail are complete. The County continually works with the surrounding counties and cities to ensure proper alignment for trail connections between agencies.

## EXISTING REGIONAL TRAILS

- |                                |   |
|--------------------------------|---|
| 1. Bunker-Chain of Lakes       | 7. North Anoka County<br><small>(search corridor)</small> |
| 2. Central Anoka County        | 8. Rice Creek North                                       |
| 3. Chain of Lakes – Otter Lake | 9. Rice Creek West  |
| 4. Coon Creek                  | 10. Rum River   |
| 5. East Anoka County           | 11. Sugar Hills   |
| 6. Mississippi River           |   |

100 MILES

246 PROPOSED

OVER 100 MILES OF TRAIL COMPLETED OF THE PROPOSED 246 MILES

10

## REGIONAL TRAILS IN ANOKA COUNTY



### LINKS REGIONAL FACILITIES & DESTINATIONS



PROVIDE MULTIMODAL TRANSPORTATION OPPORTUNITIES

## TRAIL TYPES IN ANOKA COUNTY

There are a variety of trail types within the Anoka County Trail system. The majority are eight to ten feet wide paved trails that allow multiple uses, e.g. walking, biking, in-line skating. But the system also contains other trails, such as horse trails, water trails, and winter activity trails, including cross-country ski trails and snowmobile trails.



TRAILS ARE 8-10 FEET WIDE



2 HORSE TRAILS AT BUNKER HILLS & RUM RIVER CENTRAL

### HORSE TRAILS

The County has two developed horse trails within the system. One at Bunker Hills Regional Park as part of the Bunker Park Stable operation and one at Rum River Central Regional Park. At Bunker Park Stable, users can ride the trails, take lessons, or relax on a wagon or sleigh ride depending on the time of year. At Rum River Central, users trailer their horses into the park to enjoy the trails.

During the community engagement process, the County received a few comments requesting additional horse trails and while this has been explored in the past, the County will reexamine this issue and assess new horse trails where feasible when master plans are updated.



3 WATER TRAILS ON MISSISSIPPI RIVER, RUM RIVER, & RICE CREEK

### WATER TRAILS

Water trails have increased in popularity and the County has provided access to three established water trails within the County; the Mississippi River, the Rum River and the Rice Creek. All three provide varying degrees of difficulty and very different experiences. The Mississippi River provides a much more open experience as it traverses the County mainly through residential areas. As users approach the southern end of the county, they will notice a change from residential to industrial. Canoe campsites are located on Foster and Cloquet Island's near Mississippi West Regional Park. The Rum River is a smaller river and offers a slightly more idyllic float. For longer trips, there are canoe campsites available at Rum River North County Park and



CANOE CAMPSITES ON RUM RIVER NORTH, RUM RIVER CENTRAL & MISSISSIPPI WEST ISLANDS

Rum River Central Regional Park. The Rice Creek water trail is comprised of two very different sections. The first section, between George Watch Lake and Baldwin Lake is better suited to the novice paddler, where it travels through mostly open water of the Rice Creek Chain of Lakes. The remaining section, between Baldwin Lake and Long Lake is narrower and heavily vegetated. The trail ends at Ramsey County's Long Lake Regional Park. There are no canoe campsites along this water trail, however, the trail provides a unique paddling experience for the public.

*"People care a lot more about the great outdoors when they get out into them. Trails let us reach the interiors of large public land holdings we'd otherwise never see or appreciate."*

Steve W., Trail User

# WINTER WALKING, CROSS COUNTRY SKIING, SKIJORING, SNOWMOBILING



24 MILES OF PLOWED  
WINTER WALKING  
TRAILS



48 KILOMETERS OF  
CROSS COUNTRY SKI  
TRAILS



3 PARTNERSHIPS FOR  
SNOWMOBILE TRAILS

## WINTER TRAILS

Winter trails, such as plowed walking trails and cross-country ski trails are located in several different parks throughout the system. There is a total of 24 miles of plowed walking trails within the Anoka County Park System during the winter. Through the community engagement process for this plan, comments were received about plowed walking trail loops and more winter walking trails, hence the County will examine the existing trails and make modifications for loops and expand the system as feasible. There are approximately 48 kilometers of cross country ski trails within the

## SNOWMOBILE TRAILS

The County works with several different snowmobile clubs across the County and serves as a fiscal agent for these clubs to receive Grant-in-Aid funds from the State to maintain safe and functional snowmobile trails. While the trails traverse the county, only small portions of the trails fall within the park system.

The locations of all these trails can be found on the DNR Snowmobile Trail

system. Rice Creek Chain of Lakes Park Reserve at Chomonix Golf Course and Coon Rapids Dam Regional Park have ten km, while Rum River Central Regional Park has approximately eight km. Bunker Hills Regional Park has 20 km and approximately eight km of skijoring trails. In addition, snowshoeing is available at all the parks, although snowshoe rental only occurs at Rice Creek Chain of Lakes Park Reserve through Wargo Nature Center, Coon Rapids Dam Visitor Center and Bunker Hills Campground Visitor Center.

Map in the appendix.

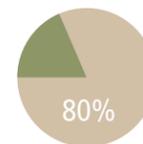
During the public engagement process, the County received a request for motorized off-road trails, but the responsibility for siting and funding those trails lies with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources and is not a use eligible for funding in the regional system, according to the Metropolitan Council's Regional Parks Policy Plan.

## COOPERATIVE TRAIL DEVELOPMENT & MAINTENANCE

The County would not have the regional trails system it has without the cooperation of the local cities and the County Highway Department. Through close collaboration and cooperation, the County has found creative ways to finance and construct 100 miles of the proposed 246 miles of regional trails. For example, a portion of the East Anoka County Regional Trail was constructed recently in

conjunction with the County Highway Department's Lexington Avenue Road Reconstruction project. Federal funds were used for the road project, which required alternative modes of transportation, therefore the regional trail was built with 80% of its cost coming through federal funds. The remaining 20% was split between the City of Blaine and the County Parks Department. When trails are funded in

this manner, a Joint Powers Agreement or a Memorandum of Understanding is executed prior to construction of the trail, which outlines operations and maintenance responsibilities for each of the agencies. Cities are generally responsible for the daily maintenance and operations of regional trail in their jurisdictions, while the County is responsible for capital improvements of the trail.



80% FEDERAL FUNDS



HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT  
COLLABORATION



20% COUNTY / CITY  
FUNDS



## ENHANCING THE PARK SYSTEM

While the Anoka County Parks and Recreation System consists of approximately 11,500 acres, there are still gaps in the system. One such gap identified previously in this plan is located in the northwest corner of the county in the Cities of St. Francis and Nowthen. This area is one of the last few remaining large acreage single owner sites in the County. An addition to the regional park system in this area would serve the northwest corner of the county as well as the surrounding counties of Sherburne and Isanti and thus provide a regional draw. The proposed site would provide up to 3,300 acres of interesting topography, maple basswood forests and plenty of open space. Besides natural resource management, initial concepts for the park include picnicking areas, biking/walking trails, a camping facility, a nature center, dog park, horse trails and arena, mountain bike trails, winter recreation area and cross-country ski trails, archery facility and range, playgrounds, restroom buildings and a disc golf course.

Since regional parks are part of the Metropolitan Regional Park System, a

Metropolitan Council approved master plan is required to be eligible for funding. These master plans examine park/trail boundaries, acquisition costs, stewardship, demand forecasts, development concepts, conflicts, public services, operations, public engagement and participation, public awareness, accessibility, and natural resources. Most of the regional parks do have existing master plans and these should be updated every 10-20 years to ensure the needs of the public are being met. As the County updates master plans, these plans will be made available on the County's website for easy access. Until then, the master plans are available to the public upon request.

While the County continues to focus on reconstruction and redevelopment of existing facilities within the regional and county parks over the next decade, it will also concentrate on developing new facilities within the system. For example, Mississippi West Regional Park is relatively a blank slate. The only development that has occurred is a public boat launch and by the end of 2018 a portion of the Mississippi River

Trail will be complete through the park. Most of the fallow farm fields have been restored to native prairie grasslands, so any new development will have to take into consideration minimizing impacts to the natural resources. Proposed development includes roads, parking lots and additional trails as well as picnic pavilions and restroom buildings. In addition, a maintenance support facility is proposed.

Another focus for the County will be developing maintenance support facilities throughout the system. In 2016, Anoka County conducted a Maintenance Facility Assessment. That assessment illustrated where there were gaps in the system and how additional maintenance support facilities will help increase efficiencies in maintenance and operations. New facilities are proposed for Coon Rapids Dam, Riverfront and Mississippi West Regional Parks. Additional support facilities are proposed for just about every park and existing facilities are to be redeveloped to accommodate current and future needs.

In addition, camping is a relatively inexpensive way for families and individuals to connect and engage with the outdoors and for that reason, the County is considering an expansion to its camping program. Currently there are 142 sites within Bunker Hills and Rice Creek Chain of Lakes campgrounds and eight primitive sites along the Rum and Mississippi River's for overnight camping while canoeing or kayaking the rivers. To be more inclusive, the County is proposing to expand its camping facilities, not only to add more campsites to the system, but to also add alternate camping accommodations, such as yurts and tent platforms, as well as additional camper cabins. These alternate accommodations will provide an opportunity for everyone to participate, whether they are seasoned campers or not. Another proposed redevelopment project includes redeveloping Camp Salie at Martin Island Linwood Lakes Regional Park to create a more user-friendly group camp facility with additional amenities. Recent public engagement efforts clearly support the need to expand the Anoka County's camping program.

Based on the community engagement results, the County would like to provide other additional unique recreational destination opportunities that are free to the public. One type is interactive water features which provide a tactile way to engage the senses for learning and enjoyment. Everyone is drawn to water, especially children and it is a relatively clean and appealing play material. Children and adults can learn about cause and effect and provides them a chance to create their own fun and explore.

Another example of a unique recreation feature is a destination playground. This type of playground is more of a playground complex than a simple playground. It offers unique and accessible play equipment that will appeal to a broad range of users and include equipment for children and toddlers, older children and teenagers, adults and seniors and include elements and features for children and people with visible and non-visible disabilities.

Another feature the County is considering is an aerial adventure park. This includes climbing apparatus

combined with zip lines and ropes courses to provide an aerial adventure playground. Some features are ground level, but most are elevated to challenge users physically and mentally. There are typically a variety of circuits that vary in difficulty, so everyone can enjoy a unique outdoor adventure.

Over the last several years, the County has been developing design standards for park facilities and amenities within the park system to provide a cohesive aesthetic context across the County. Design standards were initiated to create an aesthetically pleasing, safe, functional, efficient, sustainable and cost-effective standard for park facilities. The design standards cover materials, aesthetics, construction and maintenance. Elements with design standards can be as small as a street sign to as large as a new building. Some of these standards include using the same style of picnic shelter with varying sizes depending on demand or the construction standards for park roads and trails.



## UNIQUE RECREATION FEATURES

Several unique recreation features have been established in the Anoka County Parks System: Bunker Beach Water Park, Chomonix Golf Course, Wargo Nature Center, Banfill-Locke Center for the Arts, the Bunker Hills Archery Complex, and Bunker Park Stable. Each of the facilities are heavily used and benefit from on-going service enhancements to build customer expectations and use.

### BUNKER BEACH WATER PARK

Bunker Beach Water Park is Minnesota's largest outdoor aquatic facility. Attractions include: the first wave pool built in the state, six towering waterslides, a 900-foot lazy river, a leisure pool with climbing wall, a zero-depth entry pool with play structures, a creative sand play area, and private cabanas for rent. Bunker Beach gives the residents in the region a low cost positive opportunity to experience a premier water park without the expense of long distance travel.

The water park is located in Bunker Hills Regional Park and draws an average annual attendance of 113,000 guests. Bunker Beach was originally

constructed in 1988 as a wave pool facility. Since then, the water park has expanded and added numerous features and attractions. to make the current facility as it is today.

Annual assessments of current national trends and technologies are incorporated into the facility planning process. Recently, the Parks Committee approved the department's 10-year capital replacement plan, which will help fund continued water park enhancements. Upgrades identified in the replacement plan include the rehabilitation of the parking lot, wave pool upgrades, and refurbishment of water slides and play structure. A

comprehensive feasibility analysis will be completed by 2019 to address asset preservation and budget numbers to maintain the aging water park infrastructure amenities. The analysis will prioritize projects, develop a capital improvement project timeline, and identify costs. The identified projects will provide new and enhanced amenities at Bunker Beach Water Park, while the County reviews recreational trends and demographic changes that will determine the development and enhancement needs to provide a safe modern and appealing water park.

### JOSEPH E. WARGO NATURE CENTER

The Joseph E. Wargo Nature Center is located in the Rice Creek Chain of Lakes Park Reserve and hosts an interpretive education center nestled on a beautiful peninsula on George Watch Lake. The nature center currently serves as the hub for environmental education, outdoor recreation programming, cultural historical learning at "Heritage Lab," and off-site programming through the Wildlife Outreach program. In 2017, Anoka County Program Services served over 40,000 people through its organized programs, events, and drop-in visitors.

In 2015, a master plan for Wargo Nature Center was developed. The master plan identified the vision for the nature center and includes goals, strategies, and physical improvements needed to support a phased implementation approach. This approach is intended to be flexible, so goals can be implemented as partnerships or funding opportunities arise.

Since the development of the master plan in 2015, a few identified projects have been implemented. One such project partnered Anoka County, Connexus Energy, the YMCA of the Greater Twin Cities, and the University of Minnesota - School of Architecture

to create eight new learning stations at Heritage Lab. Another project created a new pedestrian entrance walk to the nature center. As part of this project, repurposed and recycled materials were used and funded through the County's Recycling and Resource Solutions Department.

Future capital improvement projects include the rehabilitation of the entrance road and parking lot, the addition of a bike lane along the entrance road for easier access to the nature center, an extension of the boardwalk into George Watch Lake, the construction of an observation learning platform, and updates to the interpretive and informational displays.

Future programming goals include better serving core program audiences and expanding to new diverse program audiences by expanding outreach programs, enhancing collaborations with local schools, and improving the visitor and program participant feedback program; increasing awareness of Wargo Nature Center and its programs by improving Wargo's digital presence on social media, improved marketing, and expanding cross marketing with like organizations; and improving the drop-in visitor experience.



### BUNKER PARK STABLE

Bunker Park Stable, located at Bunker Hills Regional Park, offers a variety of unique horse riding experiences that are second to none in the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area. Since the 1970's, Bunker Park Stable has provided a full-range of riding programs and activities to the public no matter the ability or skill level. The Bunker Park Stable facility is provided through a partnership between the county and the concessionaire.

Bunker Park Stable was redeveloped in 2001 and includes a new horse barn, indoor riding arena, picnic area and site amenities. On-going maintenance and redevelopment will be continually assessed as part of the overall park planning and operations process.

The community response to the redevelopment has been excellent. There has been an increase in demand for educational programming in the areas of group and private lessons. The concessionaire offers a variety of services and unique programs such as Special Olympics programs, therapeutic programs, trail and pony rides, hay and sleigh rides, education programs, scouting badges, facility and rental programs, riding lessons, and camps.

These horse related services and programs add a unique dimension to Bunker Hills Regional Park that truly make the park a destination experience.





#### BANFILL-LOCKE TAVERN

The historical Banfill-Locke Tavern is located in Manomin Park (part of the Rice Creek West Regional Trail), at the scenic confluence of the Mississippi River and Rice Creek, in the city of Fridley. The 1847 structure was known as the Banfill "Tavern" and served as a trading post and stop along the Red River Ox Cart Trail. Anoka County purchased the building in 1967 and it became the first structure in Anoka County to be listed on the U.S. National Register of Historical Places, winning designation in 1976.

In 1988, the building became the Banfill-Locke Center for the Arts (BLCA), a 501(c)(3) nonprofit. While the BLCA occupies the building and cares for the gardens, the building and surrounding park land remains in the care of Anoka County. For 30 years, this public/private partnership has been a wellspring for the community, providing enrichment, enjoyment, opportunity, and education through the arts.

The BLCA is guided by a 14-member volunteer board of directors who retain an Executive Director to plan and implement all of the art programming and services. The BLCA depends on a wide-variety of volunteers to help with registrations, membership, greeting visitors, operating the gift shop, and maintaining the gardens. Programming includes: art exhibitions, monthly reading series, Family Art Sundays, Artist and Writer-in- Residence, weekly art and writing practice groups, an arts library, gift shop, Art at Rice Creek Festival, and Holiday Gift mART. Annually the BLCA has 8,000 visitors, eleven exhibits, and more than 50 class offerings.

