



# Hole-in-the-Mountain Park Master Plan

2021

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**Appendix A** - Meeting Notes from Master Plan Update Process

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## Vision for Regional Significance

### Vision Statement

The goal of the Lincoln County Park System is to improve the quality of life for people of all ages and increase tourism in southwestern Minnesota by providing a regional park system offering year-round activities. Hole-in-the-Mountain Park offers a unique landscape for recreation, exercise, and family time while showcasing the region's beautiful scenic views and its natural beauty.

### Statements

1. *Hole-in-the-Mountain Park will make improvements to the existing infrastructure to provide a quality experience to a diversity of visitors.*
  - a. Improve existing trails to support a high demand for quality trails serving visitors interested in hiking and horseback riding.
  - b. Make improvements to Horse Hill including improved access and camping experiences.
2. *Hole-in-the-Mountain Park will create expanded and new experiences for residents and visitors to the park.*
  - a. Expand camping operations to meet increased demand and bring new visitors into the park.
  - b. Expand recreational opportunities and increase physical activity through play pods, adventure areas, sledding/skating, and outdoor pavilions.
  - c. Expand trail systems to create additional opportunities to experience the park.
  - d. Provide educational nodes throughout the park that highlight the historic and ecological significance of the area.
3. *Hole-in-the-Mountain Park will increase the safety for visitors throughout the park.*
  - a. Improve signage around the park to provide a better visitor experience and also improve safety for park visitors.
  - b. Develop improvements that will provide safer crossings for pedestrian, wildlife, and equestrian users of the park.
4. *Hole-in-the-Mountain Park will support efforts that create connectivity to surrounding amenities and improve tourism opportunities for all of Lincoln County.*
  - a. Continue to work towards the Lincoln County Trails Task Force multi phase 10-year plan to build a trail system that will connect to major points within Lincoln County, including Hole-in-the-Mountain Park.
  - b. The Sorensen Farm has been deeded to Lincoln County. Future planning will occur at a later date on the historical significance and opportunities for this site to enhance the visitor experience at Hole-in-the-Mountain Park.

## Introduction and Proposer/Implementing Agency

### Introduction

Lincoln County and the Lincoln County Parks Department, together with Development Services, Inc., the National Park Service, and WSB have established this Master Plan to identify the results of the planning process as well as to act as a guide for the operations, maintenance, and development of future projects at Hole-in-the-Mountain Park. This Master Plan also highlights the details of the application for Hole-in-the-Mountain Park being designated as a Natural Resource-Based Regional Park by the Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission.

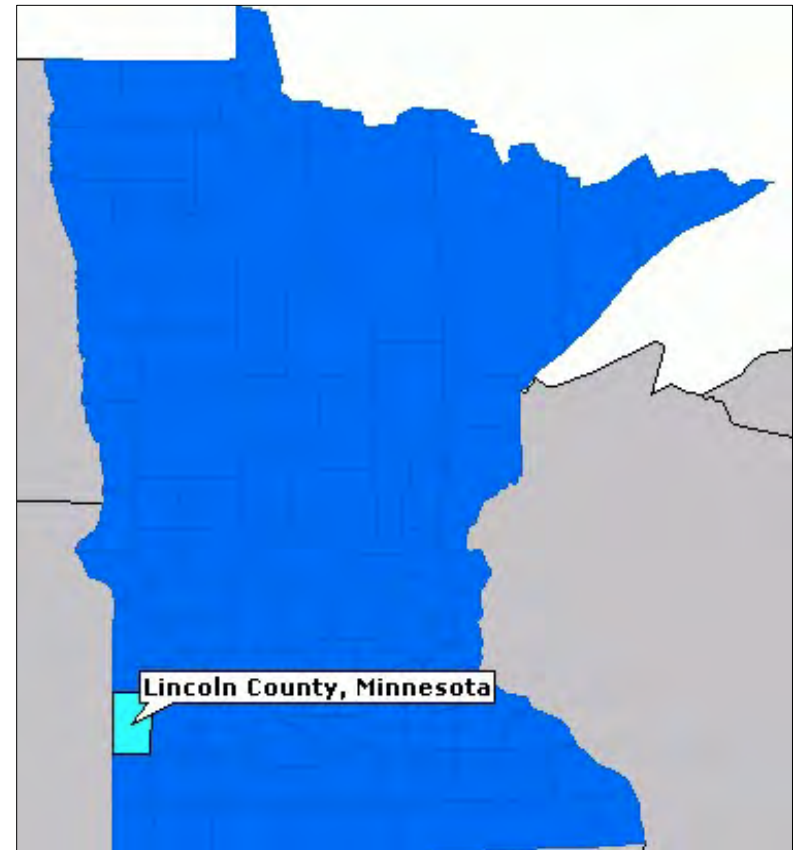
Located on Buffalo Ridge in southwest Minnesota, Hole-in-the-Mountain Park, with 647 acres of woodland and prairie, is a regional treasure due to its topography, scenic landscapes, campgrounds, and trails. With its steep hills and rolling terrain, the park provides seven miles of challenging and scenic natural trails. Hole-in-the-Mountain Park offers three campgrounds with a total of 60 campsites with water and electric. The park also has available more than 30 rustic tent sites. Each year, over 5,000 people visit the park. Whether its horseback riding, biking, hiking, fishing, or snowmobiling, Hole-in-the-Mountain Park is in use spring, summer, fall, and winter – truly, a Four Season Funland.

### Proposer/Implementing Agency

Lincoln County, Minnesota is governed by a five-member Board of Commissioners, with the County Seat located in Ivanhoe, Minnesota. The Lincoln County Parks Department, an agency under the direction of the Lincoln County Board of Commissioners, has been designated to supervise the operation, maintenance, and development of the parks and recreation centers within Lincoln County. The Lincoln County Parks Department employs a full-time Park Director of 38 years experience who is familiar with the park's directive, operations, and history, and has built valuable relationships with park guests and visitors. The Lincoln County Parks Department also employs seasonal employees to assist during the peak summer season.

The goal of the Lincoln County Park System is to improve the quality of life for people of all ages and increase tourism in southwestern Minnesota by providing a regional park system offering year-round activities. Hole-in-the-Mountain Park offers a unique landscape for recreation, exercise, and family time while showcasing the region's beautiful scenic views and its natural beauty.

Figure 1: Location Map



## Setting/Regional Context

Lincoln County, Minnesota is a rural county bordering South Dakota with agriculture and renewable energy as the dominant industries. As of the 2010 census, the population of Lincoln County was 5,896. Lincoln County, Minnesota, with a total area of 548 square miles, is home to five cities (Arco, Hendricks, Ivanhoe, Lake Benton, and Tyler), 15 lakes, and 15 townships.

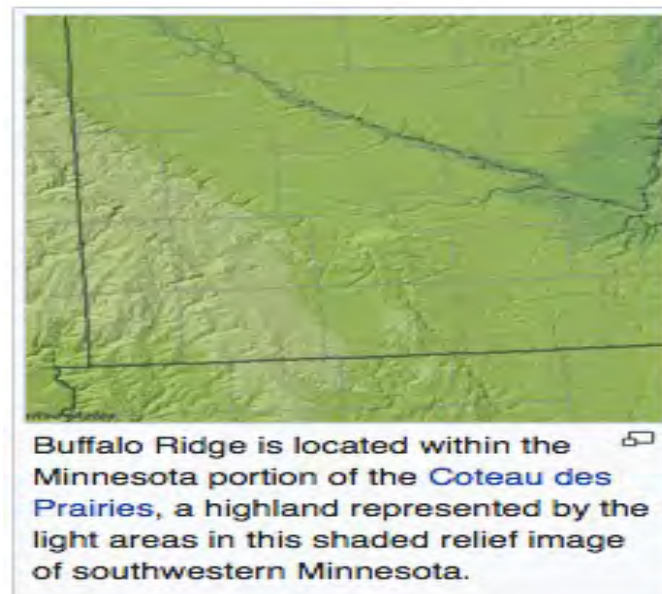
### Buffalo Ridge

Many terms have been used throughout the years to describe the landscape feature that today is known as the Buffalo Ridge, including Bemis Moraine and Coteau des Prairies. Within this Master Plan, the feature will be referred to as the Buffalo Ridge. Lake Benton is located on the Buffalo Ridge, which consists of glacial drift (silt, sand, cobbles and boulders deposited from glacier meltwater) atop layers of Cretaceous layers of shale, sand and clay. There is a 1.6 kilometer-wide break in the Buffalo Ridge in Lake Benton. With a peak of 1,994 feet above sea level, Hole-in-the-Mountain Park is among the highest points of Buffalo Ridge which, at its peak, reaches 1,995 feet above sea level.

Buffalo Ridge is 60 miles long and approximately 10 miles wide. Buffalo Ridge, dividing the great watersheds of America - the Missouri and Mississippi, provides opportunities for overlooks and interpretation. The ridge begins in northwestern Iowa and stretches through Minnesota and into South Dakota, specifically through Lincoln, Pipestone, Murray, Nobles, and Rock Counties in the southwestern corner of Minnesota.

Lake Benton is nestled in the valley of the Buffalo Ridge and is known as the "Original Windpower Capital of the Midwest." More than 600 wind turbines decorate the skyline along the Buffalo Ridge in Lincoln County, Minnesota. As noted on the City of Lake Benton's website, a 1990 study of Minnesota's wind energy potential by the Department of Public Service found that the Buffalo Ridge has enough wind to produce electricity well in excess of a full year's net electrical consumption in Minnesota. Buffalo Ridge provides the most constant wind speed, averaging 15-18 mph. Because of its high altitude and high average wind

Figure 2: Map of the Buffalo Ridge



speed, Buffalo Ridge has been transformed into a place for creating renewable energy. Buffalo Ridge provides more high-grade wind resources than the entire state of California.

### Hole-in-the-Mountain Prairie

Just south of Hole-in-the-Mountain Park, visitors can find Hole-in-the-Mountain Prairie, a tall grass prairie conservancy created, owned, and protected by the Nature Conservancy. The preserve is part of a larger glacial escarpment that runs from southwest Minnesota through northeast South Dakota. Native Americans called the half-mile-wide prairie valley "Mountain Pass" or "Hole-in-the-Mountain". Hole-in-the-Mountain Prairie, spanning a valley of about a half-mile in width, begins at the south end of the City of Lake Benton, along U.S. Highway 75, and runs south toward the Altona State Wildlife.

## Setting/Regional Context

Hole-in-the-Mountain Prairie, a 1,364-acre prairie and oak savanna wildlife preserve, is a remnant of what once was a 4,300 acre prairie area. It is located on the outer edge of Buffalo Ridge and is the headwaters of Flandreau Creek. It was created to preserve the diminishing tallgrass prairie and the insects and animals native to tallgrass prairies. Native plants within Hole-in-the-Mountain Prairie include six species of special concern: Prairie Moonwort, Small-Leaved Pussytoes, Small White Lady's Slipper, Red Threeawn, Soft Goldenrod, and Slender Milk-Vetch. This area is noted as a Minnesota Biological Survey (MBS) Site of Biodiversity Significance.

Hole-in-the-Mountain Prairie Preserve illustrates what the southern end of the larger 2.4 million-acre Prairie Coteau region might have looked like prior to European settlement. Today, roughly one million acres of the Coteau remains untilled and is primarily utilized as pasture and hayland for livestock. This site allows the Conservancy to showcase alternative prairie management programs.

### Benton Lake

Located within a short walking distance from Hole-in-the-Mountain Park, Benton Lake, with more than 18 miles of shoreline, offers visitors ample outdoor recreational activities such as fishing, ice-fishing, swimming beaches, boating, water-skiing, tubing, canoeing, and more. Approximately seven miles long, Benton Lake is 2,875 acres in area and is the sixth largest lake in southern Minnesota. Throughout the years, Benton Lake has been known to be ranked among the 10 best walleye lakes in Minnesota. Blue gill, perch, sunfish, and crappies are abundant and several trophy-sized have been caught as well as northern pike and some largemouth bass. The lake draws tourists from not only the local region but also from other regions throughout the Midwest, such as Nebraska, Iowa, and nearby South Dakota.

Benton Lake is home to two campgrounds. Norwegian Creek Campground, located on the west side of Lake Benton, is owned by Lincoln County and managed by the Lincoln County Parks Department. Stoney Point Campground, a privately-owned campground, is located on the east side of the lake.

Figure 3: Map of Hole-in-the-Mountain Prairie



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Based on The Nature Conservancy data dated 12/11/2016

## Setting/Regional Context

### Hole-in-the-Mountain

Hole-in-the-Mountain Park is conveniently located along U.S. Highways 14 and 75. It is 32 miles southwest of Marshall, MN (pop. 13,480), 28 miles east of Brookings, SD (Pop. 22,900), 66 miles northeast of Sioux Falls, SD (pop. 164,670), and 77 miles northwest of Worthington, MN (pop. 12,940).

With 30 water and electric hookup campsites, each site equipped with hitching posts, Hole-in-the-Mountain Park's Horse Hill Campground offers equestrian campers even more unique opportunities. Each year, hundreds of horse enthusiasts visit the park, enjoying not only the seven miles of natural trails winding through the woodlands and prairies, but to also experience the picturesque views offered by the surrounding Buffalo Ridge landscape. The park also offers additional campsites in the East and West Campgrounds.

Not only does the park offer some of the most diverse recreational amenities, breathtaking views and unique topography within the region, but it also provides a rich learning environment for educational opportunities and training programs. With its diverse natural environment and challenging terrain, the park provides an exceptional learning environment for students of all ages and from all walks of life.

South Dakota State University (SDSU), located in Brookings, SD, is only 28 miles west of Hole-in-the-Mountain Park.

- Students enrolled in SDSU's Agronomy, Horticulture, and Plant Science Department are among Hole-in-the-Mountain Park's annual visitors. The park provides field training potential for both horticultural and landscape architecture students.
- Every year, students enrolled in SDSU's Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) program also take advantage of the unique training opportunities offered by Hole-in-the-Mountain Park's woodlands, trails, challenging terrain, and arduous topography. They particularly like to use the dense forest and steep terrain for night vision training.

- Throughout the year, members of SDSU's Bicycle Club are also among the visitors to the park to take advantage of its challenging trails and breathtaking views of the scenic landscape as well.

Southwest Minnesota State University (SMSU), located in Marshall, MN, is only 34 miles northeast of Hole-in-the-Mountain Park. Sioux Falls, SD, is home to numerous colleges, universities, technical institutes, and other training programs that stand to benefit from the park. Families, students, campers, and outdoor enthusiasts from the Sioux Falls area are also among the hundreds of visitors who travel each year to recreate at Hole-in-the-Mountain Park.

*Figure 4: View of Main Campground from Horse Hill*

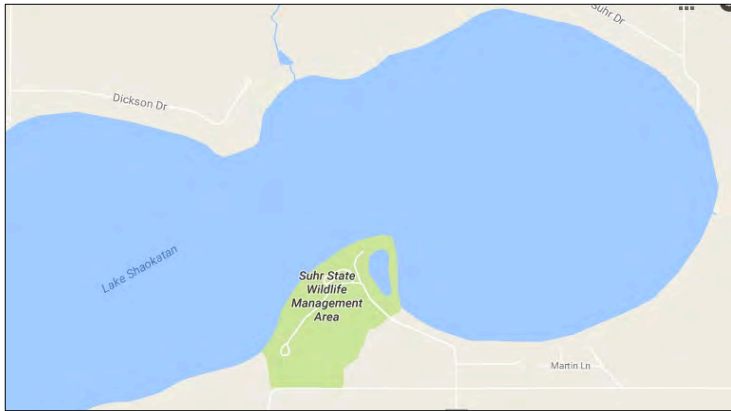


### Other Lincoln County Parks:

Hole-in-the-Mountain Park is one of three county parks owned and operated by Lincoln County, Minnesota, under the direction of the Lincoln County Board of Commissioners. In addition to Hole-in-the-Mountain Park, the Lincoln County Parks Department supervises the operation and development of Norwegian Creek County Park and Picnic Point County Park.

## Setting/Regional Context

**Norwegian Creek County Park – Lincoln County, Minnesota** is located one mile north and one mile east of Hole-in-the-Mountain Park. With 128 acres, Norwegian Creek has 92 campsites with electricity and water service. Facilities include two picnic shelters, a bathhouse with showers, a fish-cleaning shed, an RV dump station, a swimming beach, and two boat launches (one of which is a DNR Class A boat landing)



**Picnic Point County Park – Lincoln County, Minnesota** is located nine miles north, three miles west of Hole-in-the-Mountain Park. The park is 43 acres and located on the southern side of beautiful Lake Shaokatan, adjacent to Suhr State Wildlife Management Area. Picnic Point offers 30 campsites with electricity and water service. Like its sister campgrounds, Picnic Point also offers numerous camping sites without electricity. The park offers a picnic shelter, a swimming beach, a floating T-dock, two boat launches, a fish-cleaning shed and an RV dump station.

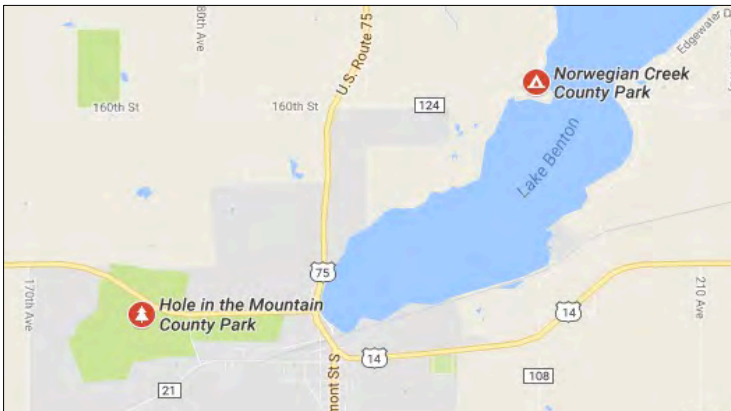
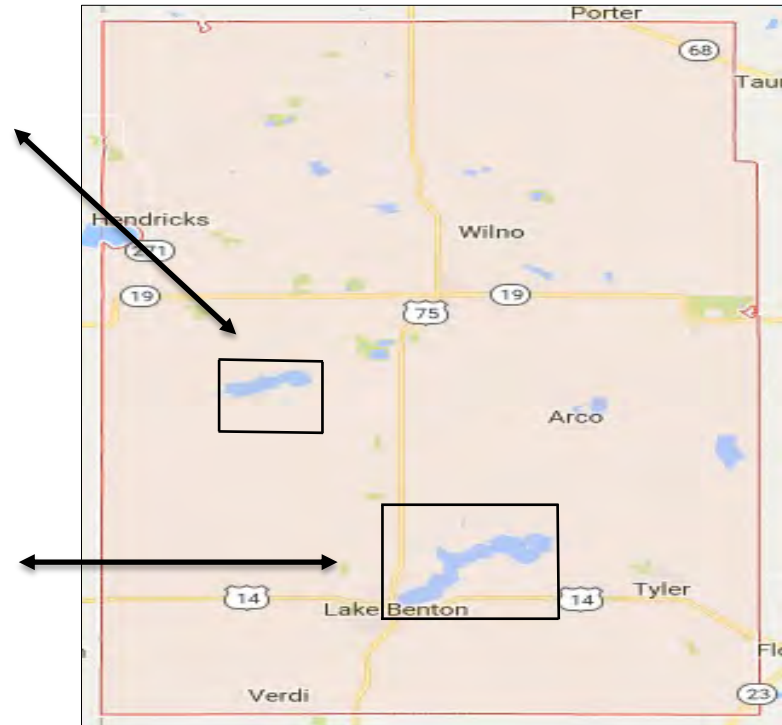


Figure 5: Location of Lincoln County Parks





## Setting/Regional Context

### Lake Benton City Trail System and Lincoln County Trail System

The City of Lake Benton has a 1.2-mile trail within the city limits that is connected to Hole-in-the-Mountain Park, providing access for visitors to hike or bike into the park. Additionally, the Lincoln County Trails Task Force, has designed a plan to construct a Lincoln County Trails System. The 10-year multi-phase plan to build trails that would not only connect major points within Lincoln County, but would also connect Hole-in-the-Mountain Park to neighboring trails and amenities, as well as multiple communities, regions and potentially states.