Donations and memberships support a variety of exhibitions, literary programs, free family programs, and special events. Future infrastructure improvements will be identified in a future Facility Assessment Report. State and regional historical renovations grants will be pursued to make the needed infrastructure enhancements, in accordance with the U.S. National Register of Historic Places guidelines.



#### CHOMONIX GOLF COURSE

Chomonix Golf Course is an 18-hole, Par 72, 6,221-yard public course located in the Rice Creek Chain of Lakes Park Reserve. As one of the most scenic courses in the Twin Cities, Chomonix averages 25,000 golf rounds annually. The golf course was originally a private, nine-hole course and was intended to have single family housing surrounding the course, but in 1987, Anoka County purchased the land from the developer and expanded it to an 18-hole public course.

Since purchasing the course, Anoka County has made many additions and upgrades to improve the safety, playability, and overall aesthetics of the course. Some of the most significant improvements the County has completed includes: reconstructing

four fairways, adding seven new ponds, adding nine forward tee boxes, upgrading eight tee boxes, installing a new irrigation system, adding a banquet room and offices to the clubhouse, creating a new driving range building and amenities, adding rain shelters, paving numerous cart paths, rebuilding all sand traps, landscaping several areas throughout the course, and repaving the entrance road and parking lot. The most recent capital improvement included the renovation of the #6 and #17 greens in 2016 to meet USGA standards.

In 2012, the Parks Department updated the Chomonix Golf Course Master Plan. The master plan was designed to provide a framework for course improvements to provide the

highest level of service and amenities to golfers. Future improvements include clubhouse enhancements, correcting drainage issues on the course, increasing tee box size to USGA standards, paving additional cart paths, aerators for the ponds, hazardous tree removal and installation of ornamental trees and planting areas to highlight certain areas on the course. The master plan also discusses the overall course objectives and individual tee, fairway and green objectives, clubhouse enhancements that include siding replacement and restroom upgrades. Maintaining capital assets and increasing the number of rounds played annually will be the primary focus for the next 10 years.

#### BUNKER HILLS ARCHERY COMPLEX

Anoka County has partnered with Rapids Archery Club for over 30 years. The range as it stands today was opened in 2001. Anoka County and Rapids Archery Club jointly promote the sport of archery through providing state-of-the-art facilities and programs for the public. The partnership shares common interests of providing family oriented experiences that promotes archery as a sport the entire family can enjoy together.

Members of the public can enjoy a variety of archery interests including bowhunting, 3-D, field, and target archery, both Olympic and National Field Archery Association style. Rapids Archery Club hosts many archery tournaments each year and offer a variety of archery instruction classes and programs that cater to all levels of skill and interest.

The facilities include an 8,400 square

foot clubhouse with a large 20-yard indoor range, full service kitchen area, restrooms, and a large training room. In addition, the outdoor facilities include five outdoor ranges comprised of three walk-through loops (totaling 56 diverse shooting stations), a large field tip range, and a unique broad-head range. Redevelopment will be continually examined as part of the overall park planning process.

The archery center is heavily used by the public and local schools on a regular basis and over 5,500 people participate in activities offered through Rapids Archery Club each year. The location of the facility also has been well received as it limits any conflicts with other park uses. The County is anticipating completing a master plan for the complex within the next few years. This will outline improvements and redevelopment required to keep the facility in top condition.





# BUILDING THE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

Parks and recreation trends are consistently evolving and changing. Many core principles of land stewardship and conservation remain the same, however, the customer experience continues to shift with changing demographics and societal influences. To provide the best experience to park guests, key areas of focus will be on accessibility and equity, education and interpretation, recreation services, marketing, and awareness and in-park visitor services.

## ACCESSIBILITY AND EQUITY

The parks continue to be well attended, however, studies have shown that demographics of park visitors are not truly representative of the overall community. Studies conducted by the Metropolitan Council have shown, demographic groups based on age, ethnicity and disabilities do not use the park system consistently. Barriers to participation have been identified. According to a 2014 study, “Overwhelmingly, participants identified proximity and transportation as the greatest contributors to regional park visitation. Unexpectedly, the lack of awareness was noted as a barrier 2.5 times more frequently than transportation constraints.”

Additional barriers that were identified, in order, are:

1. Lack of Awareness
2. Time
3. Fear/Safety Concerns
4. Lack of Transportation Options
5. Language Barrier
6. Weather
7. Cost
8. Map Challenges
9. No Companions
10. Cultural or Religious Insensitivity/ Discrimination

The Anoka County Parks Department will continue to work with community groups and partners to reduce barriers to connecting people with the outdoors. Outreach is being conducted to work with diverse groups and further identify where barriers exist in the park system along with solutions. The Communication and Outreach Specialist position will continue to play a strong role in keeping these issues in the forefront for future planning and implementation of park services and facilities.

*“Being able to enjoy the parks and trails through an interconnected, bike and pedestrian friendly system should be a key area to focus on in the future.”*

*Survey Response*

## EDUCATION AND INTERPRETATION

Parks are filled with unique historical and natural features that provide educational and interpretive opportunities. Historically, the Anoka County parks have not focused heavily on in-park interpretive displays. Public feedback surveys have shown an increased desire to expand educational opportunities within the parks. Park staff has begun developing a consistent interpretive program for each of the parks. This program will focus on using traditional signage and educational locations, but also technology-based applications that can identify natural

and historic features using GPS or other convenient technology that park users have access to.

Another area to enhance customer experience and education is through partnerships with agencies to promote the benefits of parks and recreation. Health agencies are continuing to identify the importance of recreation and time spent in nature to reduce stress, improve physical health, and combat mental illness. Collaborating with health agencies, such as local hospitals, provides a new audience

to enhance quality of life within the county. Another key collaboration is educating on the economic impacts that parks have within the community. Adding information regarding economic benefits throughout the park system and publications will help enhance the user experience but also serve as an advocacy program for the parks and county operations. The benefits can be highlighted and attract visitors using additional partnerships with convention and visitor bureaus and chamber of commerce groups.

## PROGRAMMING SERVICES

Programming services are a key reason why people choose to visit a specific park destination. Currently, Wargo Nature Center provides the majority of recreation programs within the county. The ability to offer more programs and to equitably distribute the programs throughout the county will require additional facilities to house staff, equipment, and program resources. As the public continues to request more programs and events, an increase in the number of full-time staff dedicated to this will be necessary. With additional staff able to plan, supervise, train and coordinate programs in various locations throughout the county, more guests will be able to experience the

unique amenities that are found within the park system. Additional resources that can be added will also assist in enhancing the quality as well as the quantity of programs throughout the county. Park use trends continue to show guests are looking to try new experiences without owning all the equipment that may be necessary to introduce them. Program services that can offer these opportunities will need to be explored as well as identifying ways to fund the personnel and equipment needed.

While recreation and educational programs are highly desired, the request for trails and playgrounds are the

highest rated amenities for enhancing customer experiences. Access to these two amenities will be needed as the park system continues to evolve. Various types of trail opportunities in the appropriate parks will need to be assessed to offer the widest variety of services. Requests for destination playgrounds have ranked highly in visitor surveys. These playgrounds are typically larger with unique play elements and accessible surfacing. As playgrounds are needing to be replaced it will be important to evaluate if these destination playgrounds would better serve guests for that specific location.

**IN-PARK VISITOR SERVICES**

The Park Services Unit has a specific focus to provide an enjoyable experience for all guests through education and enforcement. Park service staff are available throughout the park system to answer questions from park users about recreation facilities, programs, resources, and park ordinances. As visitation numbers increase, additional park service staff, as well as maintenance personnel, will be necessary to provide the service level customers are requesting. Staffing levels by location and hours of operation will be continually evaluated to ensure a clean and safe visit. Culturally diverse focus groups listed fear and safety as a concern for not visiting the regional park system. To further increase the visitation of culturally diverse groups, in-park services will focus on access to staff, visual presence, and continuing to provide a safe environment.

Perceived Barriers to Regional Park Use Among Select Communities of Color - 2014

African American Focus Groups	African Immigrant Focus Groups	Asian Immigrant/ Asian American Focus Groups	Hispanic/ Latino/ Latina Focus Groups	Diverse Composition Focus Groups
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Violent crime: get jumped, shot</li> <li>Run over</li> <li>Accidents</li> <li>Behavior of Others</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Violent crime: rape, killing, stabbing</li> <li>Kids get lost</li> <li>Drowning</li> <li>Being alone</li> <li>Too big=lost</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Snakes</li> <li>Bees</li> <li>Water-viruses</li> <li>Too big= get lost</li> <li>Hunters</li> <li>Being Alone</li> <li>Behavior of others (drinking)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Water-viruses</li> <li>Getting lost</li> <li>Crime</li> <li>Animals</li> <li>People</li> <li>Getting hurt</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Violent crime: kidnapping</li> <li>Too big= get lost</li> <li>Kids unsafe</li> <li>Strangers</li> <li>Crazy people</li> <li>Behavior of others (drinking, loitering)</li> <li>Animals</li> </ul>

Metropolitan Council, March 2014

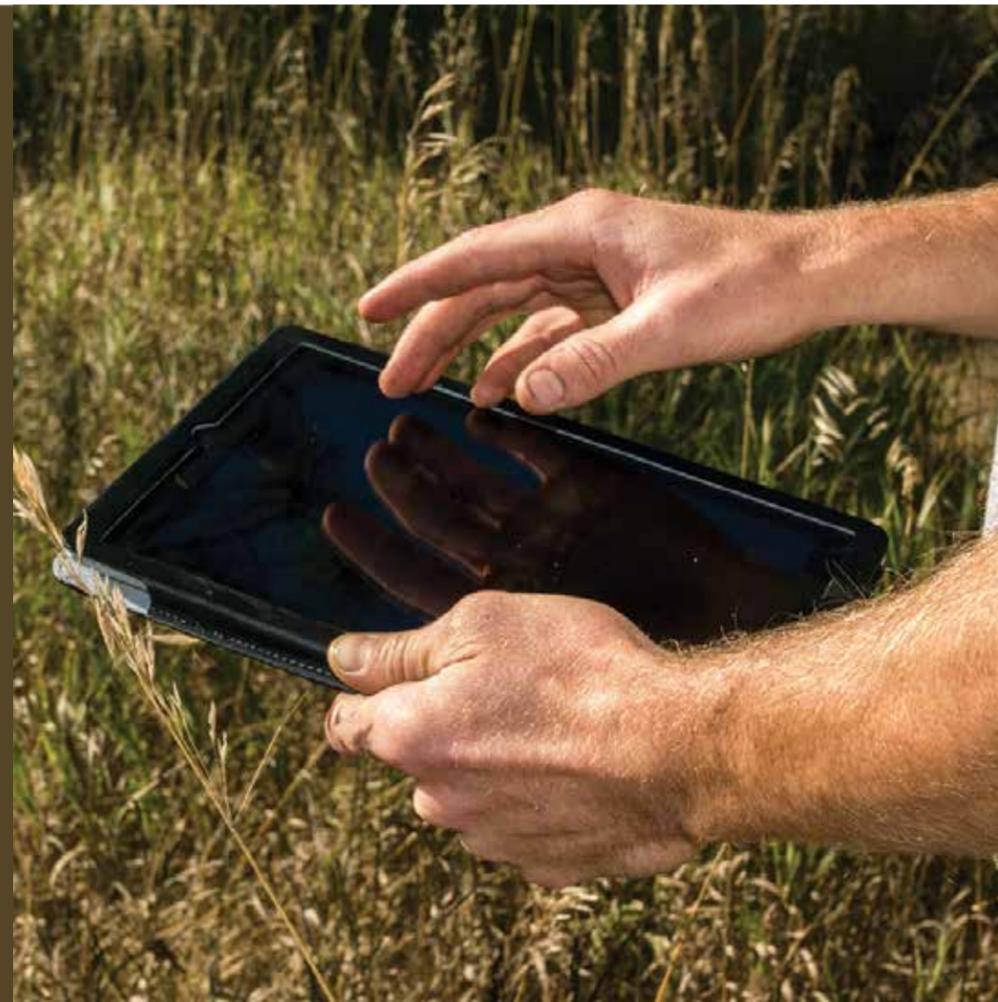


**SUSTAINING THE PARKS SYSTEM**

An integrated approach to sustaining the Anoka County Parks and Recreation System while providing for the park and trail needs of the county and surrounding region is essential to allow Anoka County's park legacy to thrive and benefit future generations. This achievement is a product of planning and using available resources to provide quality and sustainable facilities and services that support and continually improve the park system. The guiding principles as identified in Chapter Two of this plan are the basis for decisions and actions that sustain the parks system.

**MARKETING AND AWARENESS**

Even with the high use numbers for the park system, the number one barrier identified for visiting a regional park was lack of awareness of the regional parks and trails. Marketing and engagement efforts will need to play a large role in communicating the experience that is available within the park system. Ideally, guests will be able to have immersive experiences using technology and virtual tours to learn about the various amenities and park uses available prior to their visit. Expanding marketing efforts through all forms of digital and print media, as well as, interpersonal interaction will help to increase awareness of the park system. Trends in communicating with guests on a frequent and consistent basis will be constantly evaluated and staff will ensure that the county remains committed to sharing the benefits of visiting the parks, trails, and recreational amenities.



**EFFECTIVE USE OF RESOURCES**

Anoka County is currently enhancing its asset management practices to promote effective use of financial and physical resources and to develop a proactive approach to managing its infrastructure assets. As part of this effort, the Parks and Recreation Department, along with the County's Fleet Management, Facilities Management and Construction departments, and Risk Management is developing a system-wide asset management program that includes the following primary systems:

- Buildings (includes restrooms, picnic shelters, gate houses, shade shelters)
- Bituminous Surfaces (includes roads, parking lots, and trails)
- Fleet and Equipment
- Park Amenities
- Special Features (Bunker Beach and Chomonix Golf Course)
- Storm Water Treatment Systems
- Wells and Septic Systems
- Utilities and Irrigation
- Bridges and Culverts

- Urban Forestry and Horticulture  
The goal of the County's Asset Management Program is to shift from reactive to proactive planning and management of its infrastructure assets. The strategic priorities include the following:
- Gain a better understanding of the current state of the infrastructure and its future needs
- Proactively identify the asset replacement and rehabilitation needs and plan the budget and resources accordingly
- Understand the probability and consequence of failure of each asset so that the County can manage high risk assets before failure and to minimize the County's risk profile
- Minimize the life cycle cost by incorporating the latest technological advances in infrastructure to develop efficient and effective preservation and restoration strategies
- Develop a consistent and defensible methodology for prioritizing work and budget expenditure

- Focus on high benefit-to-cost ratio to ensure the budget is spent most effectively
- Be transparent by involving the County Board and the public in the development of the asset management program and the associated decisions

The asset management program methodology includes working closely with other County departments to accomplish the following:

- Inventory and assess condition of individual assets
- Estimate replacement cost of each asset
- Define preservation and restoration costs and schedules
- Determine the desired service levels
- Understand the financial needs and other resources required to sustain the delivery of services
- Optimize and prioritize the needs based on risk

SYSTEM-WIDE MANAGEMENT STANDARDS:

The establishment of qualitative and quantitative maintenance standards is necessary to clearly and accurately describe how an area, resource or facility should function, appear, and be sustained after a maintenance task, or series of tasks has been performed. The standards reflect an exceptional level of maintenance for various tasks that are carried out daily, weekly, monthly, and annually. The maintenance standards established for the Anoka County Parks and Recreation System are based upon several interrelated factors and variables that include the following:

- Public health, safety and security
- Type and function of facility
- Structural and mechanical integrity
- Visibility to public and aesthetic considerations
- Ecological considerations
- Level of use by the public
- Park visitor perceptions
- Available maintenance resources

The maintenance standards are also aligned with the availability of financial, human, and capital resources, as allocated through the budgeting process, and as a matter of public policy formulation of the County Board.