Figure 4 highlights a regional trail map of trail corridors, regional and local trails, potential corridors and gateways. There are numerous local assets beyond Hole-in-the-Mountain Park that could be connected via a future trail system including:

- \* Lake Hendricks at Hendricks
- \* Norwegian Creek Park at Lake Benton
- \* Midwest Center for Wind Energy
- \* Picnic Point County Park at Lake Shaokatan
- \* Anderson Park on Lake Stay lake in Arco
- \* Stoney Point Park at the east end of Benton Lake
- \* Gilson Field Campground at north end of Ivanhoe
- \* Lake Shaokatan County Park

A Lincoln County based snowmobile club, the Drift Clippers, maintain over 80 miles of groomed trails within Lincoln County, including Hole-in-the-Mountain's natural trails. Local snowmobile trails connect to the South Dakota trail system west of Hendricks, MN and to the Lyon County system near Florence, MN.

The Casey Jones State Trail is only 14 miles from Hole-in-the-Mountain Park and consists of three segments. The longest segment is 13 miles of former railroad grade between the City of Pipestone and the Pipestone/Murray county line. The first five miles from Pipestone are paved, with the remaining eight miles a natural-surfaced trail. The second

small segment is a natural-surfaced 1.5-mile trail near Lake Wilson. The final segment is a 6-mile, paved loop between Lake Shetek State Park and the City of Currie.

### Highways and Byways

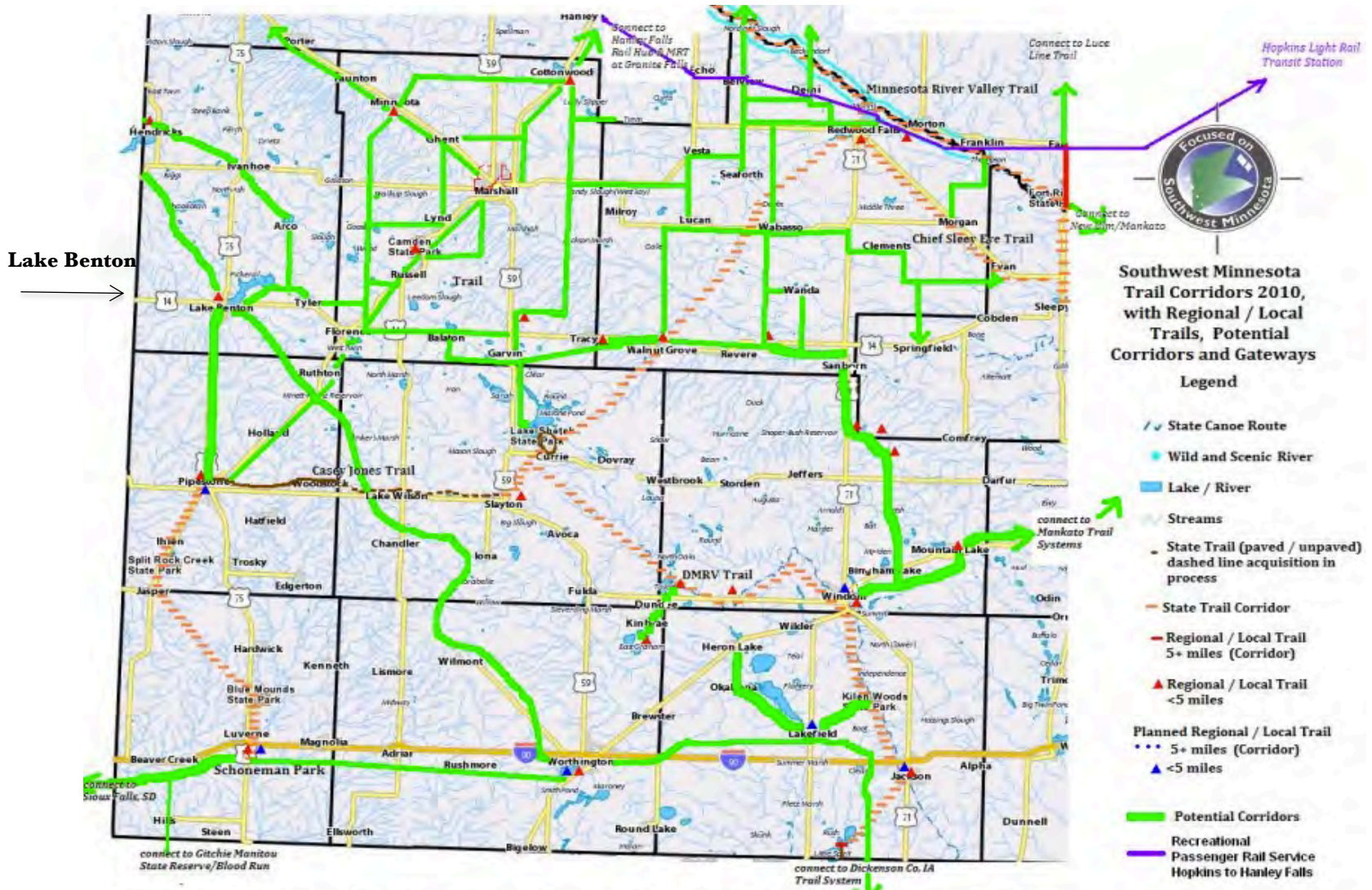
Hole-in-the-Mountain Park is located at the crossroads of U.S. Highway 75 (International Highway "King of Trails") and U.S. Highway 14 ("Laura Ingalls Wilder Historic Highway") in southwestern Minnesota.

**Laura Ingalls Wilder Historic Highway** - A segment of U.S. Highway 14, from Lake Benton to Mankato, Minnesota, was designated as Laura Ingalls Wilder Historic Highway in 1994. Along the route, you will find signs at the entrance of each town. The towns along this designated route of U.S. Highway 14 have formed a coalition for the purpose of promoting the highway and their individual communities. Each town has identified specific sites that relate to the Ingalls era of the late 1800s. The Ingalls family traveled along this route from Wisconsin to DeSmet, South Dakota, settling for a time in Walnut Grove, Minnesota.

**King of Trails State Scenic Byway** - Historically, U.S. Highway 75 was known as the "King of Trails" before highways were numbered in 1926. The "trail" is marked from Winnipeg, Manitoba, to the Gulf of Mexico at Galveston, Texas. This trail was originally used by the Native Americans and early pioneers as a trade route. Although the present "King of Trails" does not follow the original exactly, large segments of the highway do include it, while the rest of the highway was constructed nearly parallel to it. A remnant of the original "King of Trails" is still visible today following the railroad tracks south of Lake Benton. The Minnesota Legislature designated U.S. Highway 75 the "Historic King of Trails" in 2001. Benton Lake is the second largest freshwater lake along the King of Trails. Visit the scenic byway website at: <http://www.highway75.com/>

# Setting/Regional Context

Figure 6: Trail and Trail Corridor Map



base map source: [http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/maps/landview.html?layers=lakes+roads+bdry\\_munipy3](http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/maps/landview.html?layers=lakes+roads+bdry_munipy3) and Regional Committee input

Lake Benton →

## Setting/Regional Context

### Other Area Amenities:

**Heritage and Windpower Learning Center** of Southwest Minnesota is located in Lake Benton. The primary focus of the Windpower Learning Center is to educate visitors on the numerous benefits that windpower has to offer. Visitors can see the wind turbine model and several interactive computers that provide detailed information on wind energy.

**Lakeside Park in Lake Benton** is located just east of Hole-in-the-Mountain Park, on the shore of Benton Lake. This park has a picnic shelter, public restrooms, public access/boat landing, a fishing pier, and a unique shoreline with an access road used by many for some of the best shore fishing in the region. The public boat access at Lakeside Park was recently upgraded to a Class A boat landing, complete with paved parking.

### **Lake Benton Waterfront Resort**

Lake Benton Waterfront Resort is located 1.5 miles east of Hole-in-the-Mountain Park. The 17-unit lake-side resort is located on the southwestern side of Benton Lake.

### **Stoney Point Campground and Recreational Center**

The Stoney Point Campground and Recreational Center is located 7.5 miles east of Hole-in-the-Mountain Park on the eastern side of Benton Lake. The campground offers over 100 campsites with water, sewer, and electric service, and a public access/boat landing. Visitors to Stoney Point Campground also enjoy the amenities offered at Hole-in-the-Mountain Park.

### **The Lake Benton Opera House**

The Lake Benton Opera House is a historic regional performing arts center. Every year, the Lake Benton Opera House season hosts at least 6 productions, including spring and fall plays, a summer musical, a vocal production of "Broadway Meets Lake Benton" in March, a children's theatre in November, and a "Christmas Show" in December.

Figure 7: Location of Stoney Point Campground

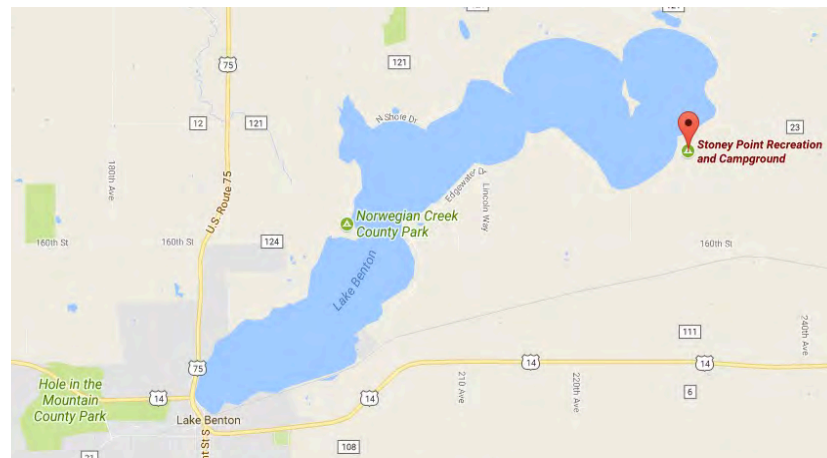


Figure 8: The Lake Benton Opera House



## Site Information

### Overview

Each year, more than 5,000 people visit Hole-in-the-Mountain Park to enjoy an ample variety of nature’s magnificent recreational opportunities and amenities including hiking, horseback riding, camping, sledding, community celebrations, and numerous other activities. Figure 9 highlights the amenities at the park. Hole-in-the-Mountain Park provides facilities and amenities relevant to existing user groups and serves to broaden the appeal of outdoor recreation to new or expanded populations. The park also serves as a destination unto itself, attracting regional users and drawing tourists from outside the regional area. The park has a reputation of providing a quality experience that encourages visitors to return time and again. Figure 10 is a park boundary map and Figure 11 highlights the park boundaries restricted under the Land and Water Conservation Fund.

*Figure 9: Amenities and Programming Currently Supported at Hole-in-the-Mountain Park*

#### Campgrounds

Hole-in-the-Mountain Park – West Campground  
Hole-in-the-Mountain Park – East Campground  
Hole-in-the-Mountain Park – Horse Hill

#### Natural and Hard-Surface Trails

|                      |                 |
|----------------------|-----------------|
| Hiking               | Mountain Biking |
| Horseback Riding     | Bicycling       |
| Walking/Running      | Snowmobiling    |
| Cross-Country Skiing | Snowshoeing     |

#### Other Activities

|               |          |
|---------------|----------|
| GeoCaching    | Sledding |
| Bird Watching |          |

#### Historic/Cultural Outdoor Amenities

Historic Snyder Cabin  
Saddle Horse Holiday  
Te Tonka Ha Rendezvous Celebration  
Hole-in-the-Mountain Prairie Preserve  
Buffalo Ridge

### Trails

Hole-in-the-Mountain Park contains seven miles of natural trails for horseback riding, mountain biking, hiking, and winter snowmobiling. In addition to the natural trails, Hole-in-the-Mountain offers a 1.141 mile hard-surfaced non-motorized loop trail, allowing runners, bicyclists, visitors, and pedestrians to enjoy the park’s scenery on an ADA-accessible trail.

### Campgrounds

With 647 acres of woodland and prairie, Hole-in-the-Mountain Park offers three campground areas with unique natural amenities as highlighted in Figure 12. The East and West Campgrounds are located on the south side of U.S. Highway 14, while the upper campground, commonly referred to as Horse Hill, is located on the north side of U.S. Highway 14. Horse Hill, the upper campground area of Hole-in-the-Mountain Park, is a regional treasure for equestrian enthusiasts. Horse Hill campground offers 30 campsites with water and electric service. Hitching posts and fenced-in areas are adjacent to campsites to accommodate horses. Numerous non-electric campsites are also available throughout the Horse Hill campground. Horse Hill Campground is also home to a kettle hole, a shallow, sediment-filled body of water formed by receding glaciers.

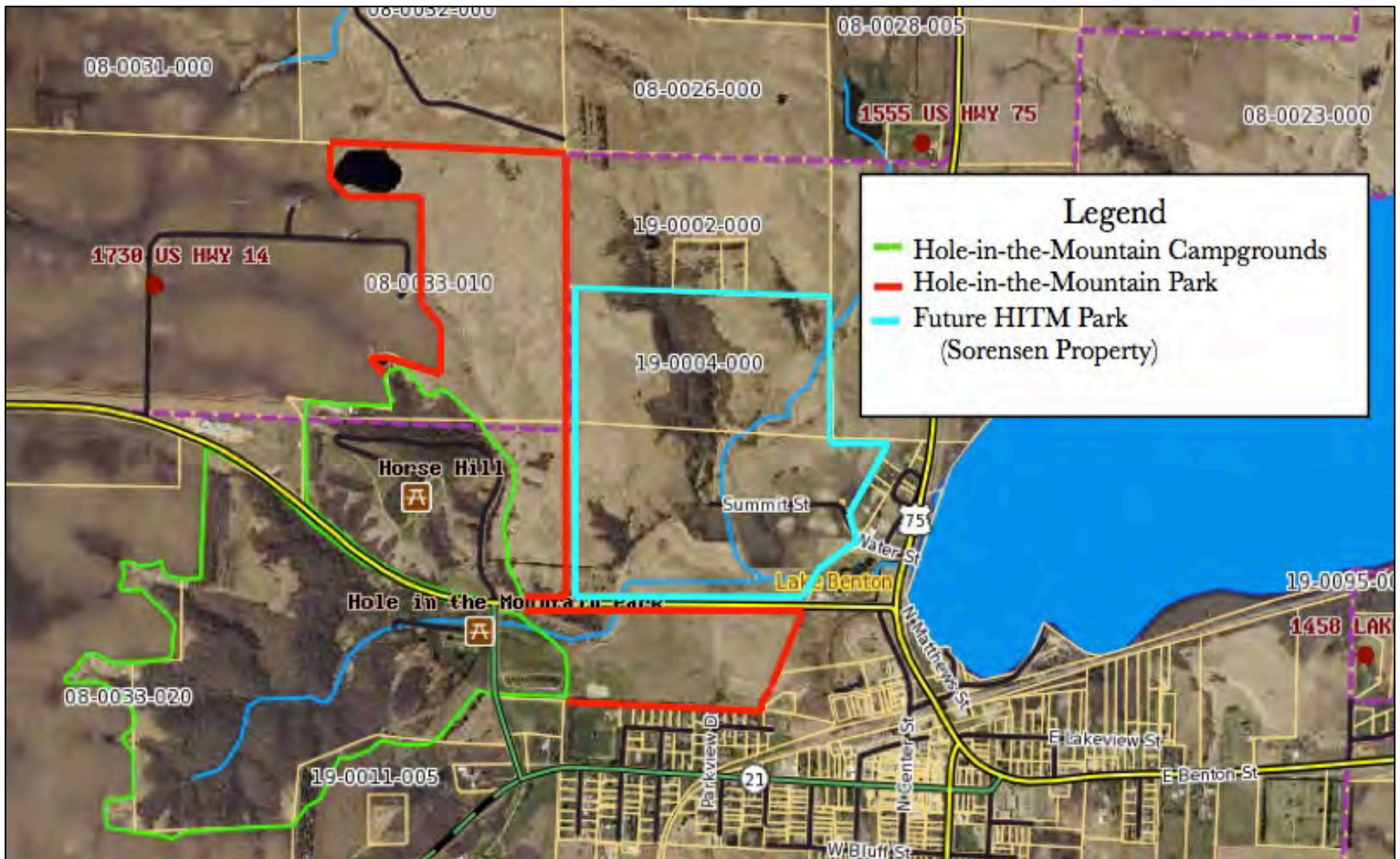
Two additional campground areas can be found on the main-level of Hole-in-the-Mountain Park main-level: the West Campground provides 20 campsites with water and electric service, and the East Campground provides an additional 12 campsites with water and electric service.

### Chalet

During the winter, park visitors enjoy cross-country skiing, sledding, snowshoeing, and snowmobiling. A favored amenity among park visitors is the Chalet building - with restrooms, showers, a 2-story gathering space for park visitors, and an indoor viewing deck on the second floor. The Chalet rests at the bottom of a 1,200 foot sledding hill, conveniently nestled between the East and West Campgrounds. Park visitors enjoy the trails, exploring the woodlands and prairie of Hole-in-the-Mountain Park and the spacious camping area for outdoor games, bonfires, and visiting. The Chalet also serves as a great venue for reunions and weddings too.

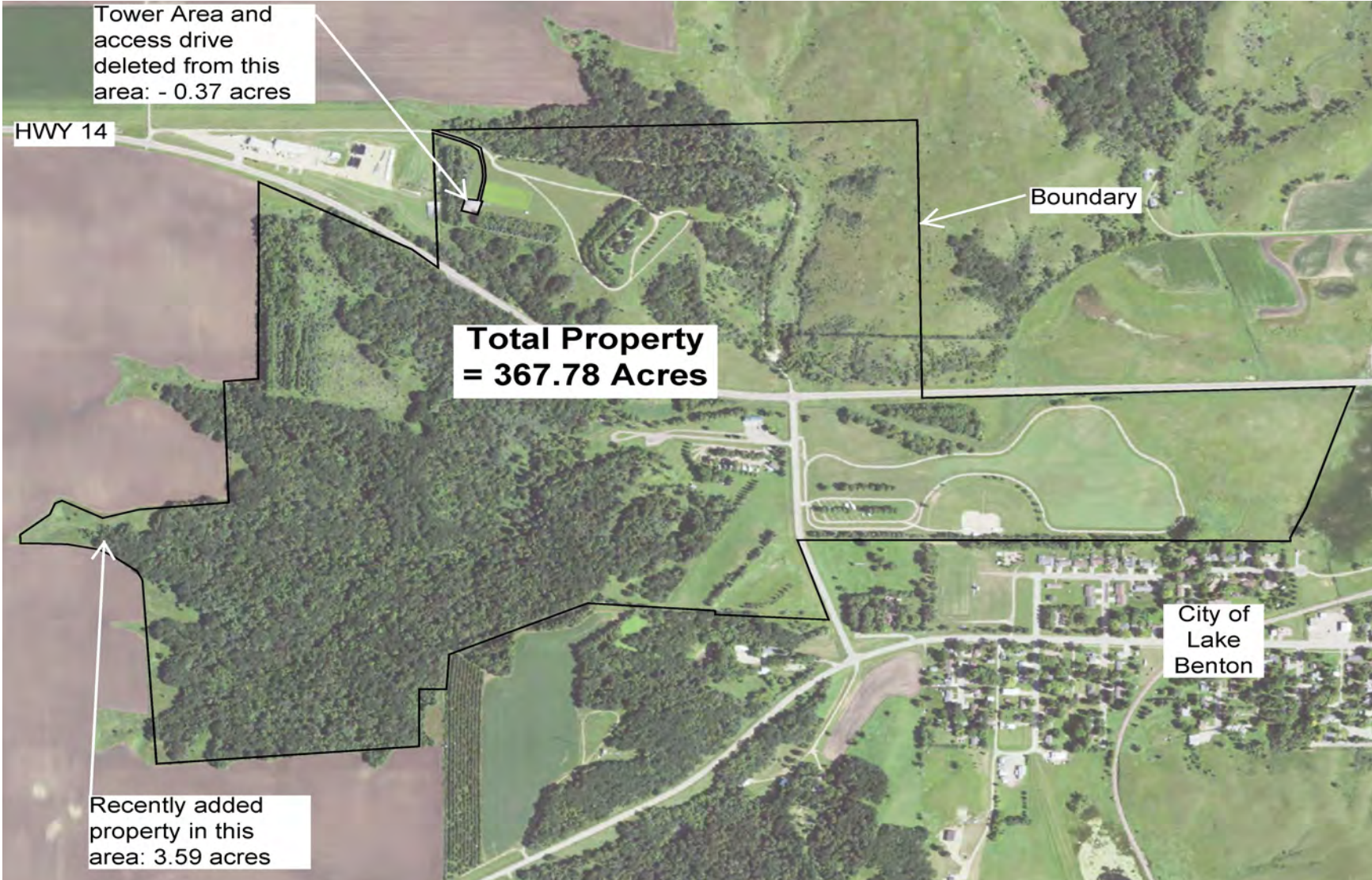
## Site Information

Figure 10: Hole-in-the-Mountain Boundary Map



# Site Information

Figure 11: Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) Restricted Area Map



# Site Information

Figure 12: Map of Hole-in-the-Mountain Park Campgrounds



## Site Information

### Snow Tubing/Sledding

Hole-in-the-Mountain Park is home to the second highest elevation region in all of Minnesota. It's peak of 1,995 feet above sea level is the higher than any elevation within a 100-mile radius in southeastern South Dakota and is more than 200 feet higher than the highest point in Iowa. Hole-in-the-Mountain Park contains a 1,200-foot hill ideal for tubing and sledding.

While sledding continues today at the park, skiing and tubing has not occurred since the mid-1990's. Many local residents and park visitors feel this is an underutilized asset of the park.

*Figure 13: Sledding Hill and Chalet*



### Historic Snyder Cabin

The Historic Snyder Cabin pictured in Figure 32 is the home of early settlers and is nestled within a clearing adjacent to the West Campground.

### Geocaching

Geocaching is an outdoor treasure hunting recreational activity using GPS-enabled devices. Participants navigate to a set of GPS coordinates and then attempt to find the geocache (container) hidden at that location. Hole-in-the-Mountain Park contains three caches.

### Community Events

Each year, Hole-in-the-Mountain Park is the main stage for regionally unique celebrations including Saddle Horse Holiday and Benton-Fremont Days/Te Tonka Ha Celebrations.

Saddle Horse Holiday draws hundreds of visitors to the park. Some years as many as 800 horses and their riders have been drawn to the region to experience Saddle Horse Holiday at Hole-in-the-Mountain Park. With its outdoor equine arena, Horse Hill is the perfect venue for the annual two-ring horse show as well as other equestrian events throughout the year. The day includes a scenic trail ride and parade.

Benton-Fremont Historic Te Tonka Ha, also held at Hole-in-the-Mountain Park, is an annual celebration that includes a weekend of entertaining pioneer re-enactments. The Te Tonka Ha Rendezvous weekend features a variety of historical, educational, and fun activities for the entire family. Go back in time when Minnesota was part of the Dakota Territory and the early explorers, Nicollet and John C. Fremont first came to the "Hole-in-the-Mountain". They named Benton Lake in honor of Fremont's fiancée, Jessie Benton, the daughter of Thomas H. Benton, a U.S. Senator from Missouri. In 1879, taking its name from the lake, the fast-growing community was named Lake Benton.

*Figure 14: Saddle Horse Holiday*





## Trends and Public Values

### Demographics

Lincoln County is a rural area located in Southwest Minnesota along the South Dakota border. According to 2019 data from the American Community Survey, the County has a population of 5,677 and ranks 80 out of 87 in population size for Minnesota counties. The County land area covers 536 square miles with a population density of 11 persons per square mile. The population of Lincoln County is older than some of the neighboring counties and the State of Minnesota. The County has a median age of 45.4 compared to 38 for Minnesota. The percentage of residents age 65 and over is 25.1% for Lincoln County compared to 16.3% for Minnesota. The percentage of residents under age 18 is comparable for the County and State.

The median household income in Lincoln County is \$53,077 with 7.7% of residents living in poverty. Lastly, approximately 96.1% of the population is white alone, not Hispanic or Latino. Approximately 2.1% of the population is Hispanic or Latino. Many counties and larger cities surrounding Lincoln County are becoming increasingly diverse, providing opportunities to engage new visitors to the park.

### Recreational Trends and Public Health Values

A 2015 report conducted by Lauren Hoffman, Director of Marketing and Communications for NRPA summarized five trends that will impact the future of parks and recreation:

- Programs are key to great park attendance.
- The perceived value of distributed services results in agency functions assigned to various departments.
- Agencies are pioneering new funding methods.
- Infrastructure deficit means fighting harder for public dollars.
- Walkable cities draw Millennials, fueling a suburban exodus.

According to a 2016 University of Minnesota study related to outdoor recreation trends, the national outdoor recreation trends reflect 48% of Americans participate in outdoor recreation. Among 6-24 year-olds; 70% are White/Non-Hispanic. The report also revealed:

- Trends in active recreation include: paddle sports, snow sports, trail running and adventure racing.
- Trends in passive and appreciative recreation including viewing and photographing nature and attending wildlife festivals.

- Projected areas of growth: skiing, challenge activities, equestrian activities, motorized water activities, and viewing and photographing nature.

The 2016 Minnesota Department of Natural Resource study related to outdoor recreation trends for park planning described the State and Regional outdoor recreation trends indicated that visitor respondents valued “High service” items like park programs that cater to children, and opportunities to rent equipment, attend special events, and attend programs to develop outdoor skills. The 2016 study found that introducing children (ages 5-18) to the outdoors is critical to active adult participation in multiple outdoor activities. Gateway activities such as running, jogging, trail running, bicycling, and camping are most popular youth (ages 6-24) activities (Outdoor Foundation 2015). Keeping seniors (ages 65+) active is also important. According to the study, the most popular activities among this age group include passive and appreciative activities such as: visiting recreation and historic sites, viewing and photographic nature, and wildlife festivals.

### Economic Development/Tourism Opportunities

Lincoln County has long valued the importance and significance of tourism to economic development. Hole-in-the-Mountain Park attracts numerous visitors from near and far each year to enjoy the diversity of activities at the park. Hole-in-the-Mountain Park is rich with opportunities to bring additional visitors to Lincoln County each year, thereby infusing tourism dollars into the local economy. The Lake Benton Chamber of Commerce is the primary entity promoting tourism in Lake Benton. As part of their website, they prominently display information and promote Hole-in-the-Mountain Park, Saddle Horse Holiday, and Benton Fremont Days.

Cultural opportunities can also influence tourism at the local level. As previously highlighted in the regional context, Lincoln County is home to a variety of historic and cultural places. Local highlights include the Burial Mounds, Osbeck House and The Lake Benton Opera House.

## Regional Significance

### Regional Significance Classification

When Lincoln County applied to the Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission (GMRPTC) in 2017 for a status of regional designation for Hole-in-the-Mountain Park, it had done so in order to fully satisfy the criteria within the designation category, Natural Resource Based Regional Park Classification. In this Master Plan update, Lincoln County seeks to improve upon the earlier regional significance score it received. Accordingly, the park seeks to once again score highly in all four criteria for which a Natural Resource-Based park can be designated:

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

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

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

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

### Hole-in-the-Mountain Park's Satisfaction of Evaluation Criteria for Designation

#### **Criteria #1**

Hole-in-the-Mountain Park is large and diverse enough to support the simultaneous use of multiple types of outdoor recreation user groups without conflict. Hikers, trail runners, and horse riders have enough trails to choose from to find the solitude and scenic experience they seek. Those who wish to stay the night have camping facilities to use, with more on the way. The ecology of the park's protected habitat supports species adapted to woodland, grassland, and edge (ecotones), as well as both upland and wetland environments, which means that birders and wildlife enthusiasts can see species here that they may not find anywhere else within a 90-minute drive. The park has a history and opportunity of supporting activities such as sledding/snow tubing, geocaching, and environmental education. These forms of recreation and enjoyment have a history at the park that Lincoln County recognizes and seeks to invest as it looks to the future.

Since the very nature of the park lends itself to supporting a wide array of outdoor recreation experiences, and because area residents come to the park to enjoy themselves in ways that are compatible with the park, let it be recognized here that Hole-in-the-Mountain Park clearly satisfies this first criteria. Upon further planned investment, the outdoor recreation value of this park will increase.

#### **Criteria #2**

Hole-in-the-Mountain Park conserves a remnant untilled grassland environment and an upland woodland environment of steep gullies and ridges. In this environment, seeps and spring flow contribute to pockets of unique perennial wetland habitat with high water quality. There are no other locations in the region where upland forest can be found; the landscape character of the region is historically grass. Since European-American settlement much of the landscape character has further shifted away from any type of woodland cover and is predominantly monocrop agriculture.

The park name, Hole-in-the-Mountain is a direct reference to the cultural significance of the landscape in that it is a location where travel up and down the Buffalo Ridge was easier compared to other locations. While Buffalo Ridge is hardly a mountain, it is large and steep enough feature to stand out as being mountain-like to both historic and current residents that are used to the relative flatness of the surrounding area. By protecting an upland forest environment within a sea of agriculture and giving visitors access to trails that ascend the entirety of the Buffalo Ridge, this park satisfied this criteria by preserving a diverse natural and historic landscape.

#### **Criteria #3**

Hole-in-the-Mountain Park is bisected by US Highway 14. Travelers on this east-west corridor to or from Brookings, South Dakota have no choice but to travel through the park as part of traveling through Lake Benton.

## Regional Significance

The park is 14 miles from State Highway 23 and the corridor between Marshall, Minnesota and Sioux Falls, South Dakota. The park is directly north of Pipestone National Monument via travel on US Highway 75 as illustrated on Figure 15. Pipestone National Monument is 20 miles south.

Due to the park's proximity to high quality US and state highways and the populations centers they connect, Hole-in-the-Mountain Park can easily satisfy this criterion. Furthermore, the short distance that this park is away from the Pipestone National monument tourist destination means that with proper marketing, Lincoln County can ensure that the park lands on the checklist of destinations that visitors to the region want to see.

### Criteria #4

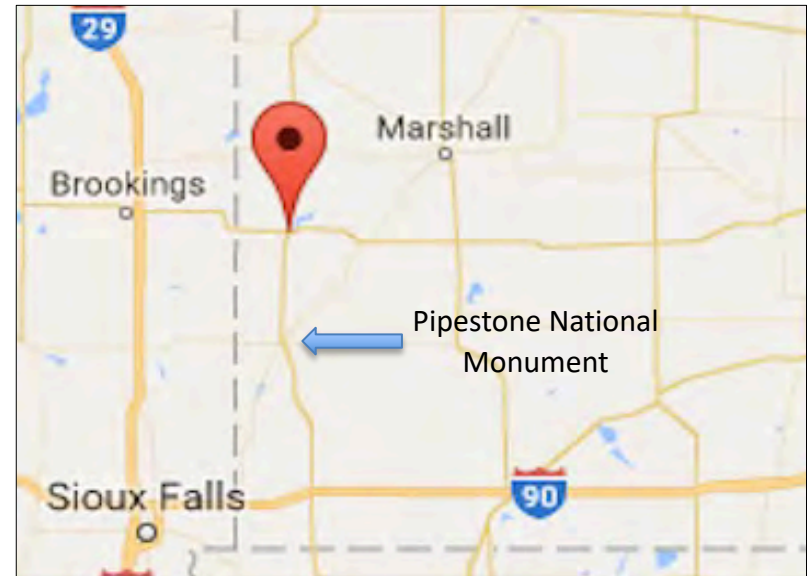
Hole-in-the-Mountain Park is unique for the region in that it is a large enough landscape to support a diversity of outdoor recreation activities that are not found elsewhere in the region. Outdoor recreation enthusiasts are drawn to the park in part because of the opportunities that are afforded by the park's combination of somewhat steep & hilly topography and woodland cover. This scenic combination makes for terrain that draws horse riders, snowmobilers, snowshoers and geocaching enthusiasts. Additionally, the large sledding hill sees active winter use from area residents and is an activity that Lincoln County wants to officially invest in and support.

The only other important protected landscapes within the region that can support outdoor recreation are the Prairie Coteau Scientific and Natural Area southeast near Holland, the Pipestone National Monument to the south near Pipestone, and Camden State Park northeast near Russell. While Pipestone has some woodland and topography, the woodland is not expansive and the topography has been set aside as a Dakota sacred site and is not appropriate for many of the outdoor recreation activities that are supported by Hole-in-the-Mountain Park. Camden State Park is the largest forested landscape in the region, but it is a floodplain forest environment lacking the varied topography that many trail users prefer.

Prairie Coteau Scientific and Natural Area is protected landscape that is primitive and closed to outdoor recreation activities other than dispersed hiking. Aside from these three locations, outdoor recreation activities in the region have to be sought in smaller city and county parks or within public right-of-ways in a mostly flat agricultural landscape.

When comparing what Hole-in-the-Mountain Park offers relative to other outdoor recreation alternatives, it is clear that the park satisfies this criteria. There few if any other places in the region where horse riding, sledding, snowshoeing, and geocaching activities can be found, let alone coexist together. In addition, the park has the ability to actively support many other types of outdoor recreation, such as mountain biking, cross-country running events, and primitive camping.

Figure 15: Map Highlighting Distances to Regional Locations



## Public Engagement

### Previous Engagement

Multiple canvassing efforts have been made in Lincoln County with the intention to garner the public's input related to park and trail amenities within Lincoln County. These engagement efforts were important for informing the original application by Lincoln County to the Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission (GMRPTC) for Hole-in-the-Mountain Park's classification to a regionally significant park. A description and summary of the results from these four previous public engagement efforts between 2011 and 2017 are found below.

### **Public Meeting (2011)**

The public meeting and survey, hosted in 2011, was intended to gather community input related to the Lincoln County Trail Commission's 2011 Legacy Grant application. The findings from this meeting and subsequent survey were used to reflect the needs, concerns, and interests from guests and visitors of Lincoln County's parks and trails (*see Appendix B for further details of survey results*).

The key findings from the 120 participants include:

- The primary activities of the participants: walking, hiking, walking pets, biking (road, mountain and recreational), and jogging/running.
- Activities that residents would like to be able to do on a trail in Lincoln County include: walking, hiking, jogging, biking (road, mountain, recreational), and walking pets.
- Residents are interested in using a trail for recreation, health and exercise, and spending time with friends and family.
- Trail activities that most people would be interested in include: walking, hiking, walking pet, jogging, running, horseback riding/equestrian.

### **Public Meeting (2014)**

A public meeting and survey in 2014 was intended to gather community input related to the Lincoln County Trail Commission's 2014 Legacy Grant application. The findings from this meeting and survey were used to reflect continued needs, concerns, and interests from guests and visitors of Lincoln County's parks and trails.

According to surveys taken from Lincoln County individuals and groups, the highest trail activity participation included walking, biking, and jogging or running. These were also the trail related activities that survey respondents participated in the most often. Hunting and fishing were next in popularity. Lincoln County residents also expressed their interest in utilizing park facilities that include snowmobiling, paddle sports, riding horses, riding golf carts or wheelchairs, and cross-country skiing/snowshoeing. The key takeaways from the survey include:

- **Walkers want:** firm and stable surface, operating space clear of hazards.
- **Joggers/Runners want:** surface clear of hazards, firm and stable surfaces – some prefer unpaved.
- **Bicyclists want:** smooth, hard surfaces clear of obstructions, avoid sharp turns, clear sight lines, prefer flat or rolling terrain without steep hills, safe road crossings.
- **Equestrians want:** adequate sight distances, passing/pull off spaces, hazard-free surfaces, structures, adequate for point loads of 800-1400 lb/horse, horizontal clearance on bridges and boardwalks, hitching posts, trailer parking.
- **Mountain Bikers want:** groomed trails designed for speed, access to rest stops and local services.
- **Snowshoers want:** unplowed, ungroomed surfaces are acceptable.
- **Cross-Country Skiers want:** groomed trails, flat or rolling hills, avoiding sharp turns, clearance for poles, shelter/warming house, clear mapping/sign system.
- **Hunters/Fisherman want:** short access trails to hunting and fishing locations to avoid carrying gear/catch long distances.
- **People with wheelchairs/Scooters want:** low-grade hills (5%), firm and stable surface, very few surface obstructions, no large surface gaps, railings or wheel stops, and plenty of turning space.
- **All trails users want:** Convenient access from home or work, adequate parking, trailheads/rest areas with restrooms and water fountains, clear mapping and signage.

# Public Engagement

## Public Survey (Jan-March 2017)

In order to collect follow-up information from Hole-in-the-Mountain Park patrons (existing and prospective), a survey was launched in January 2017. This survey was sent to various patron groups (campers, city mayors, city and county clerks, chambers of commerce, boy and girl scout groups, 4-H, and other youth and church groups) located within 80 miles of Lake Benton, as well as Sioux Falls, Brookings, Dell Rapids, and Brandon, South Dakota.

The goal of this survey was to help identify the recreational and educational needs and interests in the Lake Benton region. The survey, including an informational brochure, was submitted to user groups through a variety of channels: direct mail, email, SoGo Online Survey, Survey Monkey, and as a handout to existing camper clientele. The response from this survey was low. However, responses were consistent with previous engagement efforts on outdoor recreation. Participants indicated that walking, hiking, camping, snowmobiling, sledding, tubing, and water sports are among the primary activities that parks users are looking for in our region.

## Community Meeting (April 2017)

A community meeting was held April 6, 2017 in the City of Lake Benton. This meeting generated valuable and viable ideas for future goals and strategies both for Hole-in-the-Mountain Park and Lake Benton, as a whole. Meeting participants brainstormed ideas regarding future enhancement of the assets in and around Lake Benton, including improvement ideas for Hole-in-the-Mountain Park. A few common themes became evident:

- A strong desire was expressed to incorporate more youth and teenager activities at Hole-in-the-Mountain Park.
- Expansion of the trail system within Hole-in-the-Mountain Park.
- Link Hole-in-the-Mountain Park and Norwegian Creek County Park with a trail.
- Developing employment opportunities for teens and young adults at Hole-in-the-Mountain Park.

## Current Engagement

The 2017 Master Plan for Hole-in-the-Mountain Park created as part of Lincoln County's application to GMRPTC for the park to receive a Regional Park designation achieved this purpose, with a caveat; the Master Plan needed to be strengthened in order for the park to be competitive for funding that would further enhance the park. Lincoln County hired Development Services Inc. (DSI) to act as project manager for Hole-in-the-Mountain Park Master Plan improvements.

DSI partnered with the Rivers, Trails & Conservation Assistance Program of the National Park Service in late 2019 to develop a broad campaign to engage with hundreds of area residents around desired improvements for Hole-in-the-Mountain Park. An in-person engagement campaign was planned for the spring and summer of 2020, but with the arrival of the unexpected COVID-19 global pandemic, plans were changed and the campaign went forward as a virtual effort, whereby community feedback was sought via electronic survey forms, Zoom webinar and Zoom focus group.

The community engagement campaign to gather public input about the future improvements for Hole-in-the-Mountain Park consisted of:

- 18 question online survey with paper copies made available at city hall and the public library.
- Interactive webinar of survey results and brainstorming suggestions for park improvements.
- Concept plan presentation and focus group session with WSB.
- Park Board review of concept plans and cost estimates.
- County Board review of concept plans and cost estimates.
- Public review of Master Plan.

Public engagement was challenged as a result of the altered work and social environments due to public gathering restrictions put in place by Lincoln County and the State of Minnesota. A good faith, broad-based, inclusive effort was designed and promoted for the first three engagement activities. A summary of those activities and their results follow below.

## Public Engagement

### Online Survey

The goal of the online survey was to connect with 200 area residents about issues concerning Hole-in-the-Mountain Park use, safety, desirability, and suggested improvements. The purpose of the survey was to obtain information about the public's sentiment regarding future investment in the park from a much larger sample of the local population than previous efforts had been able to obtain. A large survey response was sought to provide a solid basis by which to make plans, develop cost estimates, and ultimately make funding requests from competitive funding sources.

The online survey consisted of 18 questions that utilized ranking and short answer response type questions. This survey went live on May 5, 2020 and stayed active until June 30, 2020. The survey link was shared online via Facebook, Twitter, County website, and personal emails to trusted partners for distribution to their channels. The survey link was shared physically on 600 flyers that were provided to the grocery store in Lake Benton and a local dentist office. Flyers were included in the City Newsletter, distributed to local school district contacts, and also made available by county staff to campers and park visitors at Lincoln County parks. Paper copies of survey were made available but were never used by the public. The survey was promoted on radio and in print and digital copies of the local news media.

A goal of 200 participants for the overall community engagement was set. In the end, despite a broad and persistent campaign to recruit as much community input as possible, 128 survey responses were collected. We estimate that through the survey, focus groups, and other engagement efforts we reached an estimated 170 participants. Responses of the survey are provided in Appendix B. Some of the key insights from the survey process are highlighted in the pages that follow.