\$1.3 Million  
Invested in Large  
Equipment



Centralized Fleet  
Management System



Staffing to Meet  
Demands and  
Service Levels

EFFICIENT EQUIPMENT AND SHARED RESOURCES:

Since 2009, Anoka County has invested approximately \$1.3 million into a well-needed large equipment replacement program to upgrade and replace an aging fleet. The last remaining piece that needs to be replaced is the Piston Bully ski trail groomer. Over the next ten-years, a large equipment replacement schedule will again need to be implemented, starting with the equipment that approaches the 10-year replacement threshold. It is anticipated that this will be financed through the County Capital Improvement Program and through future grants.

small engines. This program will cover all on-going preventative maintenance checks and services on all pieces of equipment in the Parks Department and it will also directly correlate with replacement schedules that will inform the capital improvement program budget process.

Lastly, maintenance staffing resources are currently being stretched to the limit to meet the public demand and delivery of quality services. Future growth will continue to increase the demand for personnel and equipment to sustain the quality of services that are currently provided. Therefore, it is necessary to continue to explore and develop innovative strategies, through the county budget process, to facilitate successful service delivery into the future by gradually considering increases to full time equivalent and seasonal staffing levels.

Part of asset management within the County includes a centralized, county-wide, Fleet Management Program. The Fleet Management Program is being led by the Anoka County Highway Department and is intended to efficiently inspect, maintain and recommend replacement schedules for all vehicles, capital equipment, and

*“Park patrons and county residents alike benefit from the interdepartmental sharing of vehicles and equipment, which reduces cost and allows timely delivery of urgent services and repairs throughout Anoka County. Additionally, the professional team at Anoka County Fleet Services tracks, maintains, and repairs everything from small lawnmowers to our largest pieces of equipment allowing us to remain on schedule and operate efficiently.”*

*Anders Oredson, Superintendent  
Parks Maintenance*

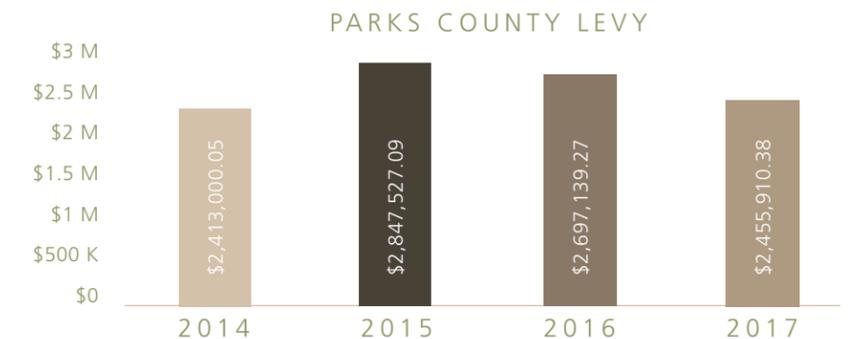
PARK SYSTEM INVESTMENT AND FUNDING

OPERATIONS AND MAINTENANCE

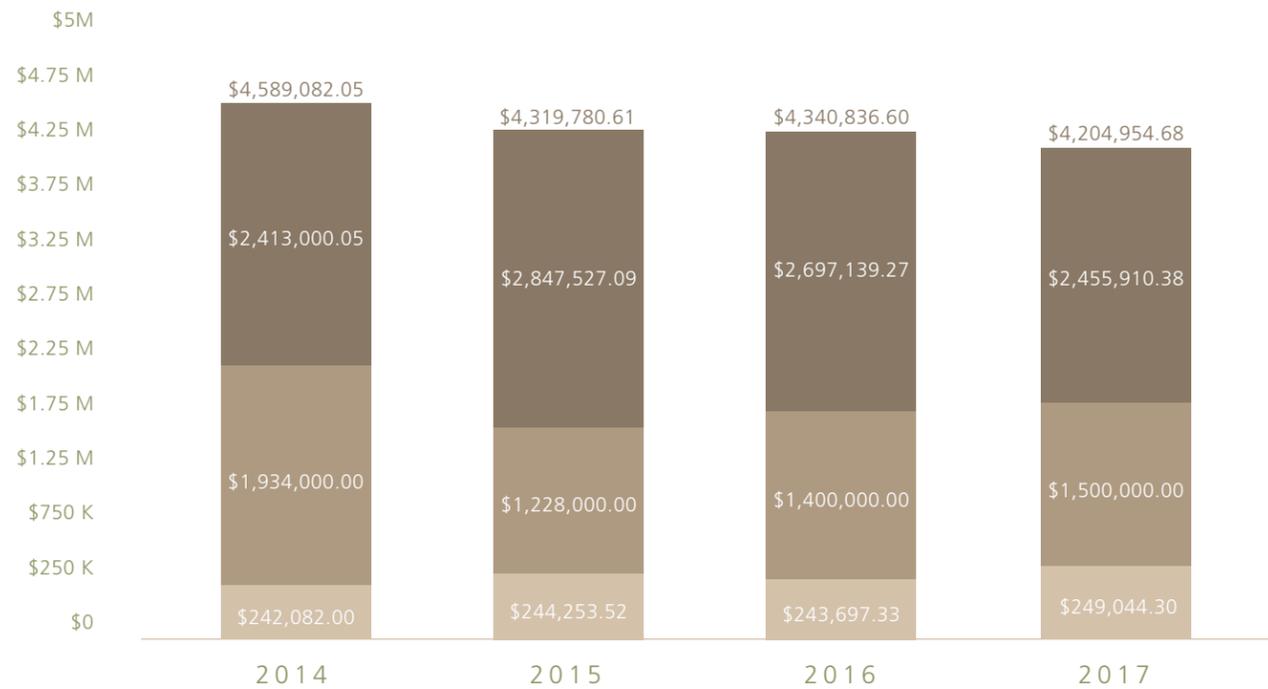
As the parks and recreation system continues to evolve and expand to meet the outdoor recreational needs of a steadily growing population, a strategic park operations funding plan is essential to effectively sustain the delivery of high quality services and to maintain and strengthen the current and future investment in infrastructure. In the last ten years, more than \$25 million has been invested into the park system and a projected \$35 million will occur over the next 15 years. In addition, over the past decade, there has been a steady increase in annual park visitation with over one million new visitors. This trend is anticipated to continue. Currently, the operational resources are stretched to their limit and need to be incrementally increased to effectively meet essential public service demands while continually improving the future of the parks and recreation system.



\$0.58 PER PARK VISITATION IN 2017



## ANOKA COUNTY PARKS GRANTS AND LEVY



Special attention must be given to the Regional Park Operations and Maintenance Grant Program that the State Legislature established in 1985 with the intent of funding 40% of the regional parks operation and maintenance costs. Unfortunately, these grants have seldom exceeded

10% of the regional park agency budgets. Lobbying efforts must be actively pursued by Anoka County and the other implementing agencies to increase this operations and maintenance funding for the regional park system to keep pace with escalating use and demand.

- - COUNTY LEVY
- - REGIONAL PARK GRANTS
- - OPERATION & MAINTENANCE GRANT

## OPERATIONS AND MAINTENANCE RESOURCES

The key funding sources for the on-going operations and maintenance of the parks system are provided for by various state, regional and county resources. The combination of these resources are needed for ongoing asset preservation, safe and effective park operations, and quality delivery of facilities and services. As the county looks forward to strengthening its ability to deliver operations and maintenance support services over the next decade, pursuit of the following funding sources will be critical to achieve success:

### State Level

- Regional Park Operations and Maintenance Grants (additional lobbying efforts needed to increase funding levels by up to 30%)
- Rehabilitation Grants (State Lottery-in-lieu-of Fund)

### County Level

- County levy (need incremental increases to keep pace with public demand)
- Use fees and charges
- Leases (U of MN, MRPA)
- Renewable resources (fuel wood, timber, solar, wind, biomass, geothermal)

### Other Resources

- Partnerships (Connexus Energy, Rapids Archery Club, Bunker Park Stables, YMCA, University of Minnesota, Master Gardeners, Minnesota Recreation and Park Association, Banfill Locke Center for the Arts, Coon Rapids Art Commission, and other philanthropic ventures)
- Volunteers & Donations
- Energy conservation credits

## CAPITAL INVESTMENT PLAN

Over the next decade, a strategic and realistic capital investment approach is needed to effectively maintain and improve the quality and function of the current park and trail system infrastructure, to accommodate new development and acquisition priorities, to protect and restore natural resources, and to strengthen the Department's overall delivery of park services. The following Capital Investment Plan components shall serve as the foundation for achieving this approach:

The Ten-Year Capital Improvements Program is a prioritized list of

capital projects that include, but are not limited to, new development, redevelopment, and natural resources restoration projects that are projected to be financed through various funding sources that are dependent upon legislative variables and county policy. This ten-year plan is carefully reviewed and adjusted annually to align with Anoka County's 5-Year Capital Improvements Program and Anoka County's legislative platform. The total projected capital investment needs under this ten-year plan are projected to be approximately \$29,000,000. Refer to the appendix for the implementation plan.

As part of the Ten-Year Capital Improvements Program, special financing attention must be given to the county parks such as Kordiak, Rum River South, Rum River North, Sandhill Crane Natural Area, and Coon Lake County Park. County Parks do not qualify for Regional Park capital investments or operations and maintenance funding sources. Funding proposals for infrastructure development and redevelopment must be pursued through Anoka County's Five-Year Capital Improvement Program process.

## FUNDING SOURCES

### Capital Investment Resources

Capital investment funding sources have come through a variety of agencies and programs including Federal, State, Regional, County, and local levels. These funds have been, and continue to be used for land acquisition, park development, facility rehabilitation, programs, and natural resources restoration. As the county looks forward to capital investment in the park system over the next ten years, upon concurrence of the County Board, the following funding sources shall be aggressively pursued:

### Federal Level

- National Park Service Grants – (Mississippi National River and Recreation Area)
- Federal Transportation Fund Grants – (Metropolitan Council)
- Federal Recreation Trail Grants – (Minnesota Department of Natural Resources)
- Land and Water Conservation Fund Grants – (Minnesota Department of Natural Resources)

### State Level

- Direct appropriation from State Legislature (State Bonding)
- Legislative-Citizens Commission on Minnesota Resources Grants
- Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council Grants
- Clean Water Fund
- Arts and Culture Fund
- Parks and Trails Legacy Fund
- Minnesota Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund
- Minnesota Department of Natural Resources Grants

### Metropolitan Council

- Regional Parks Capital Improvements Program (State and Metro Council Bonds)
- Regional Park Operations and Maintenance Grants (State General Fund)
- Regional Park and Trail Legacy Program (Legacy Fund)
- Park Acquisition Opportunity Fund Grants (Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund)

### Anoka County

- County 5-Year Capital Improvement Program
- County Levy
- User fees and charges
- County Highway Department (expansion of regional trail system)
- Recycling and Resources Solutions Grants
- Community Health Grants (SHIP)

### Local Sources

- Cities (typically matching funds for regional trail development)
- Anoka Conservation District
- Watershed Districts and Watershed Management Organizations

The Anoka County Parks Department stands ready to advance the strategic direction of the park system over the next decade to be a model that instills a sense of pride and enthusiasm among citizens, while furthering the standards of park excellence in Anoka County, the Metropolitan Region and throughout the State of Minnesota. This Park System Plan will strive to serve all citizens in a respectfully, innovative and fiscally responsible manner under the continued guidance and leadership of the Anoka County Board of Commissioners.



# APPENDIX

## IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Parks Department Office 763-324-3300

[anokacountyparks.com](http://anokacountyparks.com)

Joseph E. Wargo Nature Center	763-324-3350
Coon Rapids Dam Visitor Center	763-324-3320
Banfill-Locke Center for the Arts	763-574-1850
Chomonix Golf Course	763-324-3434
Bunker Park Stables	763-757-9445
Park Services	763-324-3360
Bunker Beach Water Park	763-324-3310

PARKS DIRECTOR  
Jeff Perry

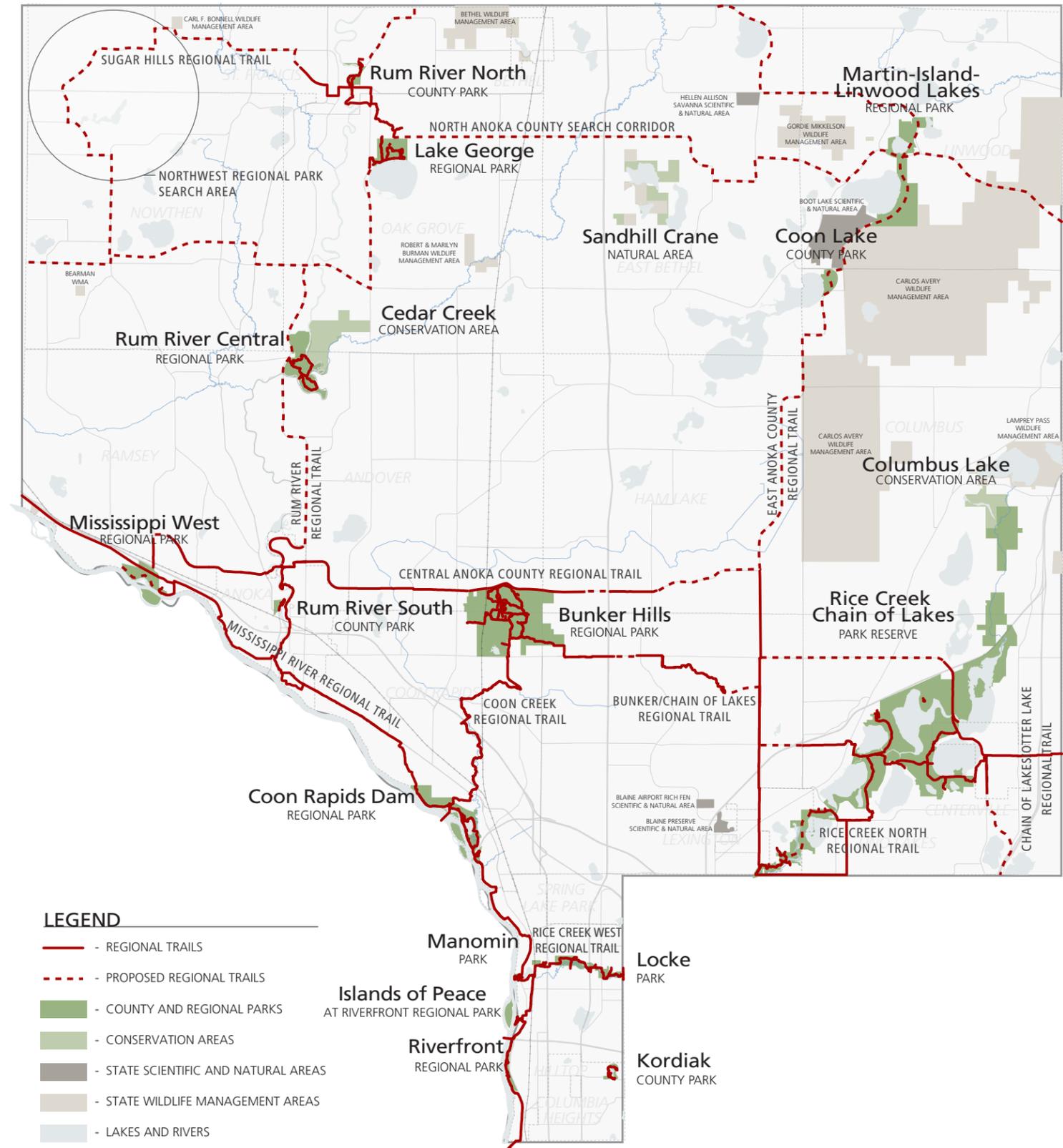
## ANOKA COUNTY PARKS MISSION STATEMENT

To positively impact the quality of life in Anoka County by providing parks, outdoor recreation, and leisure services for the public. Our mission encompasses protection of the natural environment, improving the health of citizens and supporting a strong local economy.

## ANOKA COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

- District 1 - Matt Look
- District 2 - Julie Braastad
- District 3 - Robyn West
- District 4 - Jim Kordiak
- District 5 - Mike Gamache
- District 6 - Rhonda Sivarajah
- District 7 - Scott Schulte

## APPENDIX: ANOKA COUNTY PARKS, TRAILS, AND STATE LANDS MAP



### Regional Parks

Regional parks most notably contain a diversity of nature-based resources, either naturally occurring or human-built and are typically 200-500 acres in size. Regional parks accommodate a variety of passive recreation activities. Regional Parks, with approved master plans in the Anoka County system include: Bunker Hills, Coon Rapids Dam, Lake George, Martin-Island-Linwood Lakes, Mississippi West, Riverfront, and Rum River Central.

The County has identified a search area for a new regional park in the northwest corner of the County, known as the Northwest Anoka County Regional Park Search area.