Survey respondents were asked to indicate the recreational activities most closely associated with Hole-in-the-Mountain Park. As illustrated in Figure 17, walking/hiking, camping, horseback riding/camping, and skiing/tubing received the highest responses.

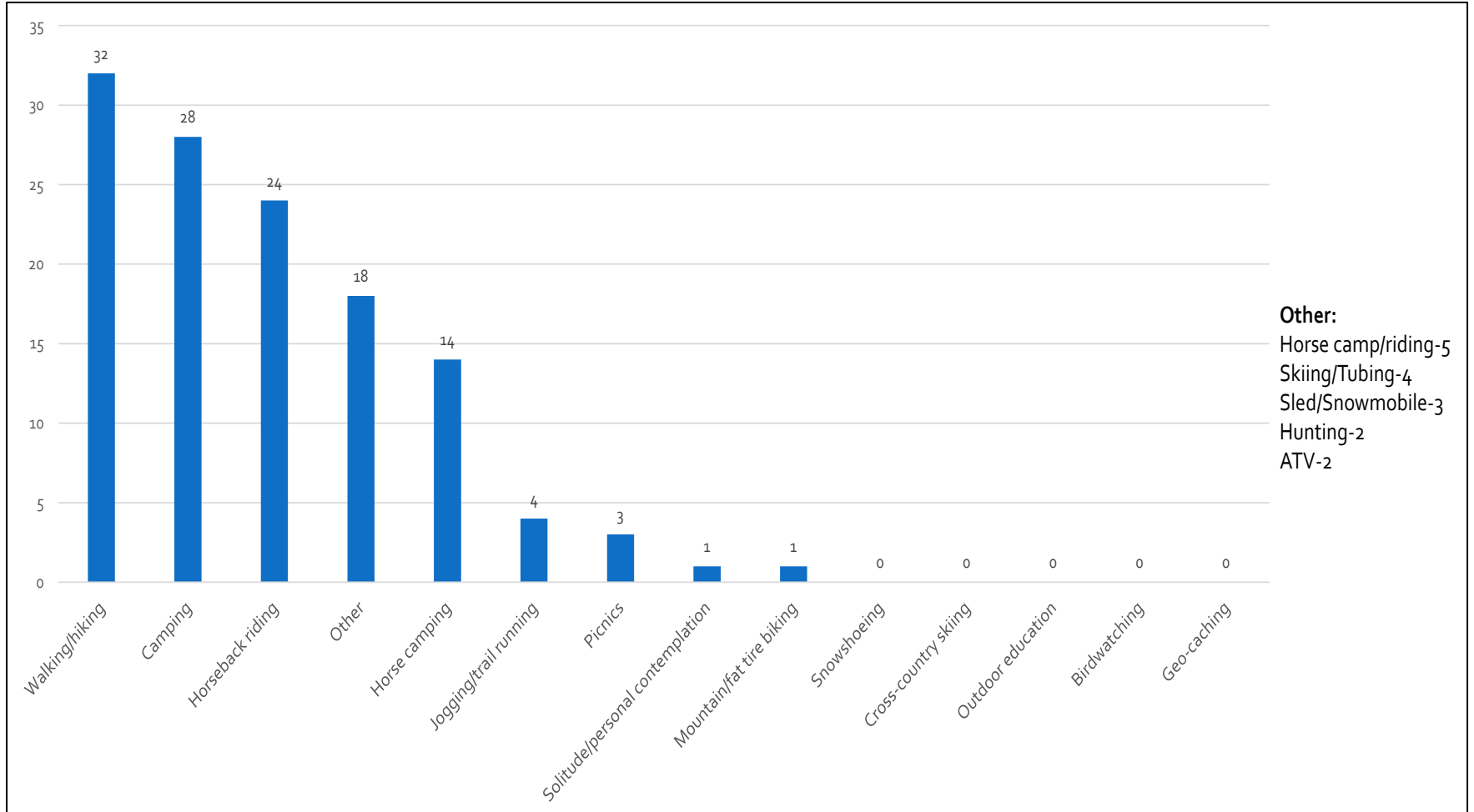
In a follow-up question, respondents were asked to indicate how Hole-in-the-Mountain Park compares to other destinations. The park scored well in the areas of camping, picnics and bird watching. Areas such as jogging/running, hiking/walking, and horseback riding did not score as well due to the condition of the existing trails following the storm damage in 2011. The survey responses showed a strong interest for improvements to trails so these areas can be utilized again.

*Figure 16: Campground at Hole-in-the-Mountain Park*



## Public Engagement

Figure 17: Survey Responses for Recreational Activities Most Closely Associated with Hole-in-the-Mountain Park

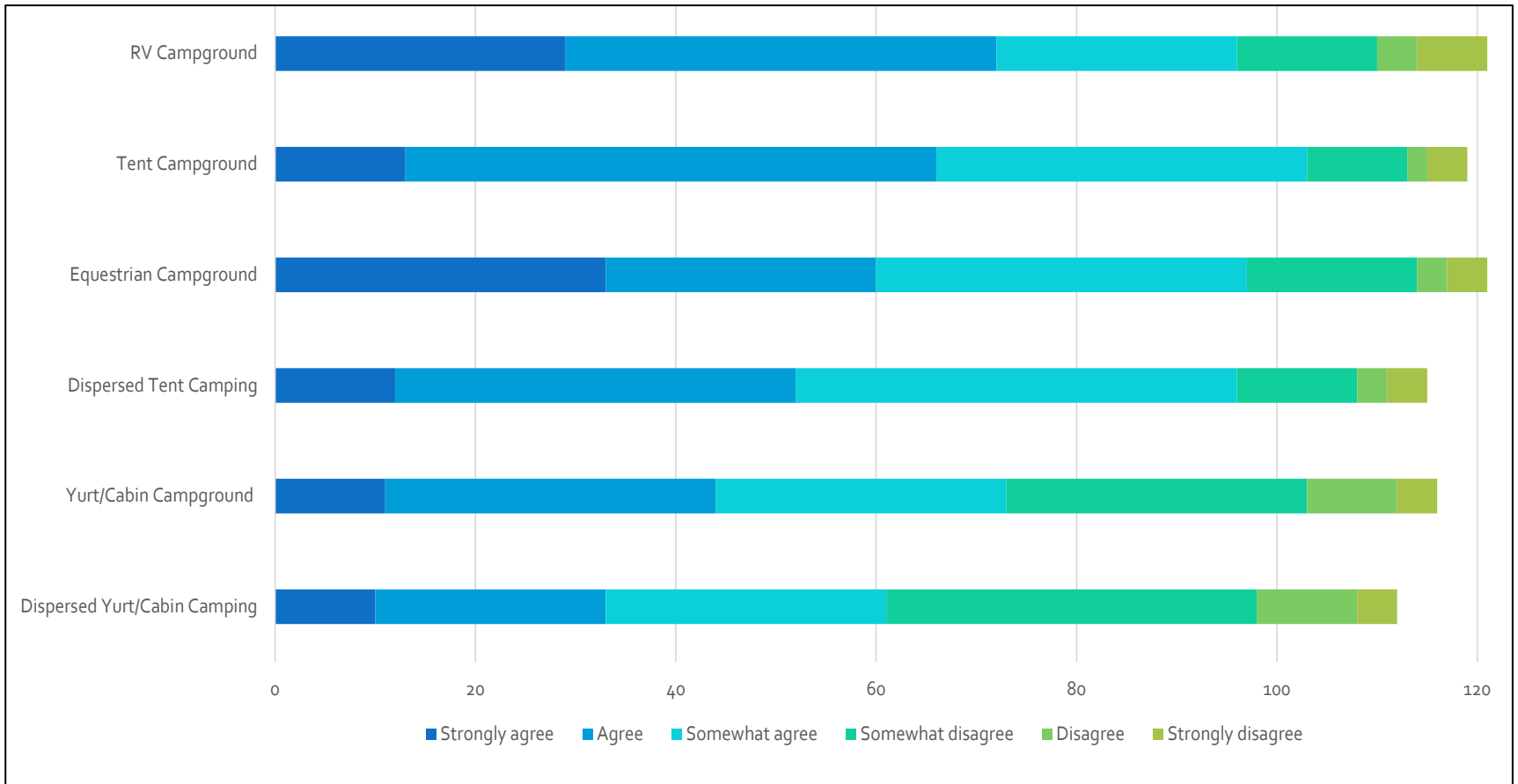


## Public Engagement

Previous community engagement has illustrated a strong interest in additional campsite development at Hole-in-the-Mountain Park. As part of the survey process, respondents were asked to indicate their agreement with the type of camping that should be added at the park.

As illustrated in Figure 18, an RV campground received the highest number of responses for strongly agree and agree followed by tent camping. Equestrian camping also had a strong response. Overall, camping received a positive survey response as an important component of the park.

Figure 18: Survey Responses for Type of Additional Camping Most Appropriate for Hole-in-the-Mountain Park



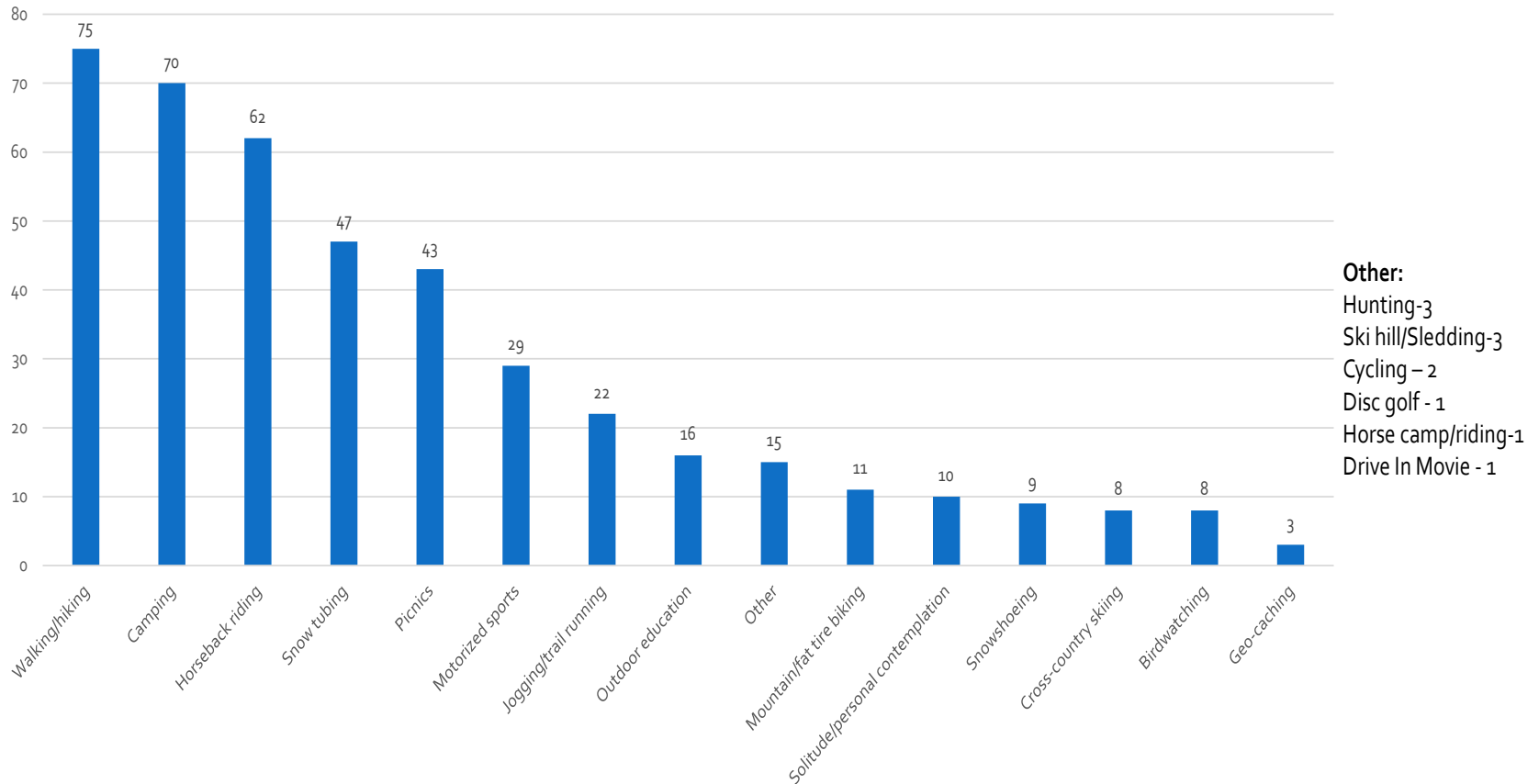


## Public Engagement

A final key insight from the community engagement highlights community input on areas in which Hole-in-the-Mountain Park can become a premiere recreation destination. Respondents were asked to focus on one thing the park should do really well. Figure 19 highlights the responses to this question. Walking/hiking was the highest response followed by camping, horseback riding and snow tubing.

The terrain and assets of the park support these activities and provide a unique experience for visitors. The survey data was vital for informing the concept plan process discussed on the following pages. Overall, survey respondents highlighted the uniqueness and significance of Hole-in-the-Mountain Park and were excited about the opportunities that exist, but they also noted that significant upgrades are needed to make the trails useable.

Figure 19: Survey Responses Highlighting One Activity that Would Make Hole-in-the-Mountain Park a Premiere Recreational Destination



## Public Engagement

### Interactive Webinar

A two-hour interactive webinar using the Zoom virtual meeting platform was hosted on August 5, 2020 and attended by 11 organizations. Attendees of this event were invited from a “wish list” of agencies and organizations that DSI developed in consultation with the National Park Service (NPS). The purpose of the interactive webinar was threefold; 1) to provide background on Hole-in-the-Mountain Park, 2) share the results of the online survey, and 3) most importantly, to brainstorm ideas that would be used to inform the concept design phase of the Hole-in-the-Mountain Park Master Plan update.

The organizations listed in Table 1 were invited to participate in the webinar and were estimated to all have professional expertise or interest concerning landscape management and planning for the kind of large, public landscape that Hole-in-the-Mountain Park is.

Table 1: Invite List for Interactive Webinar

|  |                                |
|--|--------------------------------|
| <i>The Nature Conservancy</i>  | <i>Sioux Tribe(s)</i>          |
| <i>US Fish &amp; Wildlife Service</i>  | <i>MN DOT</i>                  |
| <i>MN DNR Forester, Willmar Office</i>   | <i>Lincoln County</i>          |
| <i>MN DNR Fish and Wildlife</i>  | <i>MN DNR Parks and Trails</i> |
| <i>Greater MN Regional Parks and Trails Commission</i>   | <i>Sportsman’s Club</i>        |
| <i>Economic Development Authority</i>  | <i>Bed and Breakfast</i>       |
| <i>Equestrians- Saddle Horse Days</i>  | <i>Boy Scouts/Girl Scouts</i>  |
| <i>Southwest Minnesota Arts Council</i>  | <i>Tonka Ha Events</i>         |
| <i>Bicycle Shops- Brookings, Marshall</i>  | <i>Travel SW, Explore MN</i>   |
| <i>Southwest Regional Development Commission</i>   | <i>Drift Club Snowmobilers</i> |
| <i>South Dakota State University<br/>(Landscape Architecture Dept., Bike Club, Natural Resources Dept. or clubs)</i> | <i>Chamber of Commerce</i>     |

### Focus Group Session

A focus group consisting of invitees who had previously participated in the online survey, interactive webinar, or responded from a public call for participants in the local newspaper convened on the Zoom virtual meeting platform on September 16, 2020. Eleven members of the public attended this event, including a member of the press from Buffalo Ridge Newspaper.

Figure 20 is an analysis summary that compiled information from the survey results and interactive webinar. This analysis was used to create three illustrative concept plans (Figures 21-23) that were presented to participants attending the focus group. After each concept plan was presented, focus group participants were able to ask questions and provide feedback both verbally and via the chat feature.

All the feedback received was captured in notes by DSI or NPS staff and was forwarded to WSB. concept plans were also posted at City Hall for review and comment with 10 people providing feedback. The comments received in response to the three concepts were used by WSB to create one refined concept plan.

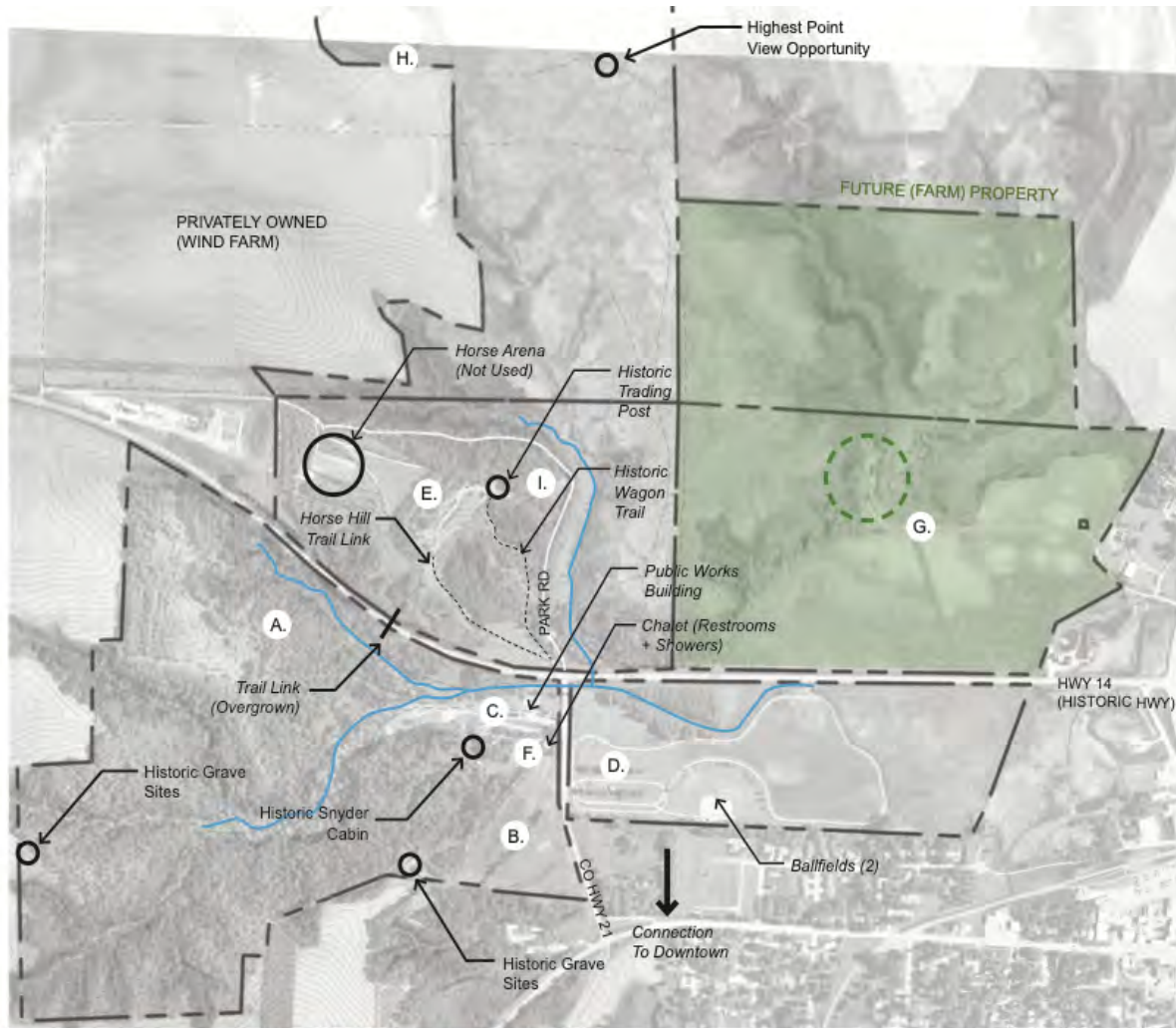
### Park Board & County Board Review

WSB completed a refined concept plan for Hole-in-the-Mountain Park on October 26, 2020. This concept plan was based on feedback obtained from DSI, the NPS, and from public input obtained during the September 16, 2020 focus group. Feedback and input for the refined concept plan was obtained from the Lincoln County Park Board on October 28, 2020. Feedback and input from the Lincoln County Board was obtained on November 3, 2020.

Comments from the Park Board and the County Board were a litmus test to ensure that the form of the design proposals was in keeping with the sentiment of the public that was determined during the previous engagement activities. The review of the concept plans was also another opportunity to edit elements of the design before cost estimates were prepared. A summary of the feedback received from the boards is captured in the notes from these meetings and located in Appendix A.