### Park Reserves

Park reserves, like regional parks, provide for a diversity of outdoor recreation activities. One major feature that distinguishes a park reserve from a regional park is its size. The minimum size for a park reserve is 1,000 acres. An additional characteristic of park reserves is that up to 20 percent of the park reserve can be developed for recreational use, with at least 80 percent of the park reserve to be managed as natural lands that protect the ecological functions of the native landscape. The only park reserve located in the Anoka County system is Rice Creek Chain of Lakes Park Reserve.

### Regional Trails

Regional trails are classified as:

- destination or greenway trails and
- linking trails.

Destination or greenway trails typically follow along routes with high-quality natural resources that make the trail itself a destination. Linking trails are predominately intended to provide connections between various Regional Parks System facilities, most notably regional parks or park reserves. Regional trails, with approved master plans, within the Anoka County system include: Bunker-Chain of Lakes, Central Anoka County, Chain of Lakes-Otter Lake, Coon Creek, East Anoka County, Mississippi River, Rice Creek North, Rice Creek West, Rum River and Sugar Hills.

The County has identified a search area for a new regional trail in the northern portion of the County known as the North Anoka County Regional Trail Search Corridor.

### State Recreation Lands within Anoka County

#### Wildlife Management Areas

Wildlife management areas (WMAs) are part of Minnesota's outdoor recreation system and are established to protect those lands and waters that have a high potential for wildlife production, public hunting, trapping, fishing, and other compatible recreational uses. WMAs within Anoka County include: Bearman, Bethel, Carl E. Bonnell, Carlos Avery, Gordie Mikkelson, Lamprey Pass and Robert and Marilyn Burman.

#### Scientific and Natural Areas

Scientific and Natural Areas (SNAs) are exceptional places where native plants and animals flourish; where rare species are protected; and where the DNR can study, Minnesota's fascinating natural and geologic features. SNAs within Anoka County include: Blaine Airport Rich Fen, Blain Preserve, Boot Lake and Helen Allison Savanna.

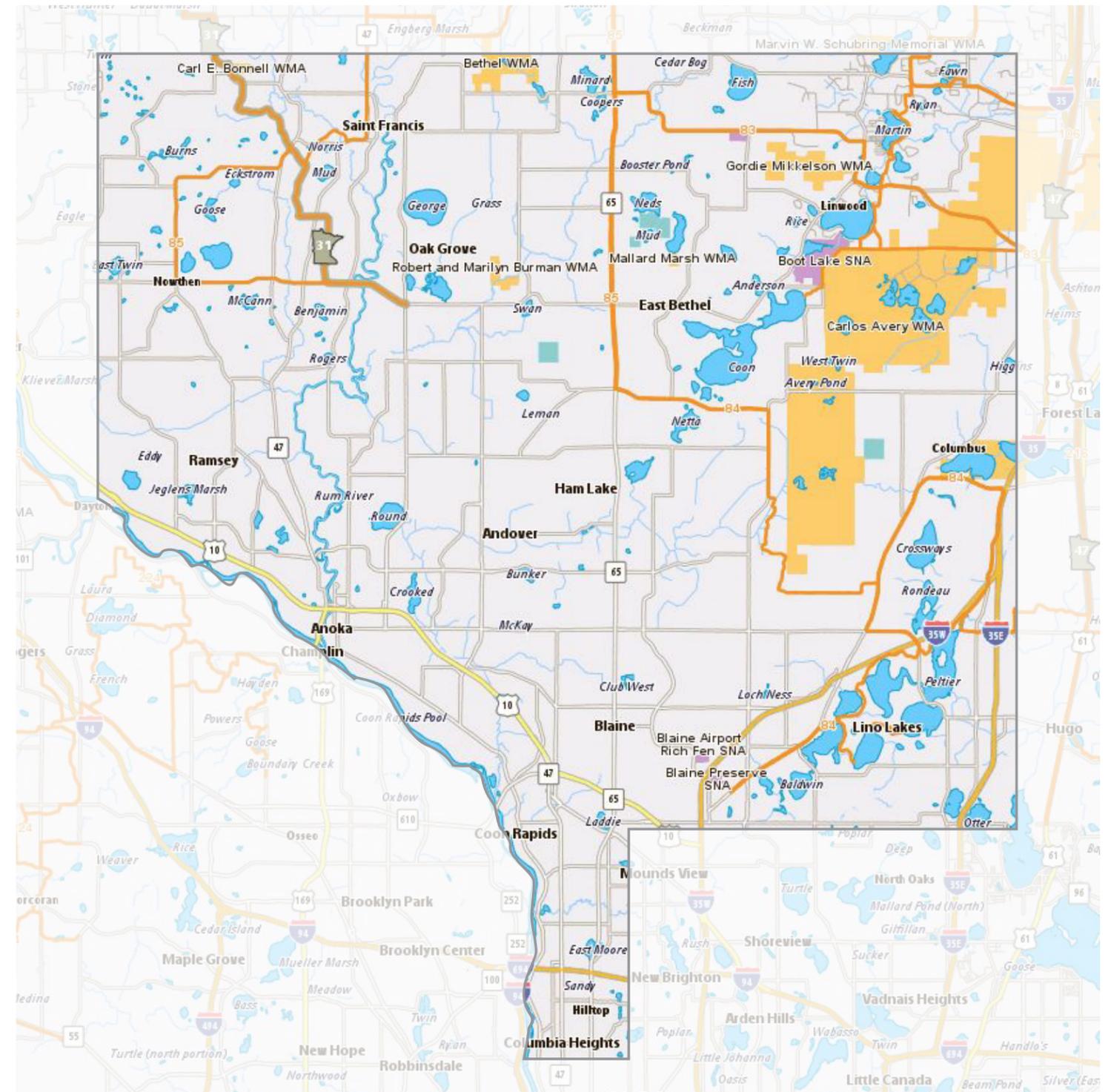
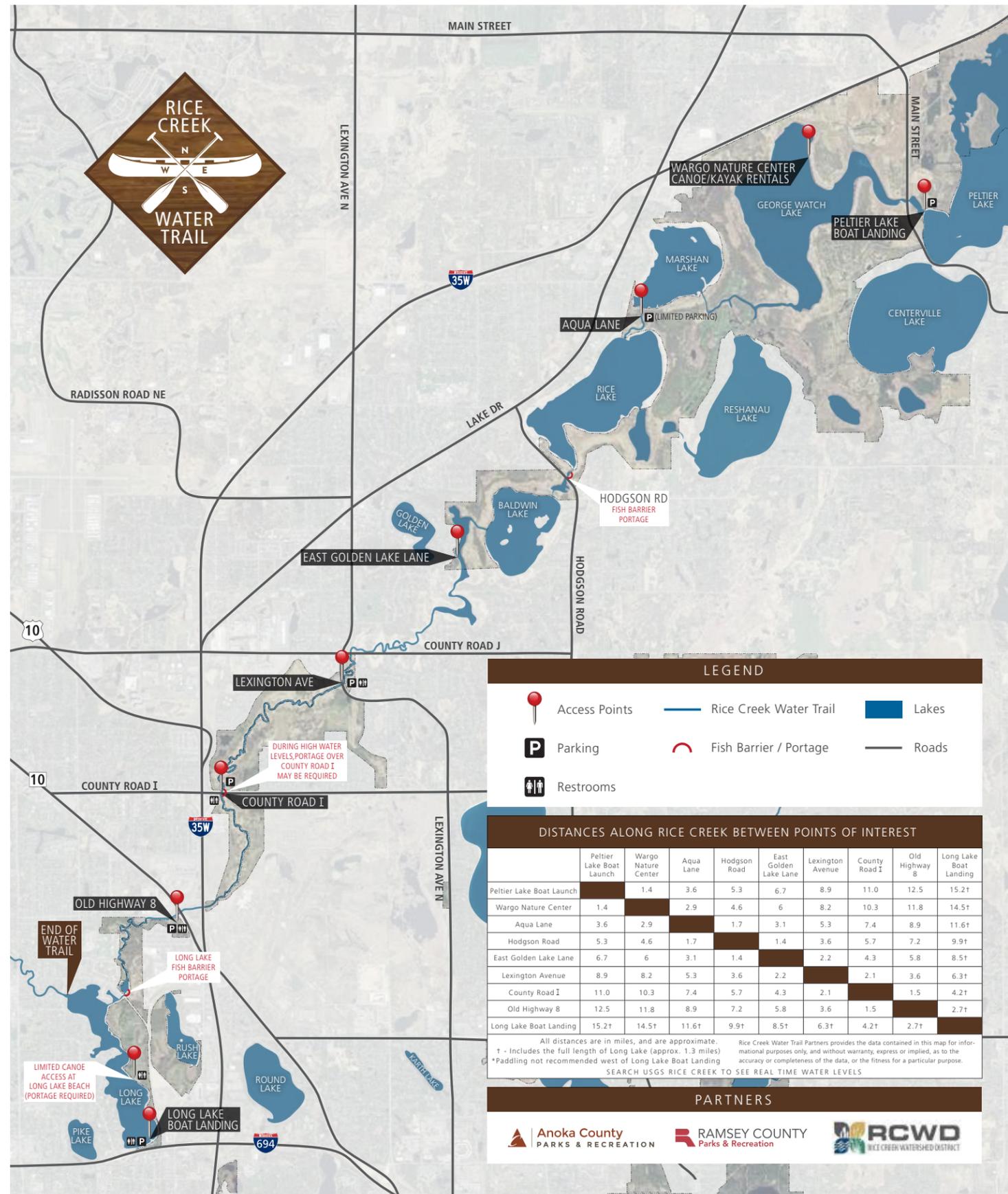


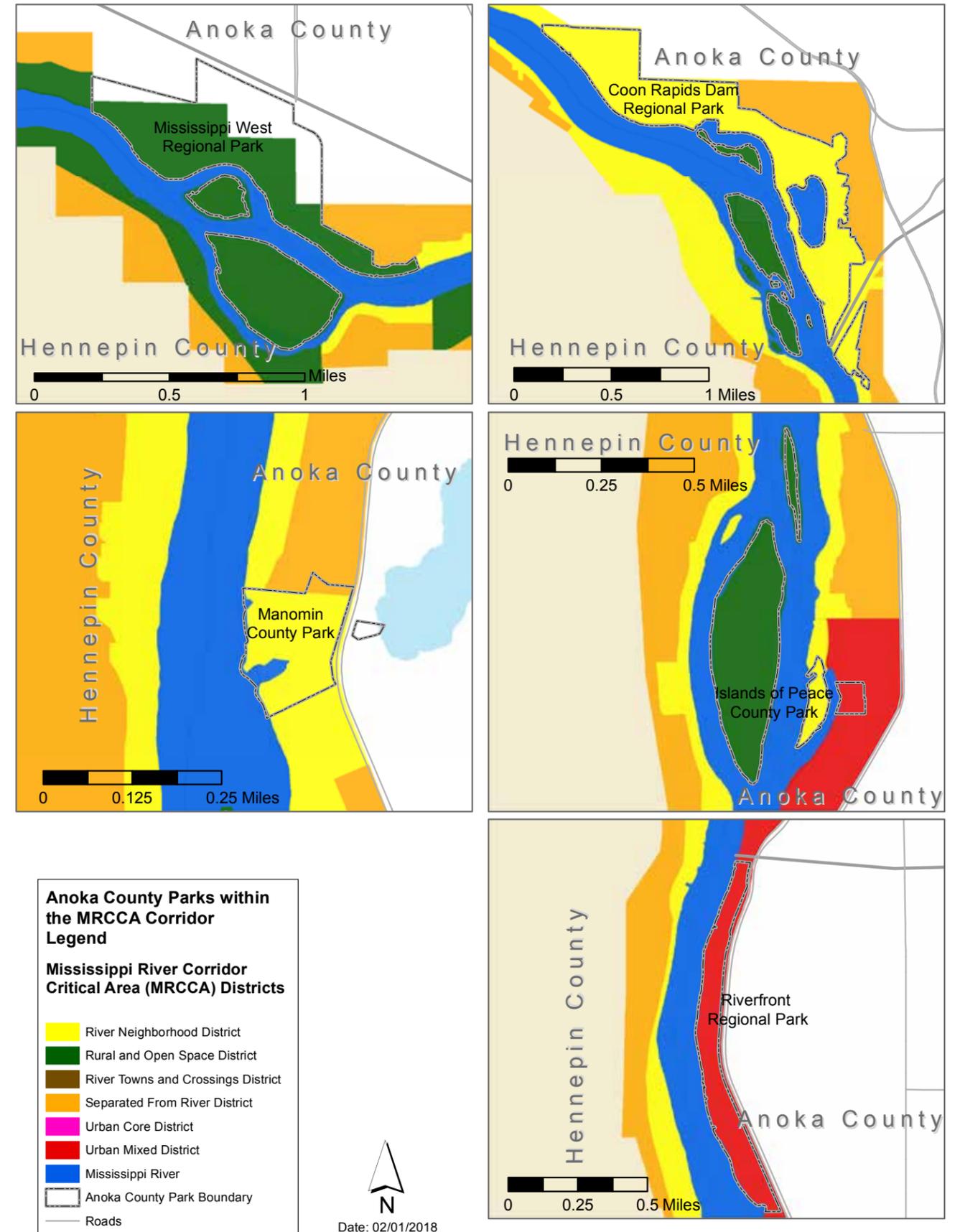
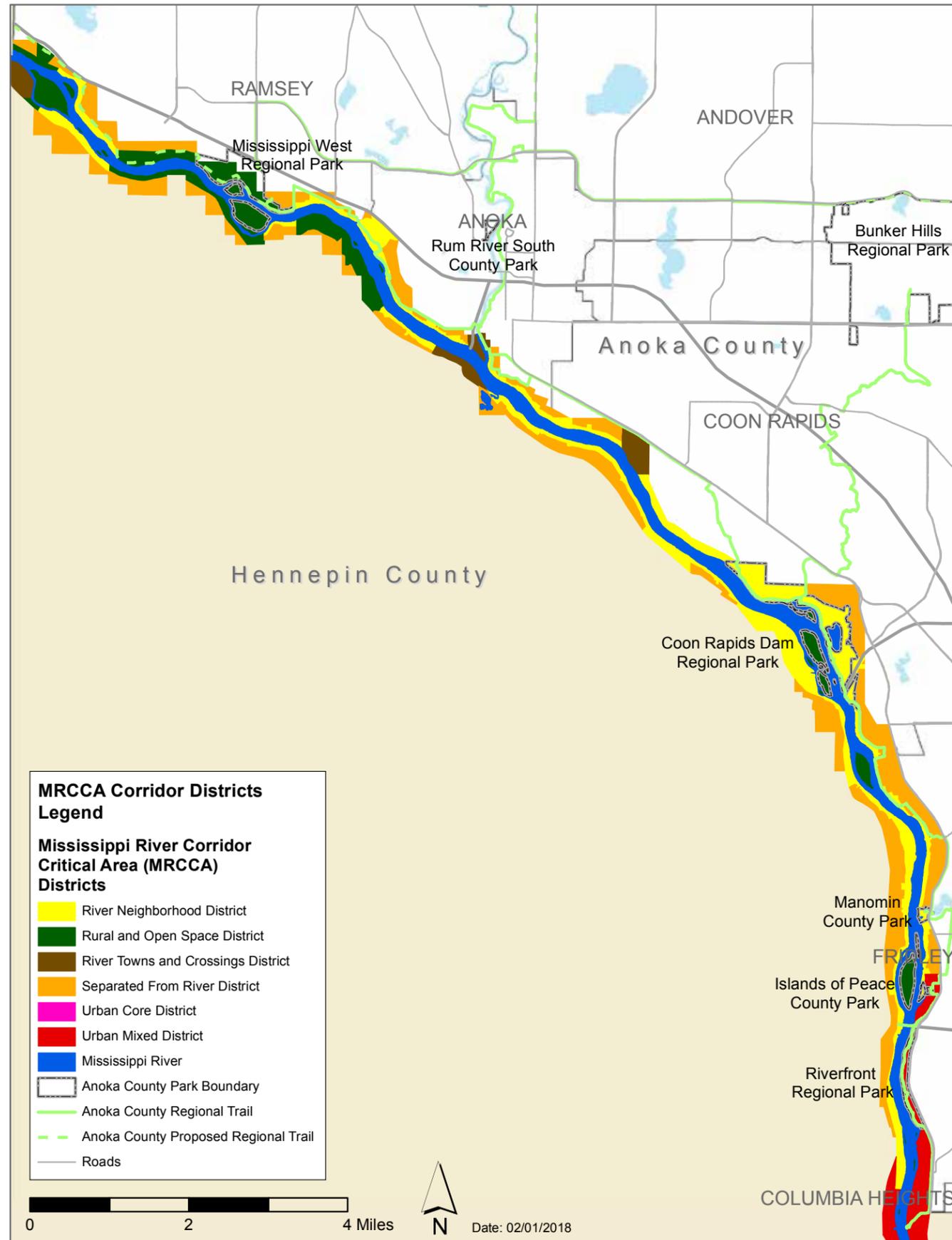
APPENDIX: 10 YEAR IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