# Public Engagement

Figure 20: Park Analysis Summary



- A. Trails: Phased trail maintenance with Buckthorn removal is needed.
- B. Sledding Hill: Tow Bar system has been removed.
- C. Western Campground: 20 Sites with electric and water. Located near chalet with restrooms and showers. Poor connection to East Campground.
- D. East Campground: 12 sites with electric and water. Desired expansion.
- E. Horse Hill Campground: Has 30 sites with electric and water. Has previously held events at on-site horse arena. Use has declined in recent years.
- F. Chalet: Currently has restrooms and showers and could be expanded.
- G. Future (Farm) Property: Farm site could provide unique programming as working farm with routine farmers market events or historic operations.
- H. Hole in the Mountain - Kettle Hole: Also known as Glacial Pond. Currently has no access by trail.
- I. Historic wagon trail and trading post could allow for an annual 'frontier day' program by re-creating historic events.

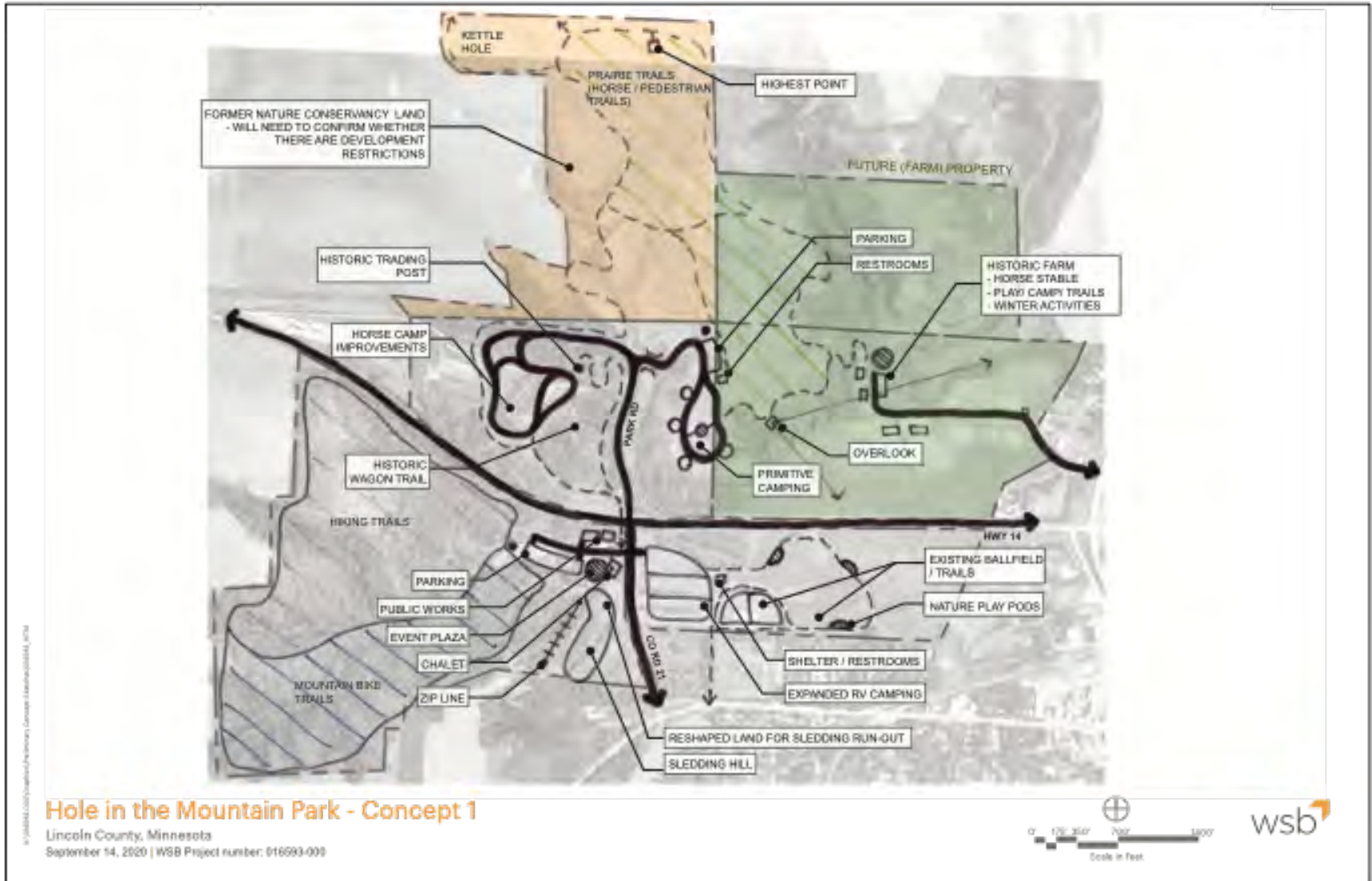
## Hole in the Mountain Park - Analysis Summary

Lincoln County, Minnesota



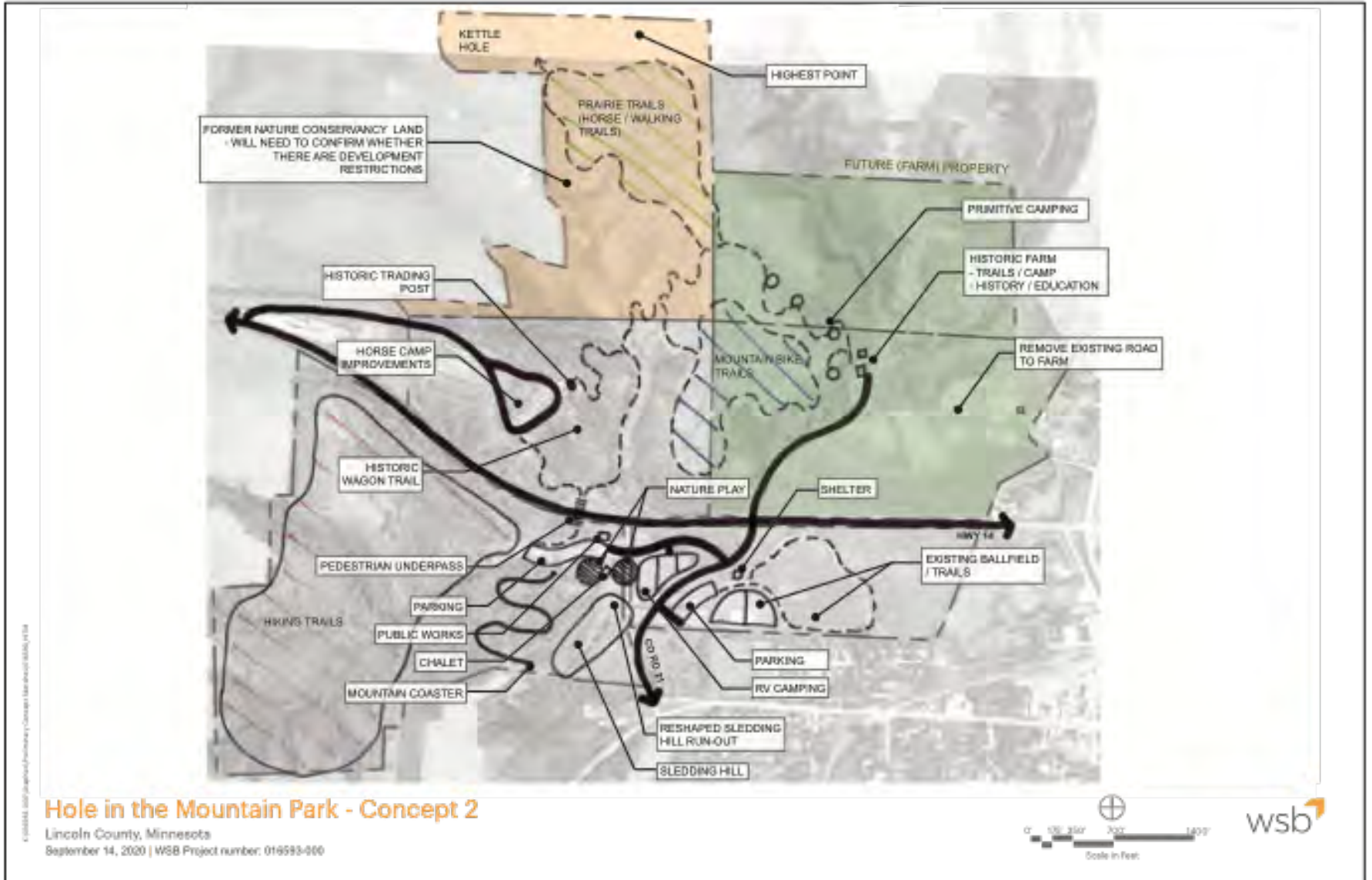
# Public Engagement

Figure 21: Concept Plan 1



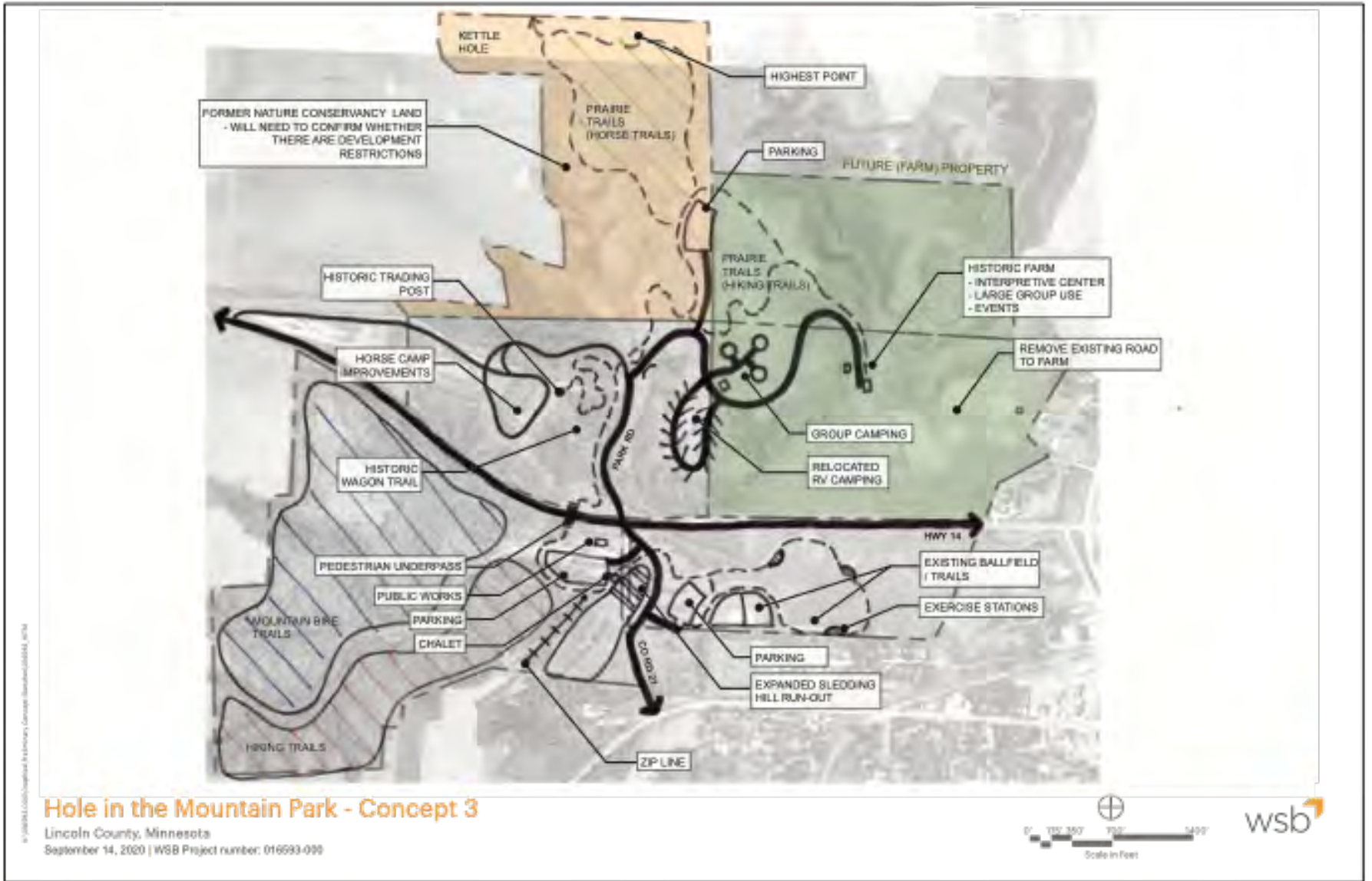
# Public Engagement

Figure 22: Concept Plan 2



# Public Engagement

Figure 23: Concept Plan 3



## Public Engagement

The Park Board was very interested in placement of various elements and how those improvements would impact park use and function. Board members would ask questions or raise concerns about a proposed element, with the WSB landscape architect, DSI or NPS staff responding to the intent of the design decision and how such a change to the park would be an improvement along with providing clarifications as needed. Topic areas discussed included, location of camping, location and function of sewer systems, trail access and use for all intended users, access and restriction of park to equestrian users, revenue opportunities, and phasing of development of the site.

The Lincoln County Board of Commissioners had a positive discussion regarding the major elements. Principle concerns among the board members were about construction costs and the steps the county will need to take to ensure match funds are available.

### **Park Board & County Board Review of Schematic Plan, Estimated Construction Costs, and Operational Cost Estimates**

The information was presented to the Park Board on December 9, 2020. The Park Board had considerable discussion on the costs, areas of cost savings due to existing infrastructure and experience with local construction costs, and priority areas. Some of the phases were downsized and reprioritized to create feasible projects relative to the County's budget.

The information was presented to the County Board on December 15, 2020. The Board did not have any concerns or changes. The discussion largely focused on the importance of budgeting additional resources on an annual basis to address the improvements outlined in the plan. Detailed information on construction and operational cost estimates are located in the Implementation, Management and Sustainability Section.

### **Park Board Review of Programming, Ecological/Resource Plan, and Research Plan**

Staff from NPS led a discussion with the Park Board on various sections of the Master Plan including Programming, Ecological/Land Resource

Plan, and Research Plan. NPS and DSI developed a survey on programming opportunities and this information was reviewed with the Board. NPS also facilitated a discussion on research opportunities and what information the Park Board would like to know in the future. Lastly, NPS facilitated a discussion with the Board on a strategy for protecting and managing the park's resources.

Full notes from each meeting are included in Appendix A.

### **Approval of Master Plan**

Prior to the adoption of the Master Plan, the County provided the opportunity for the public to review and comment on the plan. Two comments were received that focused on design of future improvements. One comment was to consider the magic carpet versus a tow rope for the sledding hill due to a variety of benefits with this system. A second comment was to ensure adequate parking exists on Horse Hill and the main entrance near Chalet for day horse riders and those camping on Horse Hill. Many staying at Horse Hill will have a vehicle and camper and a second vehicle with horse trailer. The Lincoln County Board of Commissioners adopted the Master Plan on February 2, 2021.

*Figure 24: East Campground*



# Development Master Plan

## Development Master Plan Introduction

The development of the Master Plan reflects how Hole-in-the-Mountain Park has researched and is prepared to meet both the local and regional recreational interests and needs. The public process played an instrumental role in determining and defining regional interests and needs for the park. It helped set the direction of the Master Plan. Having considered the public input, the Lincoln County Parks Board and the Lincoln County Commissioners have approved the development master plan as defined in this section. The Implementation, Management and Sustainability Section contains the cost estimates for the highlighted improvements as well as operational cost estimates. Lincoln County recognizes that as Hole-in-the-Mountain Park is improved it will also increase the operations and maintenance costs for the park. As illustrated in the cost estimates, each phase includes specific project costs, in addition to general sitework costs, contingencies, and project fees (design, engineering, admin, staking/testing, etc).

Figure 25 highlights the overall site plan. The master plan provides related recreational activities consistent with the vision statement as previously defined. The plan includes a five phased approach. Key elements of the plan include:

- Trail improvements and development including the cleanup of existing trail plus new trail development
- Three (3) phases to campground development – creating approximately 70 sites with electrical and water/sewer service, plus water/sewer service to existing sites
- Development of Sledding Hill
- Chalet improvements
- Development of future park property and trails

## Phase 1 – South Area

Phase 1 focuses on trail improvements, sledding hill, improvement of 36 RV campsites, dump station, entrance monument, and shower/restroom for new RV campground highlighted in Figure 27.

## **Natural Hiking Trail Improvements**

The natural hiking trail improvement project includes the cleanup of brush and washouts of the existing 7-mile natural trail and improvements to the

natural surface trails to reduce erosion. This is a multi-use horse and hiking trail that once improved will provide a 5' wide trail with 7' wide clearance. Improvements will also create a 12' vertical clearance. The cleanup will include clearing trees from the road/trail, killing and removing Buckthorn and Honeysuckle shrubs, stabilizing the trail, and restoring forest groundcover to decommissioned trail segments. Floods have caused damage to bottom-outs and 150-year-old trees are easily toppled with wind. Figure 26 highlights the conceptual design for trail improvements. This phase is anticipated to be completed within 1-2 years of the Master Plan approval.

## **Campgrounds Development**

Hole-in-the-Mountain Park currently has a West Campground with 20 campsites, East Campground with 12 sites and Horse Hill with 30 sites. As the County analyzed the demand for additional campsites and envisioned the opportunities to expand improvements and programming around the Chalet and sledding hill, the opportunity for campground growth was better suited in the East Campground vicinity. Overall, this area will add up to 70 new sites. Phase 1 of the campground development project includes the installation of water/sewer service to 36 campsites in the East Campground. Improvements will also include bituminous drives and parking. Each campsite will include aggregate pads with picnic table, fire pit and power pedestal. A new dump station will also be developed in this area.

Development of the East Campground will also link Hole-in-the-Mountain Park to the City ball fields, trail systems and roads that lead into Lake Benton's downtown and other local amenities. Figure 27 illustrates the development plan for the East Campground.

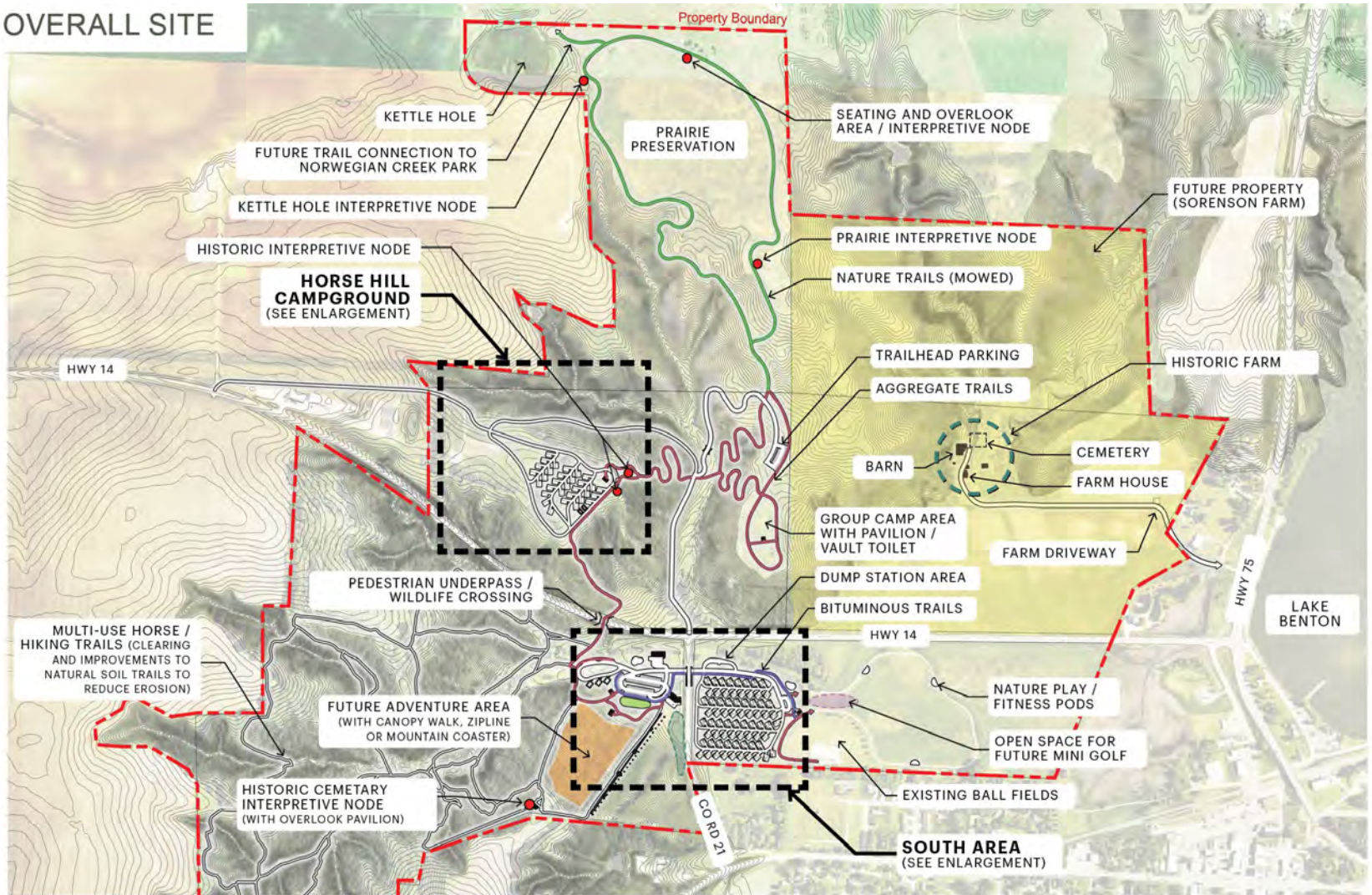
This phase is anticipated to be completed within 1-3 years of the Master Plan approval. To assist with operational costs, the County will continue to use a campground resident host site. These hosts assist with reservations, cleaning of facilities and enforcing park rules. In return they are provided with free/reduced cost of their campsite. The option will also exist for the County to eventually decommission the West Campground area to accommodate the improvements to the sledding hill and Chalet.



# Development Master Plan

Figure 25: Overall Site Plan

## OVERALL SITE



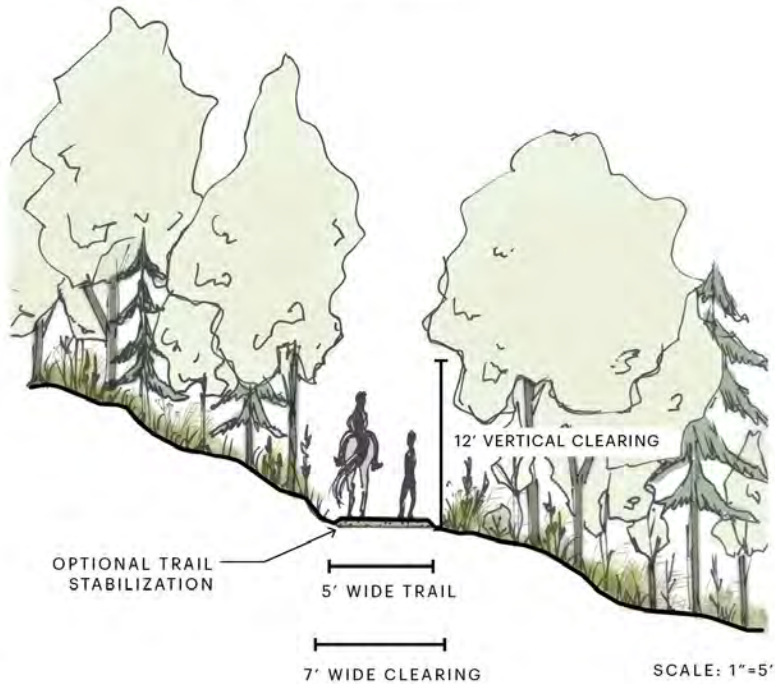
Hole In The Mountain Park | Master Plan  
Lincoln County - Lake Benton, Minnesota



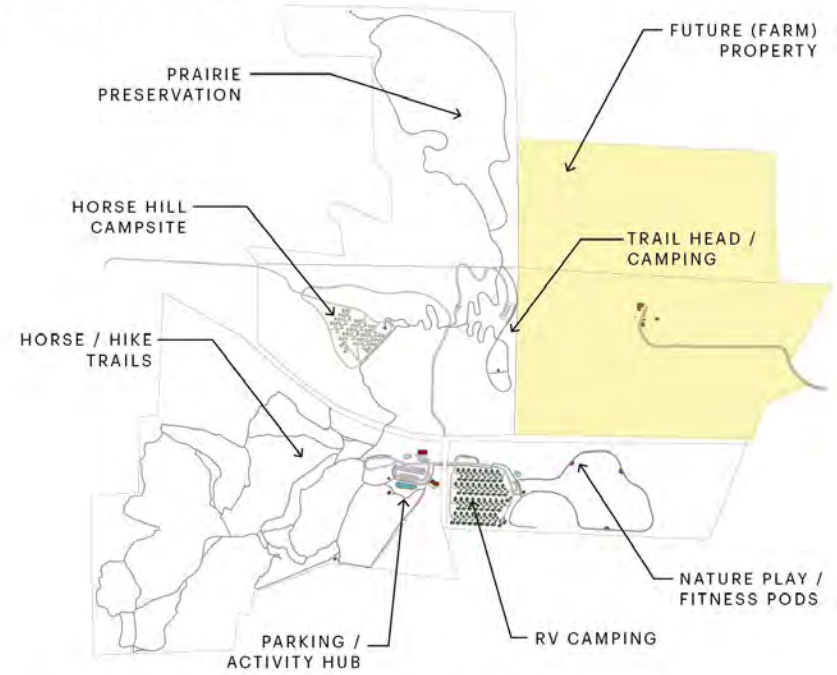
# Development Master Plan

Figure 26: Site Features  
Courtesy of WSB

## MULTI-USE HORSE & HIKE TRAIL SECTION



## OVERALL SITE PLAN



### FITNESS POD EXAMPLE



### NATURE PLAY POD EXAMPLE



## Hole In The Mountain Park | Master Plan

Lincoln County - Lake Benton, Minnesota  
December 22, 2020 | WSB Project number: 016593-000



# Development Master Plan

Figure 27: Master Plan for South Area  
Courtesy of WSB

## SOUTH ENLARGEMENT



## Development Master Plan

### Sledding Hill Development

The goal of the Sledding Hill is to rectify the unmet winter recreational needs for youth, teens, and families in the region by providing a sledding hill at Hole-in-the-Mountain Park. This amenity will not only deliver recreational amenities during the long Minnesota winter months but will also provide employment opportunities for teens and young adults in the region, as well as increasing tourism. The community engagement process also identified other recreational improvements and programming that will complement the sledding hill such as a skating area and outdoor plaza. These will be developed in future phases. Phase 1 of the development of the new Sledding Hill will include the purchase and installation of a lift system, snow machine(s), and new lighting. It will also result in the development of a sledding hill berm to reduce sledding run-out onto the County Road 21. It will include the purchase of tubes and a storage area. Lastly, the County will look to develop an online reservation and ticket system for camping and sledding to ease the administrative time with in-person reservations.

The Lincoln County Parks Department estimates 5-10 jobs will be created for proper sledding hill operation. No additional insurance would be required as Lincoln County's existing insurance (MCIT) coverage would be sufficient. Net income from sledding operations is estimated at \$27,000/year. Estimated expenses of employment, equipment maintenance, water/sewer in Chalet, upkeep of Chalet are estimated at approximately \$41,000. Revenue from concessions and other programming and events is not included in the operational costs and would provide additional revenue opportunities if the County opts to directly oversee these activities versus partnering with a local organization.

The cost estimates also include options for upgrades to the tow rope system including a magic carpet or chair lift system. This phase is anticipated to be completed within 1-3 years of the Master Plan approval.

Figure 28: View of Sledding Hill from Horse Hill



Figure 29: Sledding Hill



## Development Master Plan

### Phase 2 – South Area

Phase 2 focuses on the Chalet, parking and miscellaneous improvements.

#### **Campground Area**

Phase 2 will include the development of a new restroom building/pavilion in the East Campground. While most RV's are equipped with bathroom and shower, the County feels it is important to have a primary restroom facility as eventually this area will house up to 70 campsites. This facility will include restrooms and showers with an attached pavilion. As previously mentioned, the campground host will assist with cleaning and operations of this facility. Figure 27 highlights the improvements to the East Campground. This phase is anticipated to be completed within 4-7 years of the Master Plan approval.

#### **Chalet Area**

Phase 2 involves a number of improvements to the Chalet Building and the surrounding area. To support the development of the sledding hill in Phase 1, this phase will include an expanded parking lot and trail system. The parking lot will create up to 94 stalls with 6 ADA compliant stalls. The trail system will improve access around the Chalet and sledding hill and expand access to trailheads, the historic Snyder Cabin, and future development opportunities such as the winter skating area. Lighting improvements will also be made in this area.

This phase also includes improvements to the Chalet Building. This includes updates to the interior and exterior and compliance with accessibility and plumbing codes. It would also include a building expansion to accommodate the increased number of visitors due to the sledding hill and other improvements and programming. The expansion would include a kitchen and space for additional viewing and eating. It would include improved restrooms and act as a warming house. An outdoor plaza would also be developed with a fire pit and building screen to sponsor outdoor events and movies. This phase is anticipated to be completed within 5-10 years of the Master Plan approval.

Figure 30 is a current picture of the Chalet Building. Figure 31 illustrates the conceptual plan for expanding the Chalet Building as well as improvements to the area around the building.

#### **Historic Cabin and Signage**

Lastly, Phase 2 includes stabilization to the Historic Snyder Cabin and an entrance sign. During the community engagement process, conversation centered on the park's lack of an entrance sign. This can result in visitor confusion about how to access the park, especially at night. The entrance sign will help guide visitors into the park and provide visual information on the amenities available. This phase is anticipated to be completed within 5-10 years of the Master Plan approval.

Figure 32 highlights the existing historic cabin. Figure 33 shows a concept plan for future signage at the park.

*Figure 30: Chalet Building*



# Development Master Plan

Figure 31: Concept Plan for Chalet Expansion  
Courtesy of WSB



## Hole In The Mountain Park | Master Plan

Lincoln County - Lake Benton, Minnesota  
December 22, 2020 | WSR Project number: 016593.000

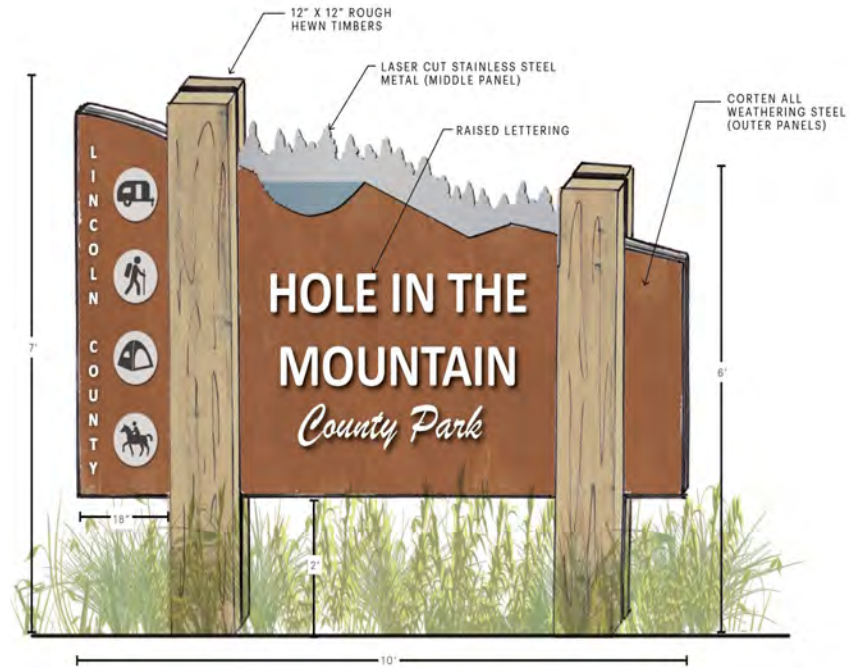
# Development Master Plan



Figure 32: Photos of Historic Snyder Cabin



Figure 33: Large Monument/Entrance Sign Design  
Courtesy of WSB



## Development Master Plan

### Phase 3 – North Area

Phase 3 will move improvements to the North Area of the park including the horse hill campground, trail improvements, and a pedestrian underpass. During the planning process, it has been discussed that Hole-in-the-Mountain Park has various entrances, most of which are unmarked. The access road to Horse Hill across from the main entrance is also in poor condition and currently unusable. To open up the northern access, the Master Plan identifies some road improvements that increase access and create a one-way entrance and exit into Horse Hill. These improvements are highlighted in the concept plan found in Figure 35.

Phase 3 includes trail, road, and parking upgrades to Horse Hill. It also includes water and sewer services for this area and a new restroom/shower building. This Phase will also create interpretive areas and a horse corral. Lastly, many equestrians enjoy access to the multi-use horse/hiking trails found on the south end of the park. Safety features have been incorporated that address safe crossing of pedestrians and horses across Highway 14. This includes a possible underpass and push-button crossing warning. This phase is anticipated to be completed within 8-12 years of Master Plan approval.

### Phase 4 – South Area

Phase 4 in the South Area includes improvements to the East Campground and creation of fitness stations and nature play pods. Sample designs of the fitness stations and nature play pods are located on the Site Features Map in Figure 26.

Phase 4 includes the addition of approximately 34 campsites to the East Campground. The exact size of this effort will be analyzed following the completion of additional campsites in Phase I. If sufficient demand exists for new campsites, this project will encompass addition roadways, water/sewer extension, and development of the campsites.

Phase 4 also includes an overlook pavilion and historic cemetery interpretive station and playground equipment and exercise stations. This phase is anticipated to be completed within 10-15 years of the Master Plan approval.

### Phase 5 – North Area

Phase 5 looks to expand roads, trails and camping to the north of Highway 14. This would expand access and usage of the prairie areas of the park. This project would include the development of a two-way drive and parking to the prairie trailhead. It would also create a primitive camping area and vault toilet. The effort would add interpretive nodes for the kettle hole, overlook, prairie area. It would also add some bench and seating areas near Kettle Hole. Lastly, there would also be space to add three optional tent campsites west of the Chalet. This phase is anticipated to be completed within 10-15 years of the Master Plan approval.

*Figure 34: Horse Hill Campground*

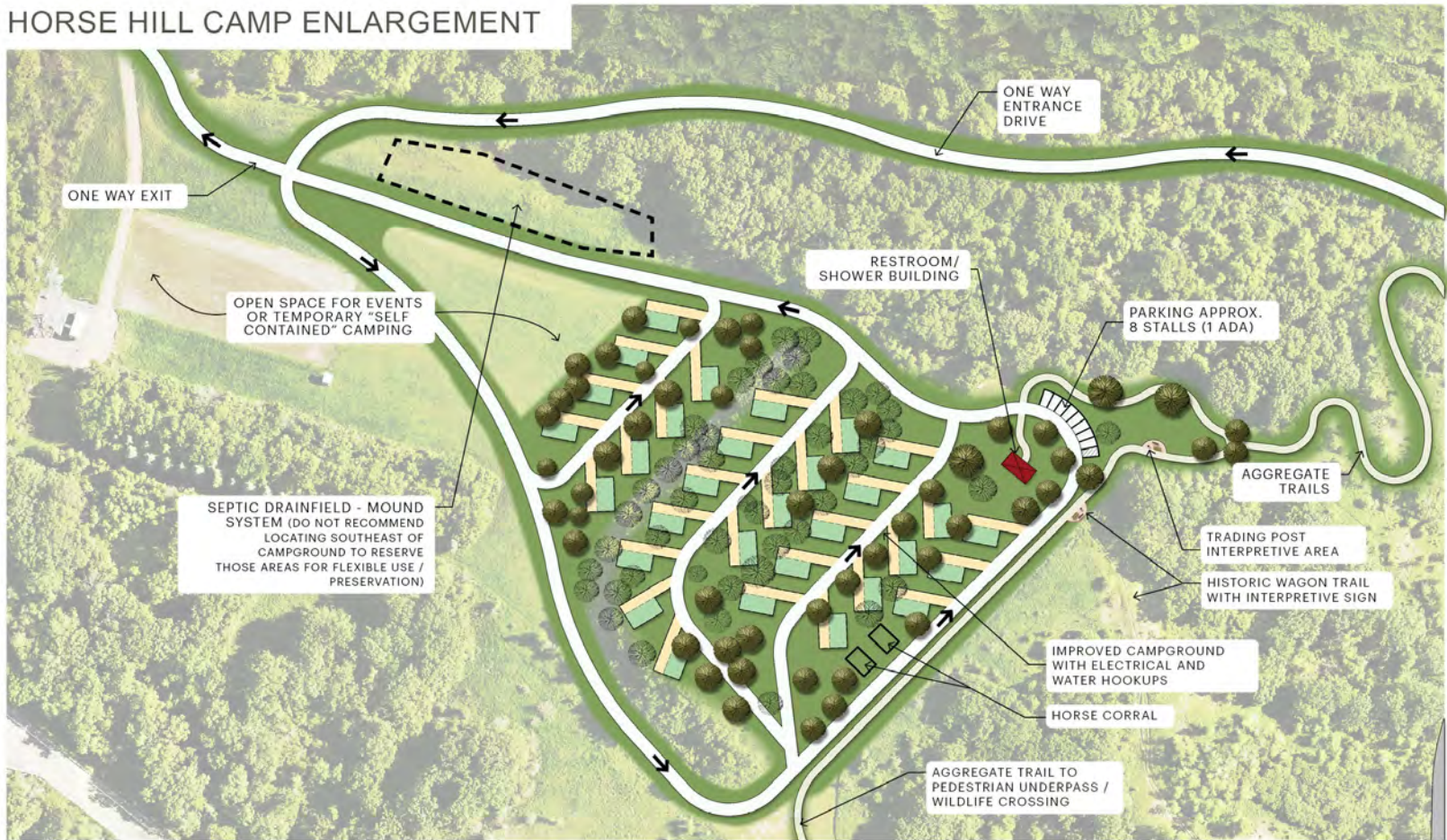




# Development Master Plan

Figure 35: Horse Hill Concept Plan  
Courtesy of WSB

## HORSE HILL CAMP ENLARGEMENT



## Hole In The Mountain Park | Master Plan

Lincoln County - Lake Benton, Minnesota  
December 22, 2020 | WSR Project number: 016593-000



## Development Master Plan

### Sorensen Farm Expansion

The owner and lifelong resident of the farm site nestled adjacent to Horse Hill, James Sorensen has established a trust account naming Lincoln County Parks System as the sole beneficiary of his 160-acre property. It is provided in Mr. Sorensen's will that upon his passing, his property (land and buildings) be entrusted to, and become a part of, the Hole-in-the-Mountain Park system. Out of respect to Mr. Sorensen, exact uses and details of this site have not been planned. The exact details and costs of redevelopment to regional park standards are unknown at this time.

The Sorensen Farm property includes a farm site that lies adjacent to the east end of Horse Hill and just across U.S. Highway 14, north of Hole-in-the-Mountain East Campground. The farm site includes a turn-of-the-century farmhouse, barn, cemetery, and a few out-buildings. While no plans have been created for the site, various ideas have been discussed that would likely be completed within 15 years of the County taking ownership of the site.

- Rehab and reconstruction of the barn. The barn could be remodeled into a state-of-the art lodge for use as wedding/reunion venues as well as a kitchen/lodging rental for visiting hunters/fishers.
- Construction of rustic cabins to be used as rental for visiting hunters/fishers.
- Transition of the turn-of-the-century farm home into a museum. It is Mr. Sorensen's adamant request that the house be left as-is and be made available to the public as a museum.
- Highlight aspects of a working farm for visitors.
- Trail connections to other areas of the park.