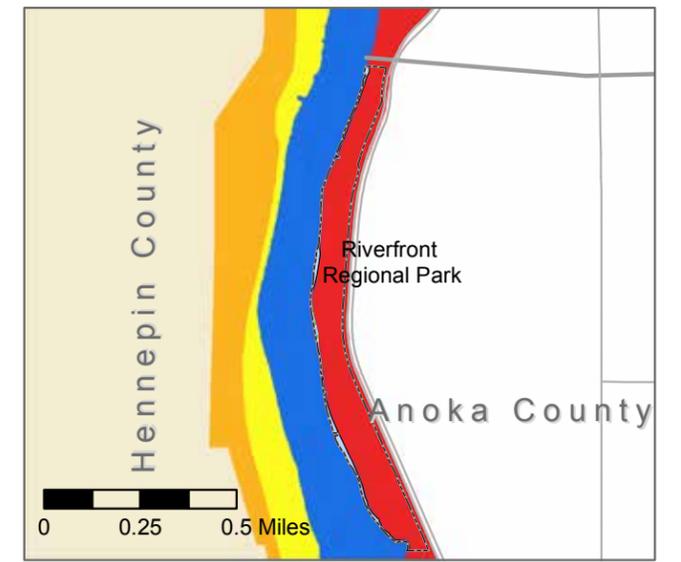
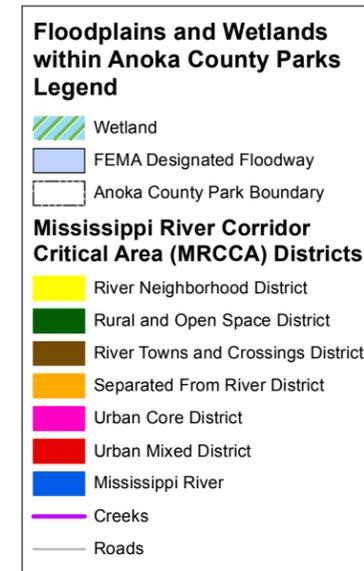
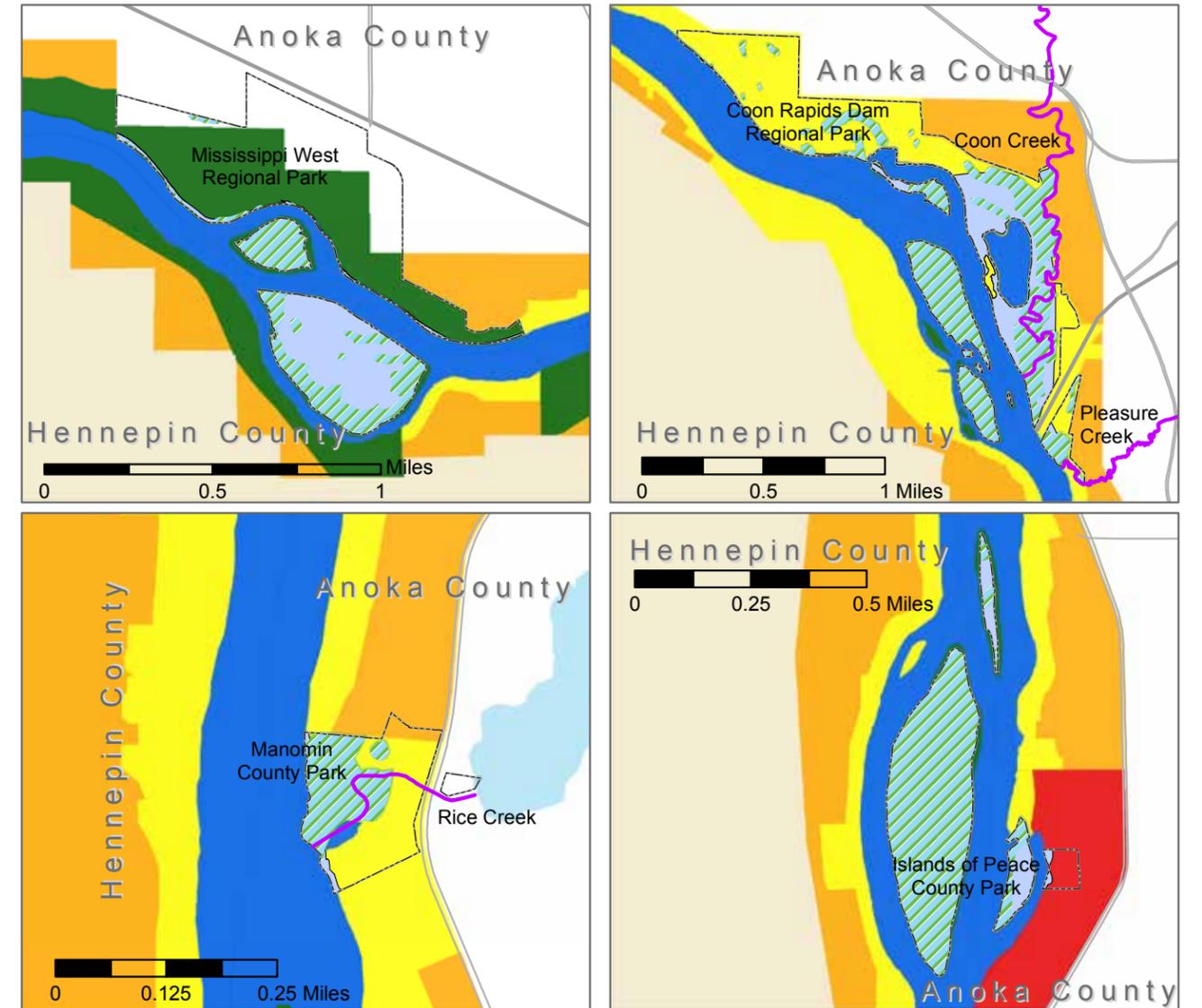
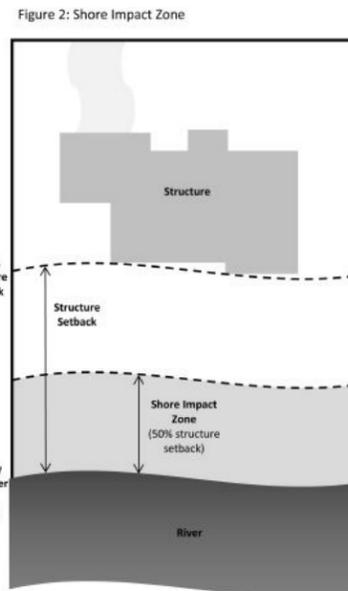
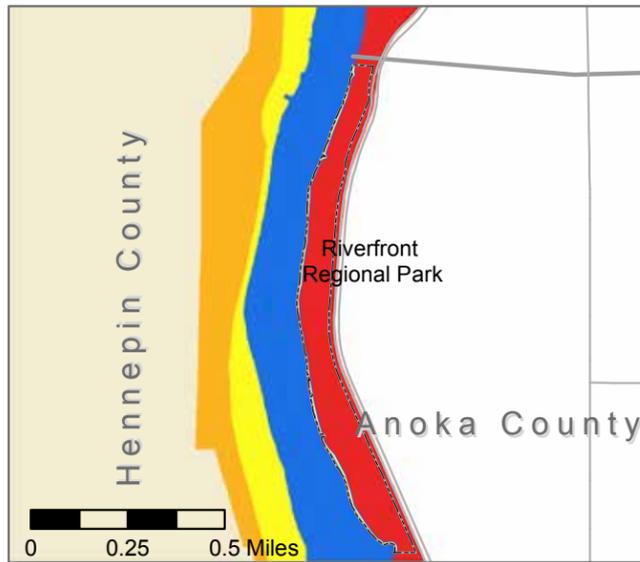
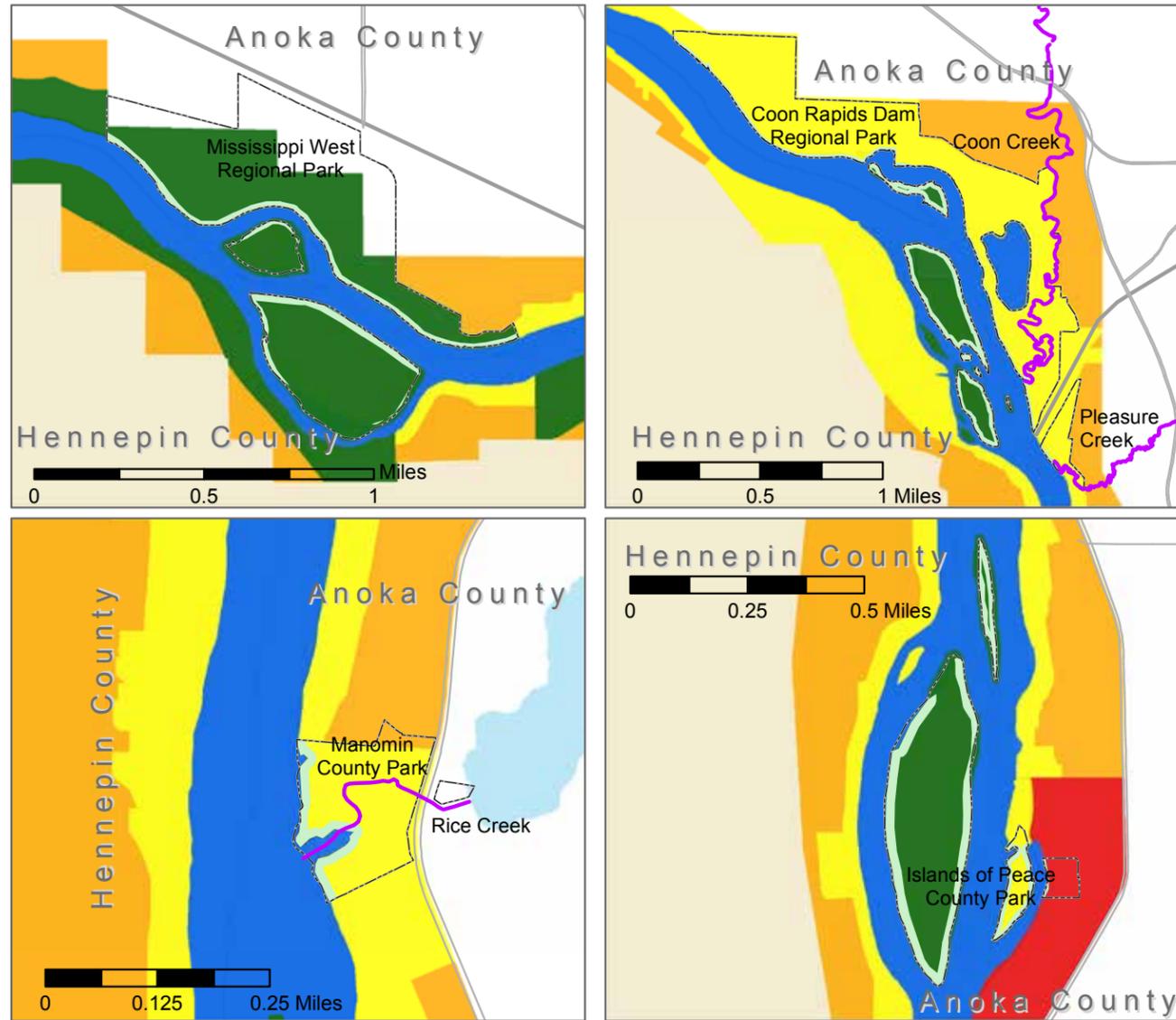
10 Year Capital Project Forecast

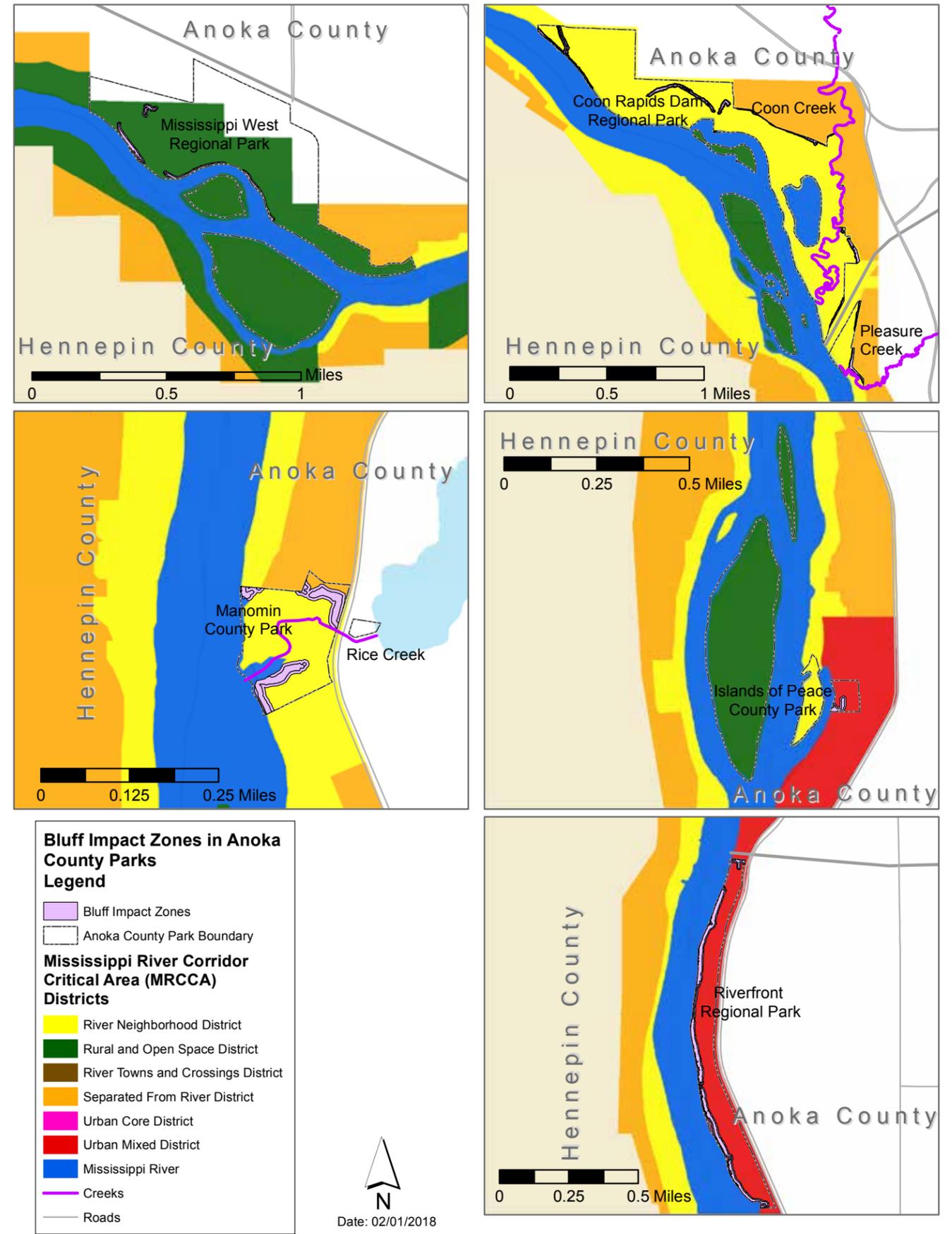
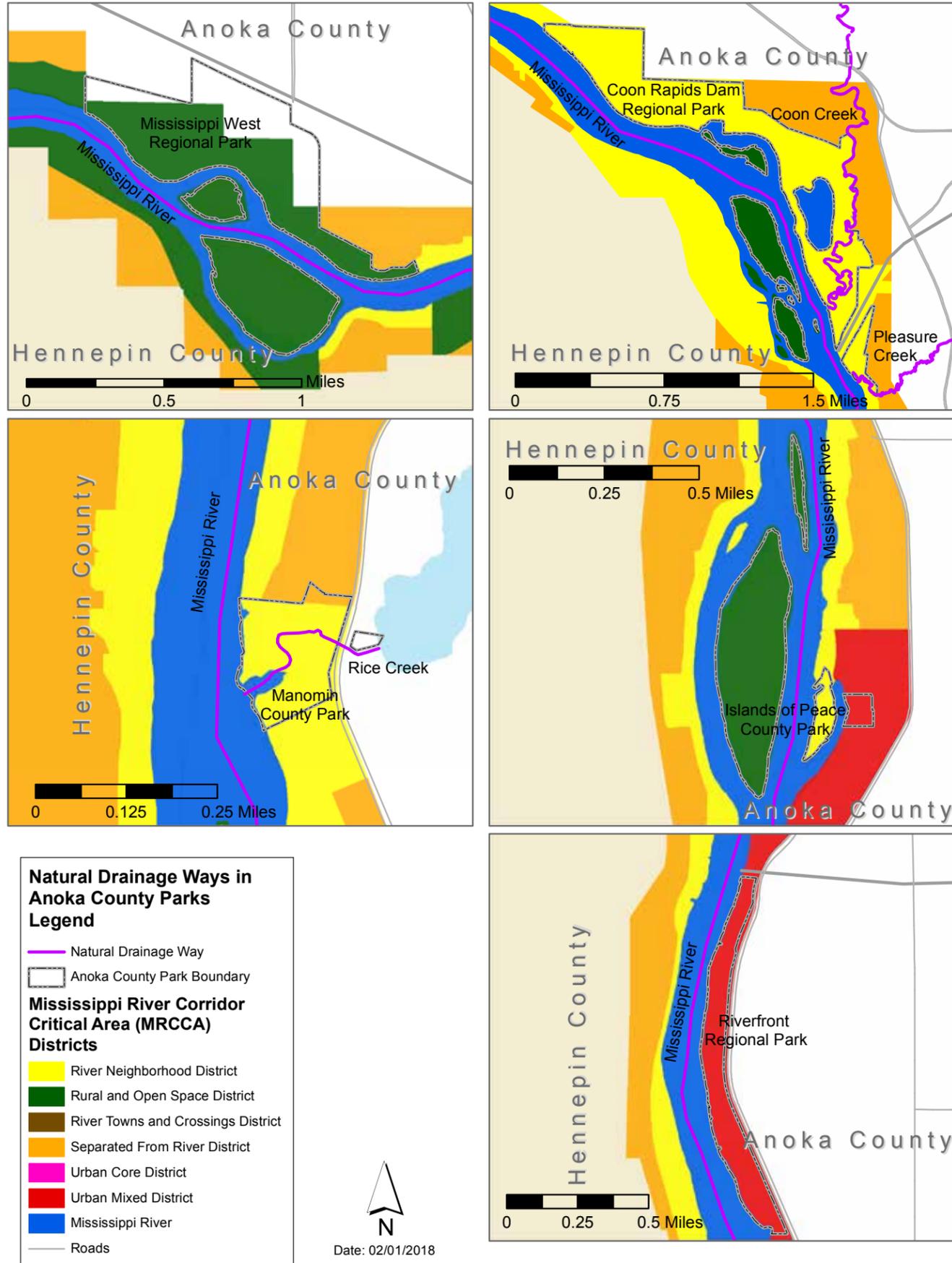
A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N
Park/Trail	Funding Source	Project	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	Total
1	Bunker	Reconstruct Parkway A (reclaim/repave, replace bit curb with concrete gutter/ribbon curb)					1,500,000						1,500,000
2	Bunker	Replace Boardwalk								300,000			300,000
3	Bunker	Activity Center Storage Building								50,000			50,000
4	Bunker	Reimbursement - City of CR for trail from RR tunnel to Avocet connector trail			150,000								150,000
5	Bunker	Central Maintenance Facility Improvements (86.53% 2018; Water/Sewer hook up: 2021; Renovation & Remodeling)	309,000		820,000								1,129,000
6	Bunker	County match for Water/Sewer Improvements to Maint. Shop.		41,600									41,600
7	Bunker	Renovation & Remodeling (County match to MC funds)			110,000								110,000
8	Bunker	Bunker Beach Parking Lot & Trail Rehab/Vets Memorial Trail Rehab	477,408	122,592									600,000
9	Bunker	Bunker Hills Activity Center Deck (add'l funds from Enterprise Funds)	617,297										617,297
10	Bunker	Bunker Beach - Slides & sand play area	510,000										510,000
11	Bunker	Asset Management Plan/Wave Pool Rehab/improvements			1,000,000	1,514,557							2,514,557
12	Bunker	Bunker Destination Playground						500,000					500,000
13	Bunker	City of Andover Ped Tunnel Reimbursement (approved 2016)			165,000								165,000
14	CACRT	Ped Bridge over 35W - Highway reimbursement (approved Apr 2013)			250,000								250,000
15	CACRT	Reimburse City of Coon Rapids for Egret Blvd portion of regional trail (approved April 2017)			175,000								175,000
16	CCRT	Visitor Center Windows/Roof		320,295									320,295
17	Dam	Visitor Center Improvements/Maint. Shop Construction									412,000		412,000
18	Dam	Maintenance Shop - Design and Construction								1,650,000			1,650,000
19	Dam	Trail improvements - Replace 4 culverts at Coon Creek with ped bridge or 1 large box culvert, reconstruct trail to 610.											900,000
20	Dam	CSAH 14 to CSAH 116 (Blaine Reimbursement - MC approved Dec 2012)	36,000										36,000
21	East AC RT	Upgrade Picnic Pavilions & Restrooms		230,000									230,000
22	Lake George	Lake George Dam & Rum River Erosion Repair		539,000									539,000
23	Lake George/Rum Lake	Lake George Dam & Rum River Erosion Repair		76,000									76,000
24	George/Rum	County CIB							415,000				415,000
25	Martin Island	Camp Salle Renovations & ADA improvements								425,000			425,000
26	Linwood	Boardwalk & Trail reconstruction											200,000
27	Miss West	2018: Entrance Road Construction (Ramsey funds for Riverdale Drive property)	200,000										200,000
28	Miss West	Phase 1: Entrance Road Construction; Phase 2: park development, maint. facility	415,000									1,000,000	1,415,000
29	Miss West	Shelter, Restroom and Amenities Development 2022; D&E, 2023/4; park development, maint. facility								1,000,000	1,000,000	500,000	2,500,000

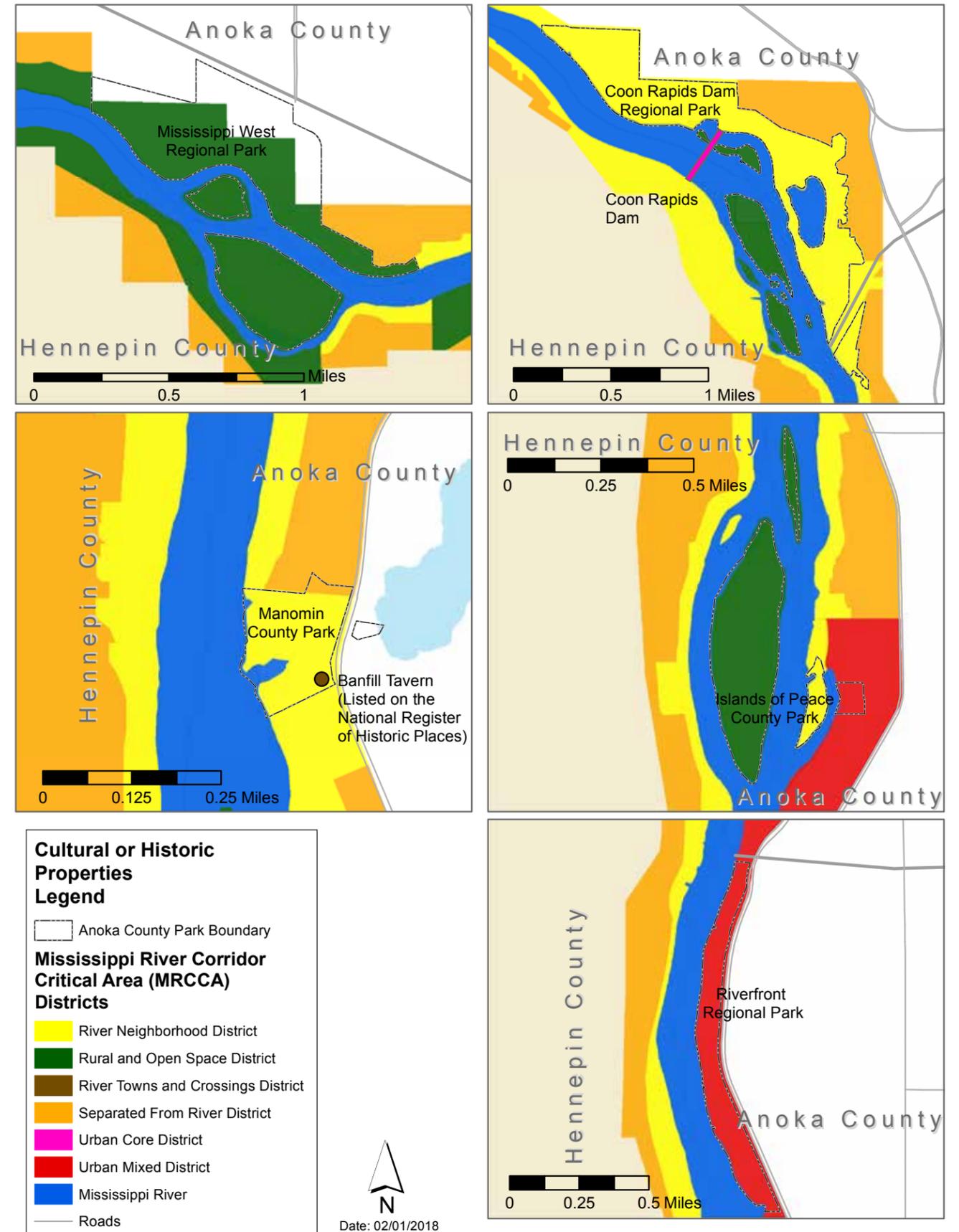
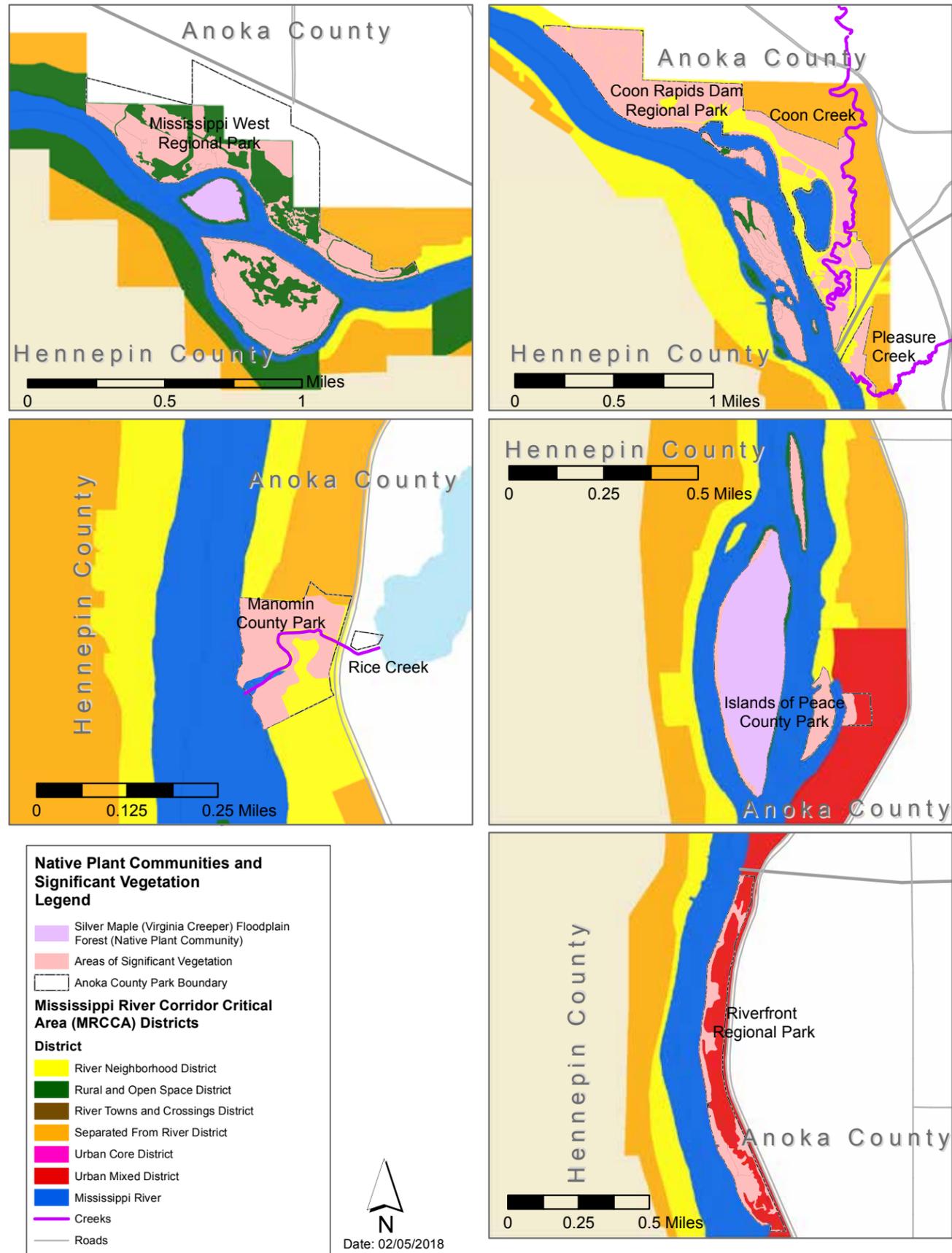
A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N
Park/Trail	Funding Source	Project	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	Total
30	MRRT	Anoka to Mississippi West (Anoka/Ramsey Reimbursement) (Approved Apr 2014)			340,000								340,000
31	RCCOL	Aqua Lane Reconstruction	82,703										82,703
32	RCCOL	Chomox Club House Improvements					150,000						150,000
33	RCCOL	Rice Creek Maint. Shop Renovation/Campground Support Facility		687,044									687,044
34	RCCOL	Peltier Fishing Pier, Parking Lot, ADA access			155,880								155,880
35	RCCOL	Camper Cabins							1,000,000				200,000
36	RCCOL	Main Park Road reconstruction											1,000,000
37	RCCOL	Wargo - 2020: Displays and Exhibits; 2022 Observation Deck/Learning Station; 2025: Displays and Exhibits			350,000			300,000				220,000	870,000
38	RCCOL	Wargo Entrance Roadway Reconstruction & Trail Along Road		931,569									931,569
39	RCCOL	Wargo Entrance Roadway Reconstruction & Trail Along Road		130,000									130,000
40	RCCOL	Burial Mound Interpretive Area Construction (lottery)		50,000									50,000
41	RCW -	North Parking Lot, Trail Reconstruction						300,000					300,000
42	RCW -	Banfill/Manomin Restroom Rehabilitation		260,000									260,000
43	RCW -	Banfill - Exterior Replacement/Insulation/ADA improvements (Andy)		50,000	80,000	360,000							490,000
44	Riverfront	2020 Maintenance bldg. construction and site work, gatehouse construction						1,200,000					1,200,000
45	Riverfront	Large Group Pavilion										357,000	357,000
46	Riverfront/ IOP	parking lot, trails reconstruction, ADA improvements, playground, plaza rehab, culvert repair (matching grant)		325,000									
47	Riverfront/ IOP	parking lot, trails reconstruction, ADA improvements, playground, plaza rehab, trail replacement, culvert replacement		325,000									325,000
48	Rum Central	Playground Replacement		175,000									175,000
49	Rum Central	Bituminous Repair and Sealcoating						700,000					700,000
50	Rum North	2019: Playground, 2022: Roadway, Parking, Trail, Building Redevelopment		170,000				850,000					1,020,000
51	Rum South	Repair roadways, parking lots, trails, erosion issue at fishing pier						500,000					500,000
52	Sugar Hills RT	Reimburse City of St. Francis for trail along CSAH 24 (approved July 2016)	47,520										47,520
53	System-wide	Connecting People to Outdoors	76,000	84,000									160,000
54	System-wide	CCM Crew	150,000	150,000	155,000	160,000	170,000	175,000	180,000	185,000	190,000	195,000	1,710,000
55		Sub-total Metro P&T Legacy	1,403,408	1,598,636	1,660,880	1,674,557	1,670,000	1,675,000	1,595,000	1,610,000	1,602,000	1,772,000	16,261,482
57		Sub-total Metro CIB	807,520	1,686,864	-	1,750,000	-	1,500,000	-	1,700,000	-	-	7,444,384
58		Sub-Total County CIB	-	246,000	-	110,000	150,000	1,350,000	-	-	-	-	1,856,000
59		Sub-Total Other Legacy	-	589,000	80,000	360,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,029,000
60		Sub-t-Total Other	710,000	221,600	-	150,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,081,600
61		<b>Total FY</b>	<b>2,920,928</b>	<b>4,342,100</b>	<b>1,740,880</b>	<b>4,044,557</b>	<b>1,820,000</b>	<b>4,525,000</b>	<b>1,595,000</b>	<b>3,310,000</b>	<b>1,602,000</b>	<b>3,672,000</b>	<b>29,572,466</b>