*Figure 36: Sorensen Farm Site*



## Development Master Plan and Ecological/Land Resources Plan

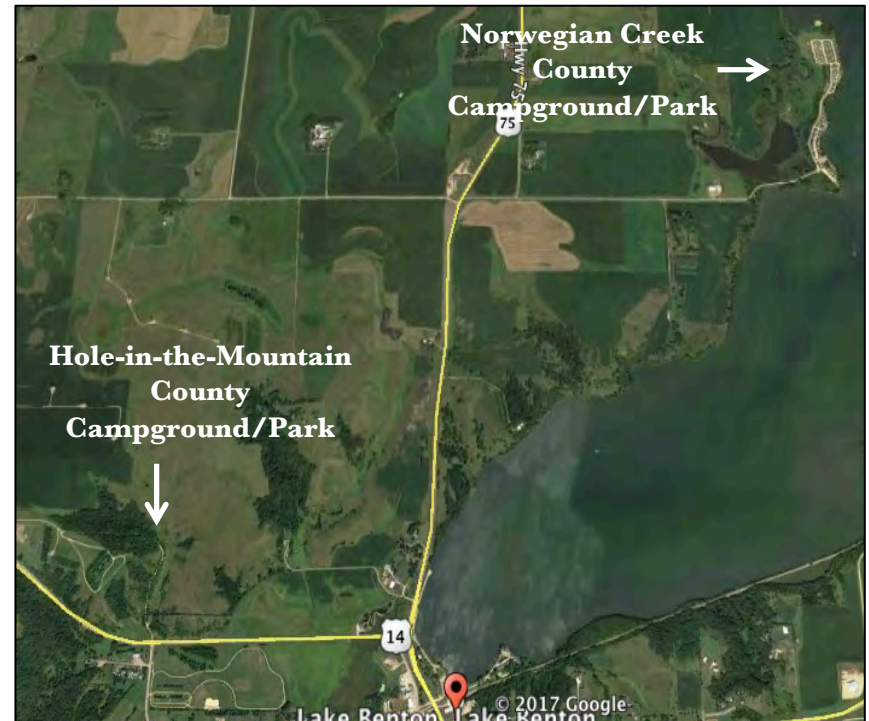
### Other Expansion Items

The community engagement efforts sparked significant ideas for the park. Due to time and costs these items are not in the short-term development plan, but they provide some unique concepts that should be noted as future development opportunities. These are items that can be incorporated as time and funds allow in the long term:

- Adventure Area near the sledding hill that include uses such as canopy walk, zipline, and/or mountain coaster
- Mini golf
- Trail connection to Norwegian Creek Park. The Lakeshore Property Trail would have the goal of connecting Hole-in-the-Mountain Park with Norwegian Creek County Park, thereby creating a safe trail system for all Lincoln County Park visitors to travel between the two county parks. Figure 37 highlights the location of the two parks. This phase is anticipated to be completed within 20-25 years of the Master Plan approval.
- The owner of the CS Natural Health Center reached out during the community engagement process to indicate their site along Highway 14 would possibly be available for purchase to expand the visibility and footprint of the park. The land includes a building that could be used as a visitor center and ponds.

The cost projections enclosed in this master plan define the anticipated costs associated with the development of Hole-in-the-Mountain campground and trails. Costs are based on a combination of site-specific development requirements and projects of similar size and complexity. The cost figures are based on a master plan level. The cost figures indicated in this plan are intended to be used for general project budgeting. Actual costs are expected to vary depending upon when a project are implemented and the state of the economy at that time.

Figure 37: Map of Trail Connection Opportunity Between County Parks



### Introduction to Ecological/Land Resources Plan

Lincoln County recognizes that Hole-in-the-Mountain Park, with its native plants, animals, and unique Buffalo Ridge landforms and gullies supports regionally significant biodiversity within the park. Lincoln County Parks Department recognizes that thoughtful, long-term strategic management will be important components of maintaining the value of this park as improvements are made and visitor use grows.

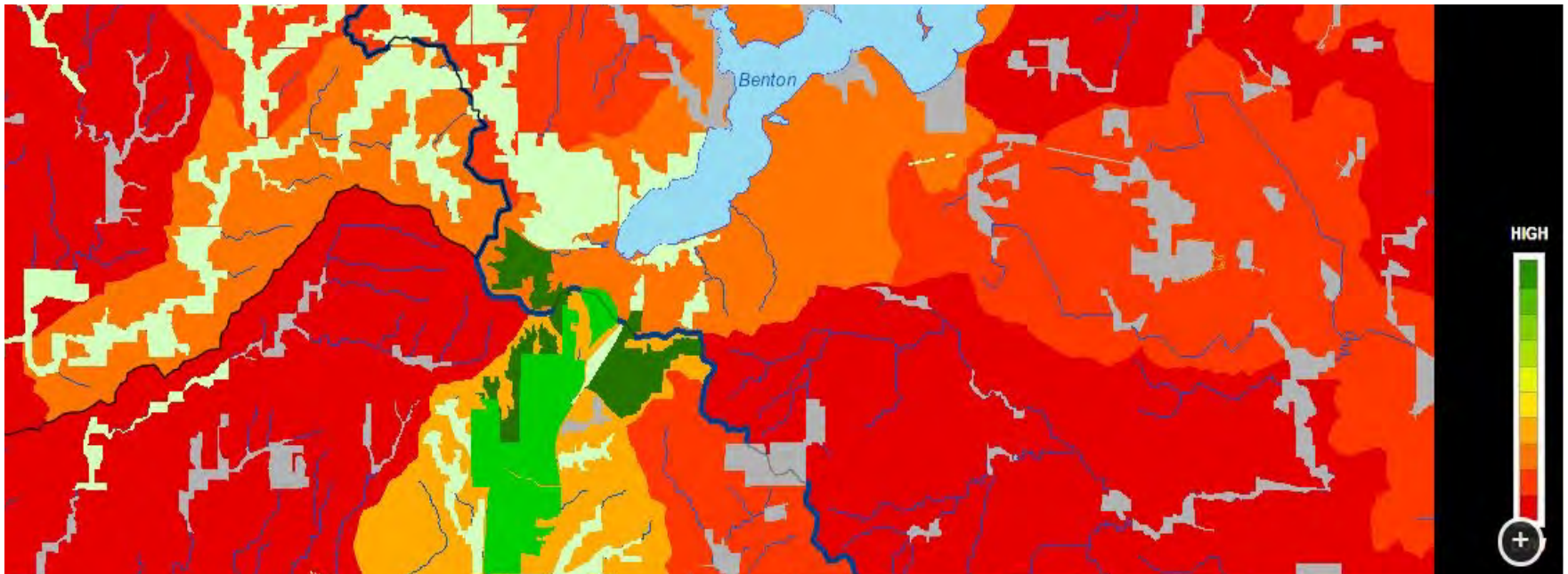
## Ecological/Land Resources Plan

### Natural Resources of the Park

Hole-in-the-Mountain Park is located in the Lake Benton sub-watershed, which is part of the Redwood River catchment of the Minnesota River watershed. The Minnesota Biological Survey- Sites of Biodiversity Significance data (MBS-SBDS), in conjunction with a 2019 Crop Layer data and 2011 National Land Cover Database data, indicated that the Lake Benton sub-watershed has medium low terrestrial habitat quality. However, the overall terrestrial habitat quality of this sub-watershed is better than many of the adjacent watersheds. Within the MBS-SBDS data, Hole-in-the-Mountain Park strongly contributes to this higher score compared to other surveyed sites. (See Figure 38 for details.)

The park's resources are considerable. Historic features include burial sites from the European settlement era, the Taylor Cabin, and the hundreds-of-years history of the Yankton Sioux and Red Rock Sioux (Očhéthi Šakówiŋ) using this location as an east-west passage up and down the Buffalo Ridge. Natural features are many; the park harbors more than 60 species of grasses, sedges, and rushes, 10 species of trees and shrubs and 200 species of wildflowers in a landscape complex of grasslands, forest and savanna. The park provides excellent habitat for rare prairie-dependent insects, including 25 species of butterflies, and nesting waterfowl, passerines and other grassland birds. Visitors may also catch glimpses of a suite of prairie birds and mammals including a bald eagle, badger, coyote, white-tailed deer, wild turkey, red-tailed hawk, meadowlark, and bobolink.

Figure 38: Minnesota Biological Survey – Sites of Biodiversity Significance Data  
Source: Minnesota Department of Natural Resources



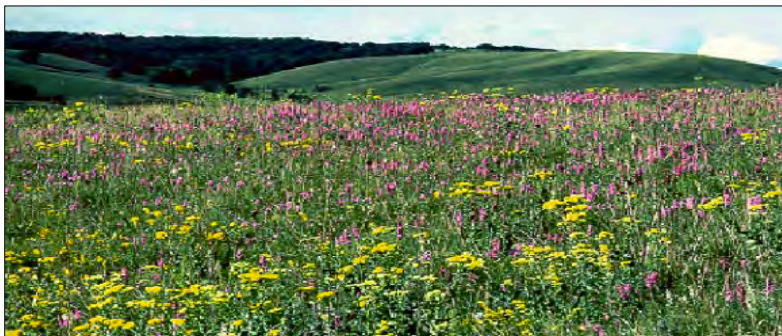
## Ecological/Land Resources Plan

Most unique to Hole-in-the-Mountain are its butterflies, thriving on the native grasses and forbs protected here. Notable species with a historical presence here include the Dakota Skipper, Ottoe Skipper and Uncas Skipper. The Dakota Skipper, a federally endangered species, is an inconspicuous butterfly with a wingspan of one to one-and-one-half inches, is yellow or straw colored, and has an erratic darting flight. It was first discovered near Volga, SD (approx. 35 miles from Hole-in-the-Mountain) and survives on only a few scattered virgin prairie habitats in the Dakotas, Iowa, and Minnesota. The Ottoe Skipper is a state endangered species similar in size and appearance to the Dakota Skipper. More information on these and other butterfly species, including their management needs can be found at [www.butterfliesandmoths.org/](http://www.butterfliesandmoths.org/)

Besides endangered and threatened butterflies, there are several other species native to Lincoln County that are declining or threatened at the state level. See Table 2 for the full list of terrestrial species that need special care throughout Lincoln County.

Many of these at-risk species can benefit from thoughtful ecological stewardship and restoration activities at Hole-in-the-Mountain Park. Identification of the habitat needs of at-risk species will help provide insight into what kinds of stewardship activities are needed, whether this is managing for structural complexity, managing for plant species diversity, or managing for controlled disturbance. In the resource management section below, general strategies for managing park

*Figure 39: Wildflowers at Hole-in-the-Mountain Park*



resources are shared, but it will be the partnership of Lincoln County Parks with wildlife biologists/ecologists/habitat specialists that will yield the best management guidance.

### Resource Management

Preservation of habitat into parks and reserves is the first step to protecting many kinds of habitat from unplanned damage due to human activity. As important as preservation is, it is not enough. Habitats, especially habitats that have a human pressure on them, must be actively managed to ensure the practical and intrinsic values of a protected place will persist over days, weeks, and seasons of use, year-over-year, indefinitely. Hole-in-the-Mountain Park's long-term ability to serve the public will depend on Lincoln County Parks planning for, funding, and implementing natural resource management across the entire park in a cyclical basis. Some areas of the park will receive cycles of attention on daily and weekly basis. Other areas of the park will need cycles of maintenance that are much longer, on the order of annual or semi-annual time periods. In the content that follows on Table 3, ecological and land resources of the park are listed, as well as the kinds of management that are recommended for each resource.

Some aspects of management of the park's ecological resources can be handled solely by the Lincoln County Park staff, but other resources will require larger teams. The County will need to develop relationships and agreements with specialists and service providers to assist with management activities that require bigger teams or coordination. Some of these land stewardship arrangements will be straight-forward, such as having an arborist with the equipment to provide tree care and management of tree canopy in heavy use areas. Other arrangements may involve larger teams or partnerships. One example would be ecological management of grasslands and woodland with applied fire. In this situation, a burn plan for the various areas of the park is developed and then executed year-over-year. Another example may be the need stabilize and restore stream corridor or drainage gullies where erosion has caused damage.

## Ecological/Land Resources Plan

Table 2: Status of Area Species

| Common name                  | Scientific name                             | Group          | State status      |
|------------------------------|---|----------------|-------------------|
| Great Plains Toad            | Anaxyrus cognatus                           | amphibian      | special concern   |
| Acadian Flycatcher           | Empidonax virescens                         | bird           | special concern   |
| American White Pelican       | Pelecanus erythrorhynchos                   | bird           | special concern   |
| Forster's Tern               | Sterna forsteri                             | bird           | special concern   |
| Henslow's Sparrow            | Ammodramus henslowii                        | bird           | endangered        |
| Loggerhead Shrike            | Lanius ludovicianus                         | bird           | endangered        |
| Purple Martin                | Progne subis                                | bird           | special concern   |
| Abbreviated Underwing        | Catocala abbreviatella                      | insect         | special concern   |
| <i>Dakota Skipper</i>        | <i>Hesperia dacotae</i>                     | <i>insect</i>  | <i>endangered</i> |
| Iowa Skipper                 | Atrytone arogos iowa                        | insect         | special concern   |
| Leadplant Flower Moth        | Schinia lucens                              | insect         | special concern   |
| Ottoo Skipper                | Hesperia ottoe                              | insect         | endangered        |
| <i>Poweshiek Skipperling</i> | <i>Oarisma poweshiek</i>                    | <i>insect</i>  | <i>endangered</i> |
| Regal Fritillary             | Speyeria idalia                             | insect         | special concern   |
| Big Brown Bat                | Eptesicus fuscus                            | mammal         | special concern   |
| Northern Grasshopper Mouse   | Onychomys leucogaster                       | mammal         | special concern   |
| Plains Pocket Mouse          | Perognathus flavescens                      | mammal         | special concern   |
| Prairie Vole                 | Microtus ochrogaster                        | mammal         | special concern   |
| Richardson's Ground Squirrel | Urocitellus richardsonii                    | mammal         | special concern   |
| Blanding's Turtle            | Emydoidea blandingii                        | reptile        | threatened        |
| A Jumping Spider             | Habronattus texanus                         | spider         | special concern   |
| A Jumping Spider             | Phidippus pius                              | spider         | special concern   |
| Cutleaf Ironplant            | Xanthisma spinulosum var. spinulosum        | vascular plant | special concern   |
| Dwarf Spikerush              | Eleocharis coloradoensis                    | vascular plant | special concern   |
| Few-flowered Spikerush       | Eleocharis quinqueflora                     | vascular plant | special concern   |
| Hair-like Beak Rush          | Rhynchospora capillacea                     | vascular plant | threatened        |
| Missouri Milk-vetch          | Astragalus missouriensis var. missouriensis | vascular plant | special concern   |
| Nuttall's Sunflower          | Helianthus nuttallii ssp. rydbergii         | vascular plant | special concern   |
| Plains Reedgrass             | Calamagrostis montanensis                   | vascular plant | special concern   |
| Prairie Mimosa               | Desmanthus illinoensis                      | vascular plant | special concern   |
| Prairie Moonwort             | Botrychium campestre                        | vascular plant | special concern   |
| Red Three-awn                | Aristida purpurea var. longiseta            | vascular plant | special concern   |

*Italicized rows indicate species with federal designation.*

Figure 40: prairie moonwort



Figure 41: Red threeawn



Figure 42: slender milkvetch



## Ecological/Land Resources Plan and Programming Plan

Some of the conservation partners that possess expertise that may benefit Lincoln County's management of the park include, but are not limited to:

- *American Trails (Hiking and Equestrian)*
- *Animal Road Crossings (ARC) Solutions*
- *Applied Ecological Services*
- *International Mountain Bike Association*
- *The Prairie Enthusiasts*
- *Pheasants/Quail Forever*
- *Lake Benton Sportsman's Club*
- *Ducks Unlimited*
- *Lincoln County Extension Office*
- *Minnesota Conservation Corps*
- *Minnesota River Basin Center*
- *The Nature Conservancy*
- *Lincoln Co. Soil & Water Conservation Office*
- *Natural Resources Conservation Service*
- *Fish and Wildlife Service*
- *MN Department of Natural Resources*
- *South Dakota State University at Brookings- College of Agriculture, Food & Environmental Sciences*

The Minnesota River Basin Center keeps a list of organizations located throughout the Minnesota River Watershed that are involved in regional environmental stewardship activities at this website: <https://mrbdc.mnsu.edu/nonprofit-organizations>. It should be noted that while this a list of organizations that are likely partners, other organizations, including unnamed existing organizations, newly-forming organizations, and concerned individuals, are welcome to partner with Lincoln County in improving the natural resource qualities of the park.

When discussing the role of partners in helping take care of Hole-in-the-Mountain Park, the sentiment from the Lincoln County Park Board was that this is a regional park that will thrive when all communities in the

region see it as theirs to care for and not as something that is only for the city of Lake Benton. Therefore, the following municipal entities are encouraged to partner with Lincoln County Parks Department to engage with regional residents in work project planning and execution:

|              |                 |                 |                |                |              |
|--------------|-----------------|-----------------|----------------|----------------|--------------|
| <i>Tyler</i> | <i>Ivanhoe</i>  | <i>Elkton</i>   | <i>Ward</i>    | <i>Ruthton</i> | <i>White</i> |
| <i>Arco</i>  | <i>Florence</i> | <i>Bushnell</i> | <i>Holland</i> | <i>Russell</i> |              |

The role of partners in helping the park achieve its full potential as a beloved and valued regional asset cannot be overstated. In the Programming Plan section, the vision for how partnerships will work to responsibly increase the use of the natural resources discussed in this section will be addressed.

### Programming Plan Overview

Programming is the act of providing a human-focused purpose to any space, landscape element, or structure that is invested in Hole-in-the-Mountain Park. In short, it is the process of creating interest that attracts users for the park. One definition of park programming comes from the Project for Public Spaces which says:

*The presence of programmed activities or activity generators attract and increase positive use in a park. Depending on the location, size and features in a park environment, programming can include: recreational offerings; tours; exhibits; community gardens; cultural festivals; or special events such as music, dance or theatre. The presence of food concessions or a cafe is another key way to engage users. Wherever possible, programming and activity generators should be incorporated into a park environment because they reinforce the interconnection between use and safety.*

The Lincoln County Park Board and Lincoln County Board of Commissioners were surveyed about their preferences regarding future efforts to support programming at Hole-in-the-Mountain Park. The rest of this section is given over to the planning guidance these choices provide for Hole-in-the-Mountain Park.