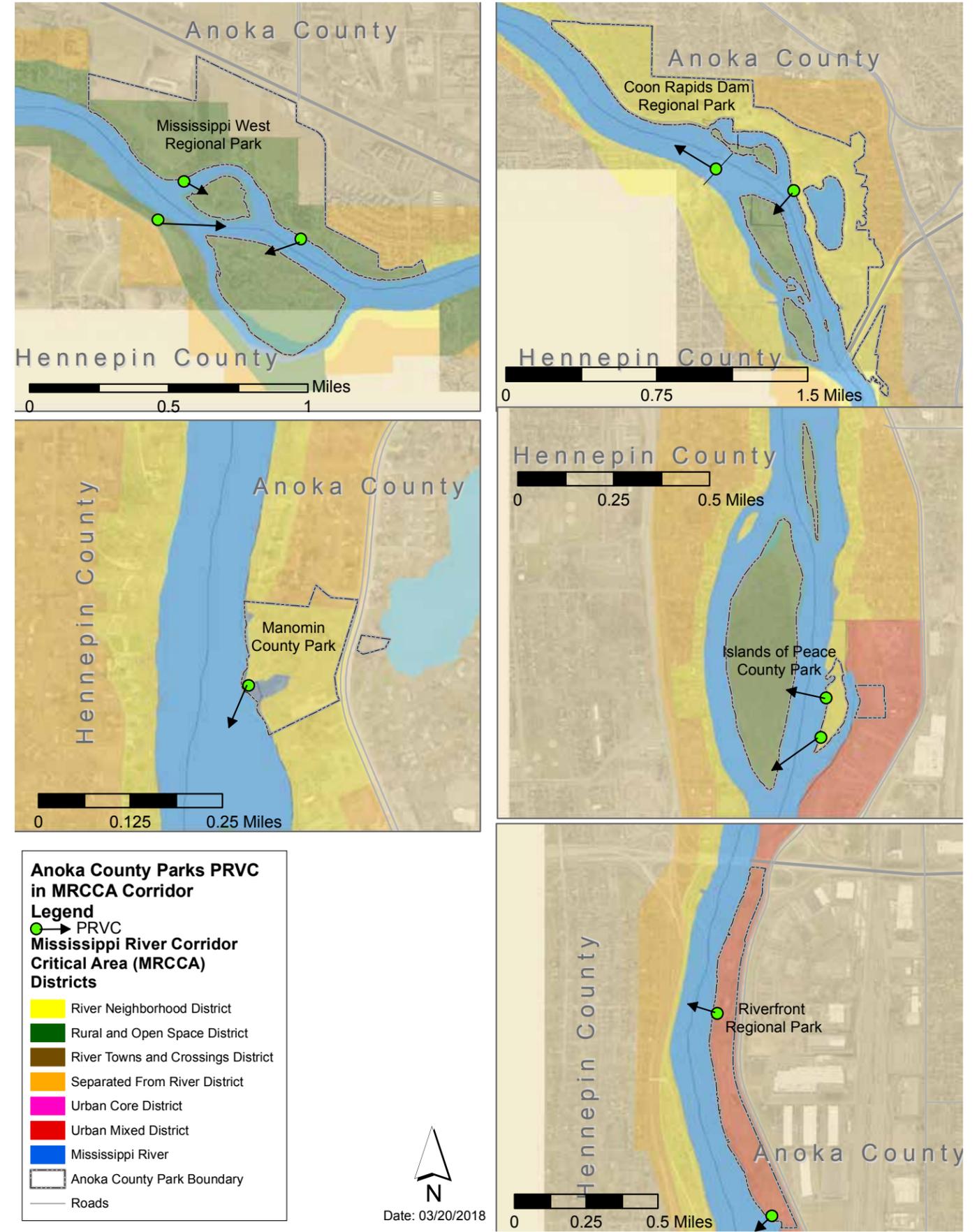
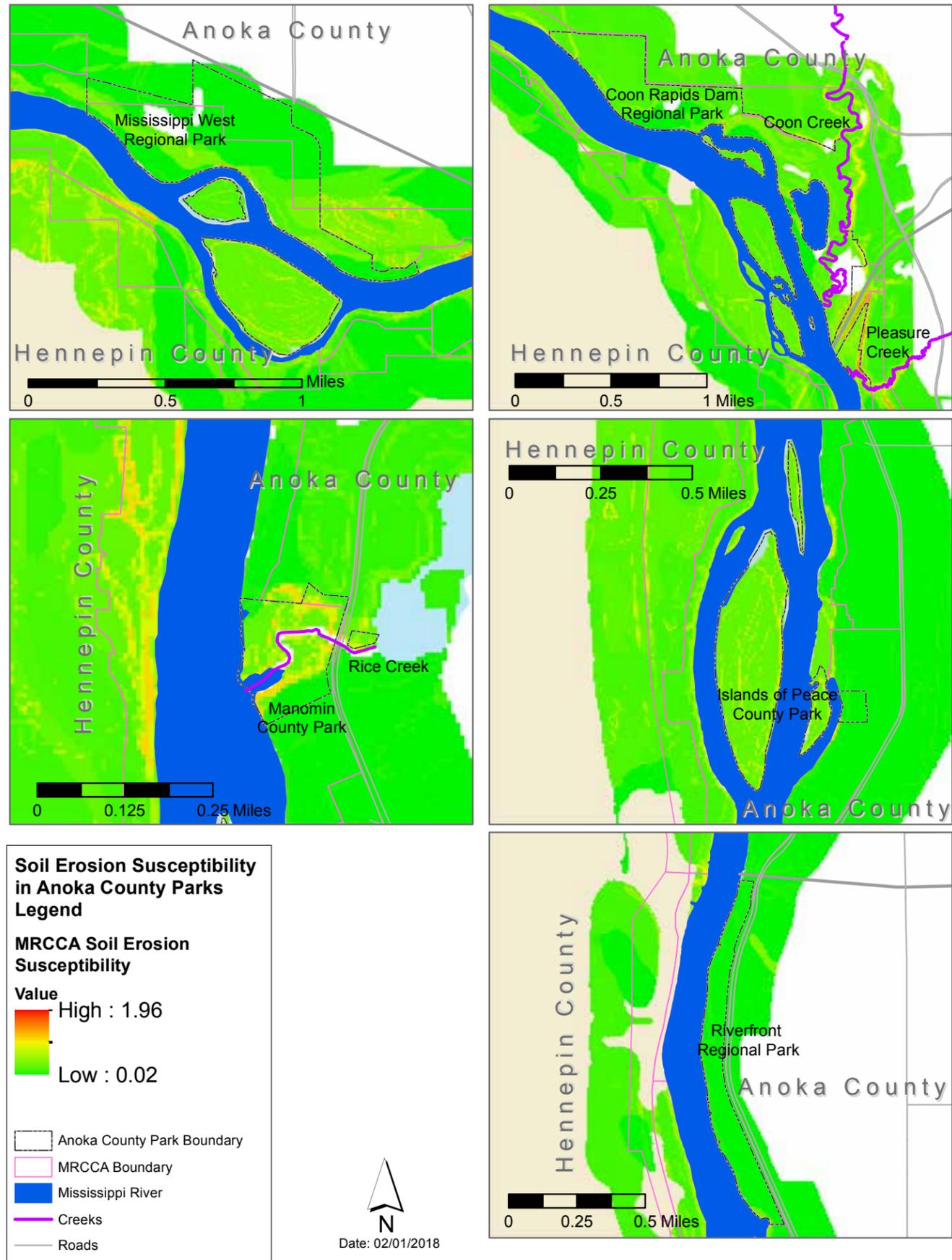














View looking south from the observation point south of the boat launch



View looking south from the park at the Rice Creek and Mississippi River confluence



View looking south from Cloquet Overlook Park



View looking north from south observation deck



View looking northwest from north end of Chases Island



View looking north from south end of Chases Island



View looking southwest from southern observation point



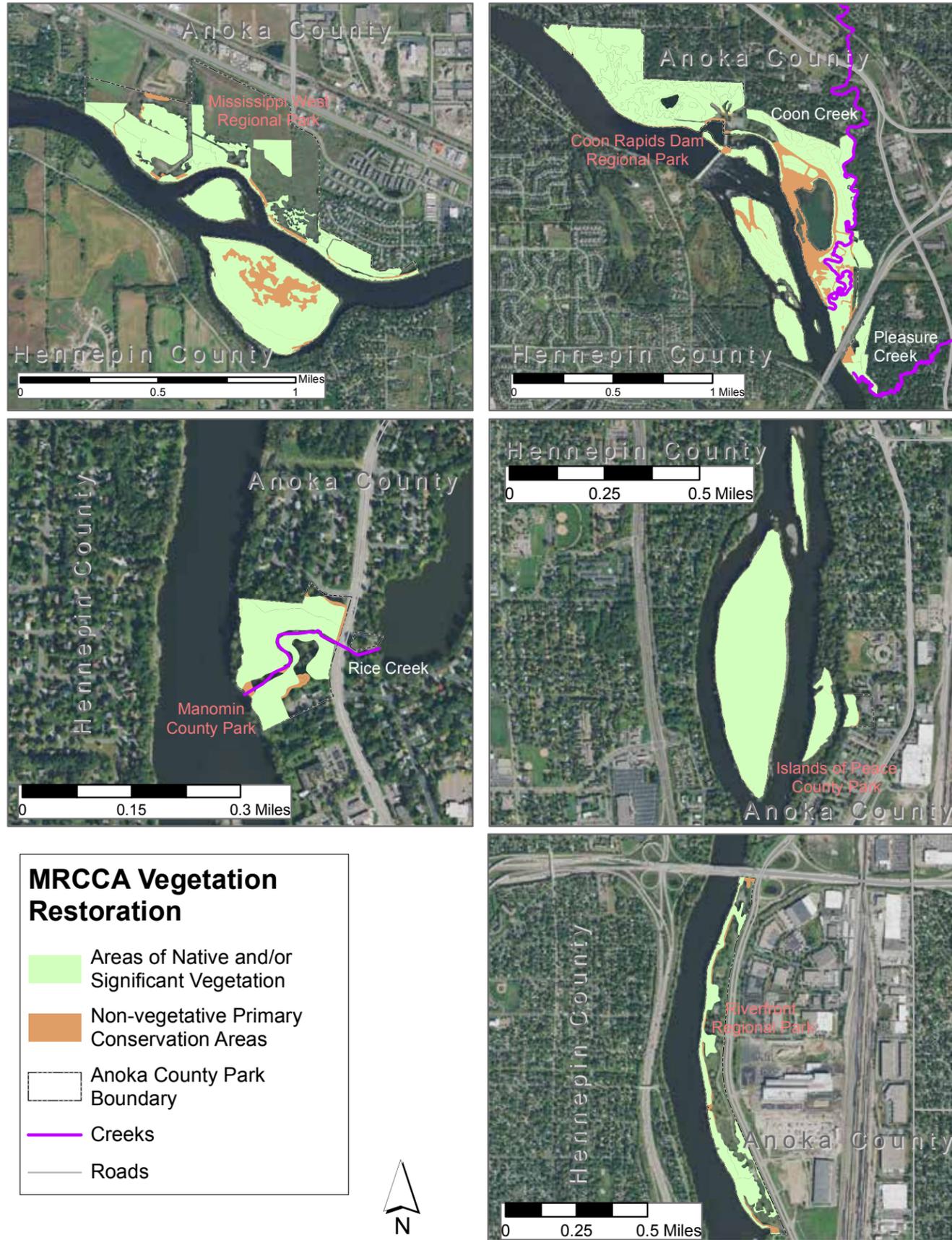
View looking north from the dam walkway



View looking west from the Mississippi River Trail at Riedel House



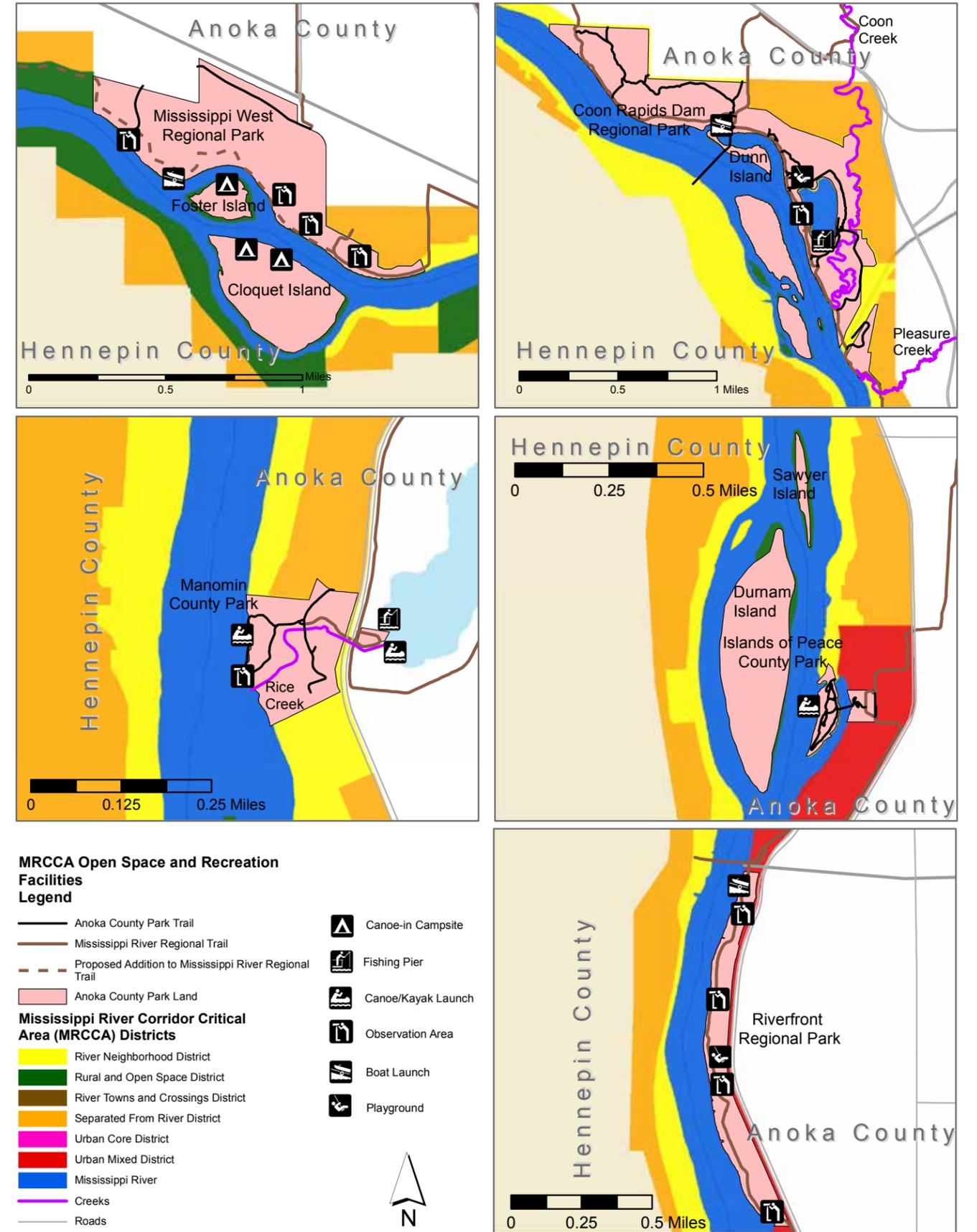
View looking south from south end of park



**MRCCA Vegetation Restoration**

- Areas of Native and/or Significant Vegetation
- Non-vegetative Primary Conservation Areas
- Anoka County Park Boundary
- Creeks
- Roads

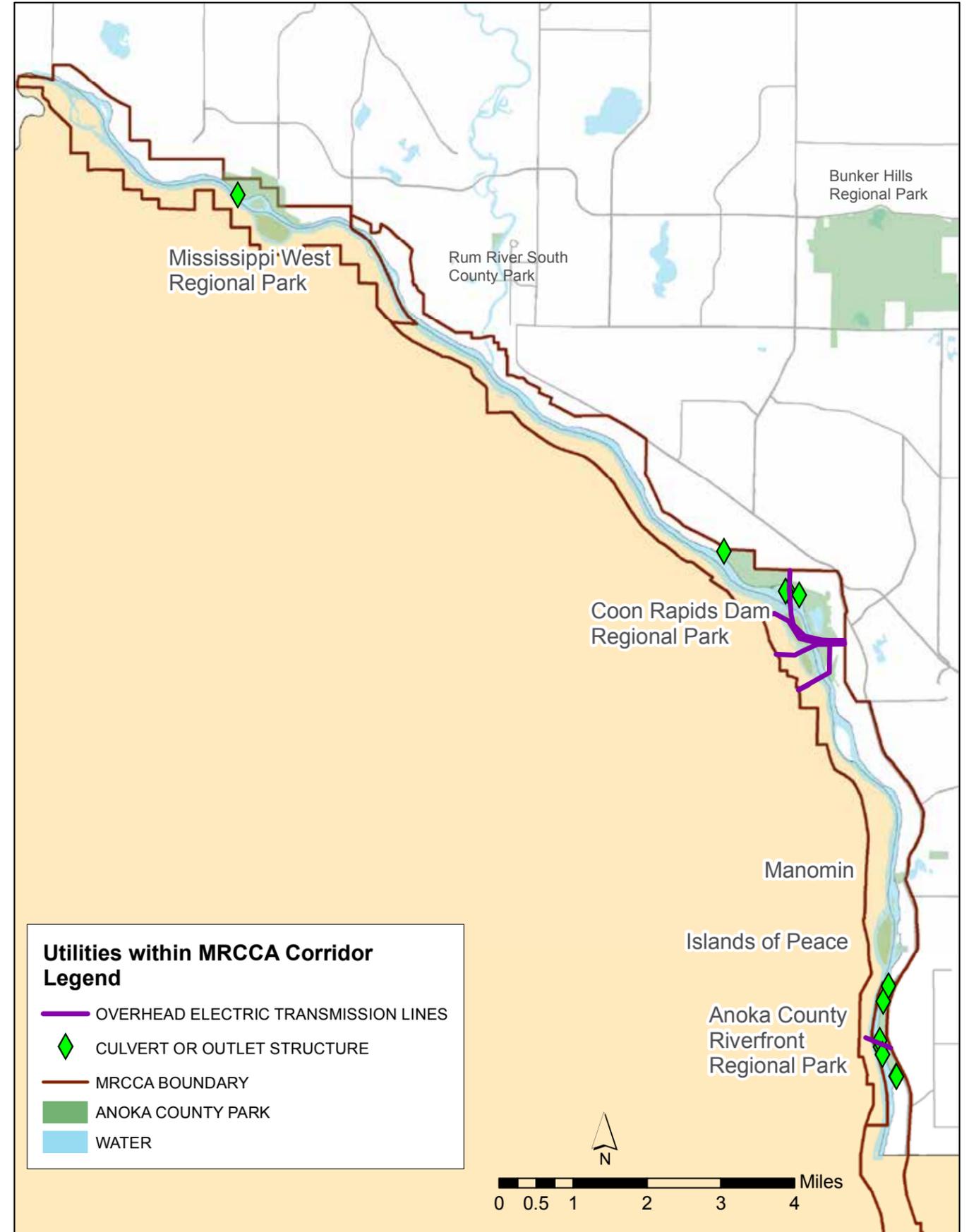
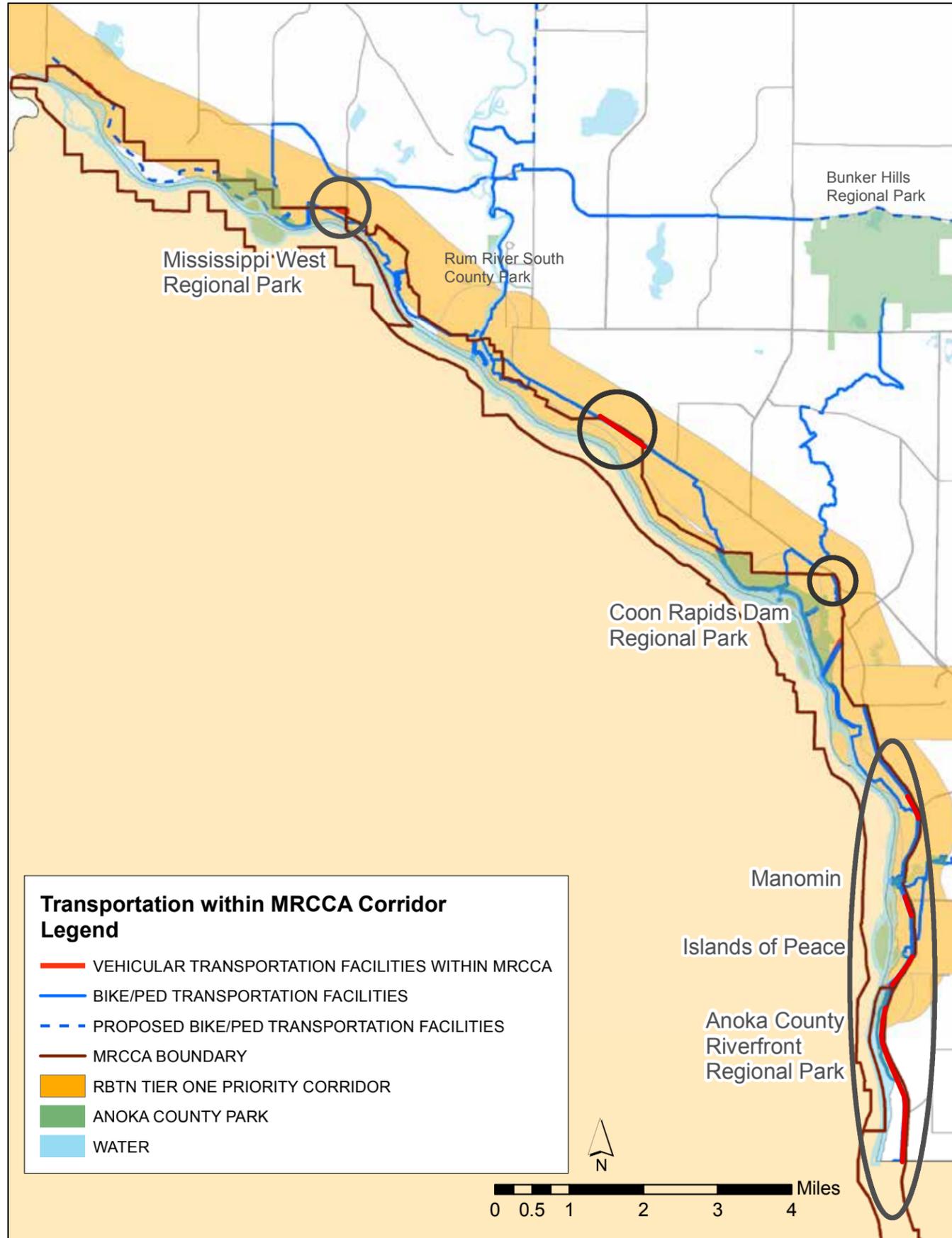
N  
Date: 02/05/2018



**MRCCA Open Space and Recreation Facilities Legend**

- Anoka County Park Trail
- Mississippi River Regional Trail
- Proposed Addition to Mississippi River Regional Trail
- Anoka County Park Land
- River Neighborhood District
- Rural and Open Space District
- River Towns and Crossings District
- Separated From River District
- Urban Core District
- Urban Mixed District
- Mississippi River
- Creeks
- Roads
- Canoe-in Campsite
- Fishing Pier
- Canoe/Kayak Launch
- Observation Area
- Boat Launch
- Playground

N  
Date: 02/06/2018



## APPENDIX: POLICIES TO MINIMIZE IMPACTS TO MISSISSIPPI RIVER CORRIDOR CRITICAL AREA

### Primary Conservation Areas (PCAs)

Policies with the intent of protecting, prioritizing, and minimizing the impact to PCAs are as follows:

#### Shore impact zones

- Comply with City zoning code within the shore impact zones.
- Encourage native landscaping, restoration and stabilization of natural shorelines.
- Provide an uninterrupted vegetated shoreline where practical.

#### Wetlands, Floodplains, and Areas of Confluence with key tributaries

- Comply with State and local zoning codes within wetlands, floodplains and areas of confluence.

#### Natural Drainage Routes

- Comply with City zoning code within the Natural Drainage Routes.
- Maintain the land and vegetation around natural drainage routes and creeks within County jurisdiction to reduce river water pollution due to soil erosion.
- Ensure new development and reconstruction employs storm water management best practices.

#### Bluff Impact Zones

- Comply with City zoning code within the Bluff Impact Zones.
- Restrict development along bluffs and in their associated bluff impact zones.
- Encourage steep slopes to be designated for open space and wildlife habitat and not development.

#### Native Plant Communities and Significant Existing Vegetative Stands

- Comply with City zoning code regarding native plant communities and significant vegetative stands.
- Identify and conserve/preserve areas of significant vegetation, unique vegetative species and wildlife habitats within the corridor and retain existing vegetation and landscaping.
- Protect and/or enhance natural resources within preservation areas and work to restore wildlife habitat, particularly for threatened and endangered species, and preserve biological diversity in all areas of the corridor in development/redevelopment projects.
- Development shall be conducted to preserve the natural features of the site and to preserve significant trees or plant communities where feasible.
- Any disturbed areas caused by development shall be restored in such a way as to increase the biodiversity and function of the site.

#### Cultural and Historic Properties

- Comply with state and local requirements to survey and protect or curate known archaeological resources, historic structures, and cultural landscapes.
- Restrict development within areas of known cultural and historic properties.

#### Unstable Soils & Bedrock

- Comply with City zoning codes within unstable soil and bedrock areas.
- Restrict development within areas of unstable soils and bluff impact zones.
- Use native vegetation and biological engineering solutions where appropriate to stabilize the riverbank.

### Public River Corridor Views (PRCVs)

Policies with the intent to protect and minimize impacts to PRCVs include:

- Structure sites and locations shall be developed to ensure the integrity of riverbanks, bluffs and scenic overlooks and minimize interference with views to and from the river, except for river access points.
- Require that riverfront development preserves a natural appearance while minimizing interference with views to and from the river.

#### Restoration Priorities

Policies with the intent of restoring native and natural vegetation and stabilizing soil include:

- The County will work with the state and local regulatory agencies to ensure adequate erosion control along the corridor.
- Where feasible, provide an uninterrupted native vegetated shoreline, except for river access points.
- The County will require native vegetation restoration as part of development projects.

#### Open Space & Recreational Facilities

Policies with the intent encourage the creation and maintenance of open space and recreational facilities and public access to the river include:

- The County will continue to preserve/conservate natural areas within the parks within the corridor.
- The County will maintain the existing local, regional and state trail facilities within the corridor.
- The County will continue to maintain existing river access points within the corridor.
- Provide carefully designed, safe, and accessible public facilities that complement the river corridor context.
- Provide high quality and sustainable parks, trails, open space, interpretive facilities, and related amenities and facilities within the river corridor that highlights its location and importance of the corridor.
- Existing islands within the Corridor shall be preserved and managed as public open space.

#### Water-Oriented Uses

Policies with the intent to protect water-oriented uses and minimize the conflict between those uses and other land uses include:

- The County will work with state and local regulatory agencies to safety and compatibility of water oriented uses, while protecting the natural resources.
- The County will ensure future development within the corridor is compatible with the water-oriented uses of the corridor.

#### Transportation & Public Utilities

Policies with the intent to minimize the impact of transportation facilities and public utilities on the MRCCA include:

- Ensure future transportation facilities and public utilities within the corridor complement planned land and water uses.
- Ensure future park development minimizes utility and infrastructure needs and allows for scenic vistas, trails and walkways. Future trail development should be incorporated into or utilize existing river crossings if needed.
- Encourage, where practical, the placing of utilities underground.



The following Affected Jurisdictions were sent a copy of the Parks System Plan (a component of the Anoka County 2040 Comprehensive Plan) for review:

<b>Via E-mail on 05/23/18:</b>	Columbus	Linwood
Andover	Coon Rapids	Nowthen
Anoka	East Bethel	Oak Grove
Bethel	Fridley	Ramsey
Blaine	Ham Lake	St. Francis
Centerville	Lexington	Spring Lake Park
Circle Pines	Lino Lakes	<b>Via Mail on 05/23/18:</b>
Columbia Heights		Hilltop

No comments were received from the above Affected Jurisdictions.

The Parks System Plan was sent to the following regulatory agencies for review by e-mail on 05/25/18:

Anoka Conservation District	Upper Rum River Management Organization	Metropolitan Council
Rice Creek Watershed District	National Parks Service	Army Corps of Engineers
Coon Creek Watershed District	Minnesota Department of Natural Resources	
Mississippi River Water Management Organization	- The MNDNR provided a preliminary review of the MRCCA chapter, which was subsequently revised to address the DNR comments.	
Lower Rum River Management Organization		



**Comments Received**

Anoka Conservation District

1. Anoka County Parks system and staff have always been a great asset to the county. The holistic approach to managing natural resources while providing recreation opportunities is well balanced.
  - a. No response required.
2. Acquisition of the Sugar Hills Regional Park in St. Francis should be a high priority. The opportunity to do this may end when the Legacy Amendment expires in 2032 if it isn't renewed by the voters.
  - a. No response required.
3. Resolving the issue in the Sandhill Crane Natural Area as it related to the School Trust and State-Owned land should be a priority. Efforts were made that postponed clear-cutting of MCBS mapped forest, but to our knowledge a permanent solution was not implemented.
  - a. Anoka County acknowledges that the continuing work with local agencies that is required to ensure the protection of the natural resources in the area.
4. The connection/distinction between county and municipal parks is difficult to understand. What are their respective roles? Do they partner to provide a comprehensive suite of recreational opportunities or are they each working in their own silos? It seems that many of the cultural barriers could be better addressed through the municipal parks system, which are specialized, closer to the populations of interest, locally funded, and smaller in scale.
  - a. Anoka County added to the Parks Plan discussion on the partnership between regional parks, county parks and city parks to provide a comprehensive suite of recreational opportunities for the public.
5. Parks provide the public with both passive and active recreational connections to nature. Finding ways to better parlay this connection into literacy regarding issues such as groundwater conservation, stormwater management, surface water quality, invasive species, and rare species conservation would be very helpful for those charged with managing those resources outside of the park system.
  - a. Anoka County included information in the Parks Plan regarding the integration of conservation education and awareness throughout its park system.

Rice Creek Watershed District

6. Rice Creek Watershed District recently completed a project to restore historic meanders to Middle Rice Creek. RCWD staff recommends updating the flowline of the Rice Creek to show this recent work on the water trail map (page 52).
  - a. Anoka County acknowledges the restoration of the meanders and will update the flowline for Rice Creek as soon as the digital data is received from the District. As of submission date, this information is still pending.
7. RCWD staff suggests including a more detailed discussion about working with watershed districts and watershed management organization to advance water quality and flood control projects within the parkland.
  - a. Anoka County acknowledges the hard work of the watershed districts and management organizations to advance water quality and flood control within County park land but does not believe inclusion within the Parks System Plan is required at this time.

National Park Service

8. The National Park Service was provided the Park System Plan and focused their review on the MRCCA Chapter. Most of their comments requested additional language or minor mapping changes.
  - a. Anoka County included the requested language regarding the history of MRCCA and adjusted the MRCCA maps based on comments received.

No other comments regarding the Park System Plan were received from any other regulatory or affected jurisdiction.