## Ecological/Land Resources Plan

*Table 3: Ecological/Land Resources Plan*

| Resource                       | Concerns   | Inspection Frequency   | Management Strategy  |
|--------------------------------|--|--|--|
| <b>Turf Fields</b>             | Blade height; root depth; mowing frequency; recovery from concentrated use; accumulation of litter | As needed as part of routine maintenance.                                      | Mowing as needed. Fertilize as needed based on soil tests. Apply no-mow grass seed mix each spring. Herbicide 2-4D for weed species as needed. Aeration every 2-3 seasons.   |
| <b>Trees in High Use Areas</b> | Limb fall; root damage; bark and branch damage   | Annual inspection or after significant storm events.                           | Tree trimming. Subcontract for large limb removal or tree felling. Tree install, both nursery or soil and water conservation district, or park staff. Replant each fallen tree with 3-5 replacement trees, 6' or taller. Aim for tree diversity of 10-12 species over time.  |
| <b>Planting Beds</b>           | Infestation by weeds; accumulation of litter; plant mortality                                      | Monthly inspection during establishment, otherwise two or three per season.    | Non-seeding annual flowering species planted each season. Hand weeding planting beds monthly. Add new mulch annually.  |
| <b>Rain Gardens</b>            | Sedimentation; infestation by weeds; accumulation of litter; plant mortality                       | Three inspections during establishment, otherwise spring and fall              | Remove litter as needed. Mow, weed-whack, or hand-pull weed species monthly. Replace dead plants each spring. Add mulch every 2-3 years. Remove accumulated sediment in inflow areas annually. Test soil pH annually, if the pH is below 5.2, limestone should be applied. If the pH is above 8.0, iron sulfate and sulfur should be applied. If raingarden plants are all woody shrubs, identifying weeds will be easier for staff and volunteers.  |
| <b>Grassland Environments</b>  | Intrusion of shrubs and trees; invasion by weed species  | Annual survey while improving conditions, otherwise every three to five years. | Identify presence of Federally Endangered butterflies and avoid damage to host species or nursery areas if possible. If using applied fire for management, divide grassland into multiple "puzzle piece shaped" management zones and alternate burns on management zones over 3-4 years, ensuring that not all areas of the grassland burn at once, thereby ensuring refuge areas for butterfly and beneficial insect species. Can hand seed native plants after fire to increase species diversity and density.                         |
| <b>Savanna Environments</b>    | Intrusion of shrubs and trees; invasion by weed species  | Annual survey while improving conditions, otherwise every three to five years. | Remove berry producing plants first. Apply water based concentrated herbicide with dye to perimeter of cut stems. Applied fire, grazing with goats, and herbicide applied to foliage can be used to control germination from seed and re-sprouts. Heavy equipment such as a skidloader with brush cutter is used in winter when plants are dormant, and soils are frozen. Reseed and replant native species as invasive species show signs of being eliminated. Fire can be used as effectively in savanna as in grassland environments. |



## Ecological/Land Resources Plan

*Table 3: Ecological/Land Resource Plan*

|  |   |  |   |
|--|---|--|---|
| <b>Forest Environments</b>               | Intrusion of shrubs and trees; invasion by weed species               | Annual survey while improving conditions, otherwise every three to five years. | Remove berry producing plants first. Apply water based concentrated herbicide with dye to perimeter of cut stems. Applied fire, grazing with goats, and herbicide applied to foliage can be used to control germination from seed and re-sprouts. Heavy equipment such as a skidloader with brush cutter is used in winter when plants are dormant, and soils are frozen. Reseed and replant native species as invasive species show signs of being eliminated. Habitat piles can be constructed of cut woody brush. Protect valuable hardwood species's trunks from fire during wildfire operations. |
| <b>Ridges, Gullies, &amp; Watersheds</b> | Accelerated soil transport due to erosion and deposition              | Evaluate as part of trail inspection events.                                   | Repair headcut and install appropriate siltation baffles within gullies. See USDA Technical Supplement 14P to address gullies ( <a href="https://directives.sc.egov.usda.gov/OpenNonWebContent.aspx?content=17826.wba">https://directives.sc.egov.usda.gov/OpenNonWebContent.aspx?content=17826.wba</a> ). Reseed or replant as necessary after brush removal. Special order species via native nurseries: <a href="https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_PLANT_MATERIALS/publications/ndpmcot8152.pdf">https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_PLANT_MATERIALS/publications/ndpmcot8152.pdf</a>      |
| <b>Seeps and Springs</b>                 | Damage due to human visitation  | Early spring or late fall inspection.  | Partner with DNR on mapping and monitoring of springs and seeps and associated plant communities every 6-10 years. Remove non-native plant species that are colonizing these areas. Route trails away from springs and seeps where possible. Provide appropriate warning/educational signage at springs or seeps if visitor use cannot be avoided.  |
| <b>Channels and Streams</b>              | Changes in channel due to high-flow events; stream morphology changes | Inspect after high-flow events.  | Consult with stream restoration specialists on repair or rehabilitation and implement within twelve months of damaging event. <a href="https://semspub.epa.gov/work/01/554360.pdf">https://semspub.epa.gov/work/01/554360.pdf</a>   |

## Ecological/Land Resources Plan

Table 3: Ecological/Land Resource Plan

|  |   |  |   |
|--|---|--|---|
| <p><b>Hiking and Horse Trails</b></p>              | <p>Failure due to use; failure due to erosional forces; blocked or damaged due to tree falls</p>    | <p>Two inspections per season or after heavy use/trail related events, and after significant precipitation events.</p> | <p>For horse trail damage, follow best practices in the Equestrian Design Guidebook for Trails, Trailheads, and Campgrounds: <a href="https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/recreational_trails/publications/fs_publications/07232816/index.cfm">https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/recreational_trails/publications/fs_publications/07232816/index.cfm</a></p> <p>For hiking trail damage, can follow US Forest Service best practices: <a href="https://www.fs.usda.gov/managing-land/trails/trail-management-tools/trailplans">https://www.fs.usda.gov/managing-land/trails/trail-management-tools/trailplans</a></p>   |
| <p><b>Mountain Biking Trails</b></p>               | <p>Failure due to use; failure due to erosional forces; blocked or damaged due to tree falls</p>    | <p>Two inspections per season or after heavy use/trail related events, and after significant precipitation events.</p> | <p>Consult with International Mountain Biking Association on troubleshooting &amp; maintenance. <a href="https://www.imba.com/resource/guidelines-quality-trail-experience-ggte">https://www.imba.com/resource/guidelines-quality-trail-experience-ggte</a></p>   |
| <p><b>Bridges, Culverts and Crossings</b></p>      | <p>Failure due to clogging, erosion, slumping, heaving; wildlife mortality; weed species vector</p> | <p>Annual inspection and after significant precipitation events.</p>   | <p>A US Forest Service document provides technical guidance on handling stormwater flows under and over roads and trails. Images, diagrams and costs are included: <a href="https://www.fs.fed.us/eng/pubs/pdf/BAERCAT/lo_res/Chap_4.pdf">https://www.fs.fed.us/eng/pubs/pdf/BAERCAT/lo_res/Chap_4.pdf</a></p> <p>The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency has a Wiki of best practices for slowing down stormwater flows. See info about check dams: <a href="https://stormwater.pca.state.mn.us/index.php/Sediment_control_practices_-_Check_dams_(ditch_checks,_ditch_dikes)">https://stormwater.pca.state.mn.us/index.php/Sediment_control_practices_-_Check_dams_(ditch_checks,_ditch_dikes)</a></p> |
| <p><b>Snowmobile Trails (ATVs not allowed)</b></p> | <p>Scouring and erosion on steep slopes as a result of thin snow cover or high intensity use.</p>   | <p>Weekly inspection of high impact areas and steep slopes during snow season.</p>                                     | <p>Snowmobile trails are groomed and separate from other trails. Trails remain open as long as minimum snow base (6-7" deep) is maintained on trail slopes that are at highest risk of eroding.</p>   |
| <p><b>Cultural Areas</b></p>                       | <p>Decay of fences, stone monuments, erosion of foot traffic areas.</p>                             | <p>Annual inspection.</p>  | <p>Signage maintained or installed when missing. Fencing updates as needed to ensure visitor safety. Groundcover is maintained in high impact areas.</p>  |

## Programming Plan

### Programming Development

Two questions were asked of the Lincoln County Park Board and Lincoln County Board of Commissioners; those questions essentially asked, 1) How do you want to support programming? and 2) What kinds of programming is appropriate? To summarize, the responses were, 1) Develop programs in partnership with local community groups, and 2) With the exception of overnight stays in the Chalet, most of the suggested types of programming are appropriate. The long-form survey questions and answers that guide planning for this section can be found in the appendix.

Upon review of the survey results and within conversation about how to best develop programming for Hole-in-the-Mountain Park, the Park Board was in agreement that the preferred way to cultivate programming is through a partnership-based approach. In this approach, the county identifies all the community partners that it wants to work with and invites those community organizations to take a leadership role in providing support for park activities that most interest them.

Involving all of Lincoln County's municipal entities into the programming development of Hole-in-the-Mountain Park is an important priority. The Park Board understands that despite the park's proximity to Lake Benton, that this is a county and regional park that has relevance for residents in every town and city across the region. Therefore, the Park Board invites staff from each of the municipalities within the County and neighboring counties to co-develop and implement programs for the park.

Any programming priorities that cannot be met through partnership would fall upon the county to support. If this is the case, the County may need to set aside resources for staff, interns or fellows to complete all programming that partnerships cannot support. When budgeting for a program manager, a program manager position can expect compensation at \$15-20/hour, with interns or seasonal staff in the \$11-15/hour range (2021 rates). Program managers that are permanent full-time or permanent part-time will be more effective at creating fresh, relevant and regular activities /events than a position that is rehired seasonally.

### **PROGRAMMING PLAN**

The Lincoln County Park Board feels the park is suitable for most activities and is open to programming to support most activities. Hole-in-the-Mountain Park is a large and diverse enough landscape, that upon full completion of the multiphase buildout, will be able to support nearly any type of outdoor recreation forms of programming. The park will have the facilities to handle cultural events, various active and passive forms of recreation, as well as classes and education at the same time. Safety classes, interest-driven permit-based events, and passive recreation are the types of events that have strong support from park board and county commission members. Group skills and builder courses, and 'on your honor' passive recreation activities like geocaching, disc golf, and snowshoe rental are also supported and while not shown on the physical plans, are activity areas that Park Board members are glad to explore. The programming areas that are not supported are organized overnight activities in the Chalet, motorized vehicles (snowmobiles are allowed in certain places only) access, concerts, and other program ideas that could pose insurance risks to the county.

In Table 4, a list of programming activities, and potential partners who can share responsibility on implementation of particular programs with the county are listed. This is not an exhaustive list of what will be done, but an idea list of suitable activities that have support from the park board.

*Figure 43: View of Benton Lake from Hole-in-the-Mountain Park*



## Programming Plan

Table 4: Programming Ideas

| Program Idea   | Potential Partner in Implementation   |
|--|---|
| <b><u>Passive Recreation</u></b>   |   |
| Disc Golf Course- permanent or seasonal.   | Lincoln County 4H Club  |
| Do-it-yourself snowshoe rental.  | Lincoln County Parks  |
| Geocaching.  | Boy Scouts of America, Girl Scouts of America, and High School Student Council  |
| Community Birding- list of all bird species known to be found in park is placed on chalkboard at trailhead. As people identify them, they can mark which birds they saw. | Environmental Awareness Club at SMSU<br>Lincoln County Parks  |
| <b><u>Regionally Significant &amp; Unique Events</u></b>   |   |
| Cross Country Race- host a meet or invitational event a few times each year.   | Lake Benton, Russell-Tyler-Ruthton, and Hendricks Public School Athletic Departments.<br>Minnesota State High School League |
| Tournaments or fundraisers- Tug of War Tournament, Relay 4 Life, etc.  | Community organizations relevant to fundraising need.   |
| Nighttime luminary walks on special dates, such as Halloween, Thanksgiving, Winter Solstice, New Year Eve.   | Houses of worship<br>Celebration organizing committees<br>Interested individuals  |
| Saddle Horse Holiday, Dog Day at the Park, Historic Re-enactments, and other kinds of interest driven events.  | Organizing committees of particular activity  |
| <b><u>Learning &amp; Personal Enrichment</u></b>   |   |
| Day-long environmental education field trip collaboration with local schools.  | Lake Benton, Russell-Tyler-Ruthton, Hendricks, and Ivanhoe Public School Districts  |
| Safety classes- hunting safety, chainsaw safety, etc.  | Sportsmans Club<br>Lincoln County Extension Office  |
| Group classes for all ages, such as cross-country ski school, mushroom collecting, map and compass, etc.   | Interested individuals<br>Clubs- 4H or others...<br>Lincoln County Parks  |
| Folk school classes at the Chalet such as basket weaving, snowshoe making, fly leaf casting, etc.  | Interested individuals<br>Clubs- 4H or others...<br>Lincoln County Parks  |

## Research Plan

### Research Plan Overview

The Lincoln County Park Board and the Lincoln County Board of Commissioners understand the importance of supporting data collection and research initiatives in a regionally significant park. In order to evaluate the success of improvements in the park over time and to ensure management and maintenance activities are responsive to the needs of the visiting public, a monitoring and reporting program will need to be established alongside physical improvements to the park.

Lincoln County will participate in research initiatives as requested by GMRPTC as they are developed and implemented over time. This may include visitor counts, visitor profiles, and recreational demands and trends. This information may be used to help further inform the development of the regional park system in Minnesota. Furthermore, Lincoln County understands the opportunity that exists in locally initiated data collection and monitoring. The Lincoln County Park Board and Lincoln County Board of Commissioners were surveyed about their preferences regarding future county-initiated efforts to collect data to benefit the park. The survey results revealed a desire to use the park to collect information that will positively impact operational improvements is strongly supported. Follow-up conversation on these results reiterated their support.

In this section, a vision for how data collection and research will be planned for is described. The survey questions and answers about data collection are located in Appendix B. The meeting notes from when this topic was discussed are located in Appendix A.

### Research Plan Development

Lincoln County and Lincoln County Parks Department will focus on partnering with other entities for purposes of collecting data or conducting research. Ideally, the type of data collection and research conducted would be decided in a collaborative way between the Lincoln County Park Board, the Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission, and yet-to-be-determined research partners.

When considering what data needs to be collected, it is important that Lincoln County coordinate with GMRPTC to ensure the county can effectively participate in any data collection requests they have. The ability of Lincoln County to provide park-use data to GMRPTC may impact subsequent decisions to award more funding for park improvement. In addition to the reciprocal benefits of generating data for GMRPTCC, the county will need to identify which other data collection areas it wants to focus on for its own purposes.

Data collection opportunities are many; trail use, trail longevity, invasive species expansion or retreat, monitoring of species, year-over-year changes in visitation patterns, and returns on investment are examples of study areas. One comment received from park/county board members when specifically questioned on what type of data should be collected was a suggestion for the county to work on *“identification and summarization of Hole-in-the-Mountain Park’s vegetation, and wildlife”*, as well as to *“study the park’s economic impact on the community and county”*.

The Lincoln County Park Board reviewed the results of the survey that they and County Commission members took, and in conversation on this topic, decided that an “all of the above strategy that included tracking visitation and wildlife” related metrics was appropriate. The initial focus will be on gathering visitor experience feedback. The community engagement that has taken place as part of this park plan update represents a good start to tracking visitation. The questions that were developed as part of the online survey can be used year-over-year by the county to track visitor experience. The county also can develop new questions or methods for tracking visitor experience scores. The Park Board expects that data collection/reporting on these focus areas will increase in capability at the same rate that improvements are made to Hole-in-the-Mountain Park.

## Research Plan

The tracking of visitors to the park as well as the services those visitors demand already happens in the area of overnight camping. The creation of a reservation system to manage bookings at any of the park campsites can improve the availability of data in this park operations area. The reservation system should also be flexible enough to accommodate rental of the Chalet, as well as handle snowtubing. Methods for tracking visitor use outside of park experiences that require payment also need to be developed. For day users of the park's trails and picnic areas, visitor counts should be sought. For special events, classes, and programs, a reservation system as well as head-counts at the start of events may need to be standardized.

### Research Plan Implementation

There are many methods by which Lincoln County can start a partnership-based data collection effort. The two preferred methods are:

- The County could choose to establish into a partner relationship with a select college, university, or extension service to work together on data collection and reporting.
- Making informal inquiries to businesses and organizations that the county already has a relationship with and seeking referrals to data collection partners from within the county's existing business network.

The methods that are supported by the Park Board as a first course of action are outreach to universities, regional development councils or extension services to inquire about working together on data collection. The Park Board also supports conversations with existing vendors or other business partners on recommendations for how to proceed. GMRPTC is one such business partner that the Lincoln County Park Board can look to. Others may include the University of South Dakota at Brookings, the Center for Urban and Rural Affairs at the University of Minnesota in the Twin Cities, the University of Minnesota Extension Southwest Regional Sustainable Development Partnership, and the University of Minnesota Lincoln County Extension office.

If a partnership is not possible for some or even all responsibilities of data collection, then the county should be prepared to take on the data collection tasks alone. One way for the county to develop the strategies and systems for collecting this information could be through a fellowship or public service offering. Developing a public service position through the Americorps State and National program would enable the county to get exposure to a nationwide talent pool. The county also has the ability to create a limited-term research fellowship and post the opening with teaching faculty at regional colleges and universities. Lastly, the county could hire staff with the needed expertise. Staff hires in this regard could be permanent seasonal full-time, or permanent part-time. The Park Board has an excellent opportunity to create a staff position that would handle the data collection and reporting needs identified in this section with the park programming needs discussed in the previous section.

It is difficult to forecast the annual operating costs of data collection. This effort will have a cost, but depending on the partnerships developed, systems implemented, frequency of collection, etc., it is difficult to know how to budget for these costs. If Lincoln County develops an online or automated reservation system for camping and future snow tubing, then part of the data collection costs will be associated with this system. If online surveys and other forms of visitor feedback are utilized, those costs will stand alone and are easier to budget for.

Going forward, as Lincoln County plans for park improvements, two actions will be important to take on a regular basis:

- It will need to be necessary to include a budget line-item for data collection system as part of park improvement cost estimates.
- Discretionary spending for research and data collection will need to be budgeted into the annual operating costs of the park.

The discretionary spending can take the form of support funds to be shared with partners who are cooperating on data collection. These funds can also be used to hire staff or fund Lincoln County's share of responsibility for supporting a research fellow.

## Implementation, Management and Sustainability

### Implementation, Management and Sustainability Introduction

The estimated construction costs in Table 5 were prepared by WSB in 2020 as part of the Master Plan process. The information assumes implementation of each phase as a single project through a design/bid/build process. Costs are based on 2020 pricing at a site planning level suitable for budgeting purposes based on the vision of the development. Inflation should be applied over time based on economic factors. It should be expected that the costs will need to be refined through stages of the design process as more specifics related to the elements, products, and finishes associated with the project are considered in greater detail.

Phased development may be necessary based on available funding, priorities, and reasonable timeframe. The sequence of the phases identified in the table is suggested for consideration, but could be consolidated or broken into smaller pieces based on Lincoln County's preferences and available funding. The following are some footnotes and alternative options to the information outlined in the cost estimates:

- Phase I Sledding Hill Area – the cost estimates include a tow rope system. Lincoln County could upgrade to a magic carpet system with a cost increase of \$200,000 or a chair lift system with a cost increase of \$1,450,000.
- Costs for water/sanitary sewer is based on average “prevailing wage” bid pricing in Greater Minnesota. The water system assumes the need to provide fire hydrants for fire protection in areas of new campground buildings, which will require increased water main size. If this is not required, or the project is not subject to prevailing wages typically required for state or federal grant funded projects, it is possible the construction costs could be decreased.

Table 5(a): Development Cost Summary

| Phase 1                                  |  |        |       |                 |   |                    |
|--|--|--------|-------|-----------------|---|--------------------|
| Item                                     | Description  | Qty.   | Units | Est. Unit Price | Estimated Cost  | Estimated Total    |
| <b>General Sitework for Phase 1 Area</b> |  |        |       |                 |   |                    |
| 1  | Mobilization   | 1      | LS    | 75,000          | 75,000  |                    |
| 2  | Earthwork & Erosion Control  | 1      | LS    | 62,500          | 62,500  |                    |
| 3  | Selective Clearing and Grubbing  | 1      | LS    | 20,000          | 20,000  |                    |
| 4  | Removals   | 1      | LS    | 12,750          | 12,750  |                    |
| 5  | Vehicular and pedestrian wayfinding / signage, ada parking   | 1      | LS    | 3,000           | 3,000   |                    |
| 6  | Restoration - seeding  | 5      | AC    | 7,000           | 35,000  |                    |
| 7  | Tree/shrub plantings   | 1      | LS    | 22,500          | 22,500  |                    |
|  |  |        |       |                 | <i>Subtotal</i>   | <i>230,750</i>     |
| <b>Horse/Hike Trail Area</b>             |  |        |       |                 |   |                    |
| 8  | Horse/Hike Trail Improvements (compacted natural soil trails - also includes decommissioning restoring segments) | 23,204 | LF    | 8               | 185,632   |                    |
|  |  |        |       |                 | <i>Subtotal</i>   | <i>185,632</i>     |
| <b>Campground Area</b>                   |  |        |       |                 |   |                    |
| 9  | East Bituminous Parking/Drop off Pavement with Agg. Base   | 1,025  | SY    | 30              | 30,750  |                    |
| 10                                       | Aggregate RV Drive Pavement (east camp)  | 5,916  | SY    | 10              | 59,160  |                    |
| 11                                       | RV Campsite Aggregate Pads (36 sites) with Picnic Table, Fire Pit, Power Pedestal                                | 36     | EA    | 2,500           | 90,000  |                    |
| 12                                       | Water main and service improvements for new campground   | 1      | LS    | 175,750         | 175,750   |                    |
| 13                                       | Sanitary Sewer main and service connections for campground   | 1      | LS    | 237,000         | 237,000   |                    |
| 14                                       | Dump Station - includes connection to sanitary sewer system, water service/hydrant for rinse down                | 1      | LS    | 18,000          | 18,000  |                    |
|  |  |        |       |                 | <i>Subtotal</i>   | <i>610,660</i>     |
| <b>Sledding Hill Area</b>                |  |        |       |                 |   |                    |
| 15                                       | Sledding Hill Berm   | 1      | LS    | 45,000          | 45,000  |                    |
| 16                                       | Tow Rope system  | 1      | LS    | 150,000         | 150,000   |                    |
| 17                                       | Sledding Hill Lighting   | 1      | LS    | 215,000         | 215,000   |                    |
| 18                                       | 1 Snow Machine (assumes existing water / electrical system and connection points are adequate)                   | 1      | LS    | 40,000          | 40,000  |                    |
| 19                                       | Develop online reservation and ticket system for camping and sledding  | 1      | LS    | 8,000           | 8,000   |                    |
|  |  |        |       |                 | <i>Subtotal</i>   | <i>458,000</i>     |
|  |  |        |       |                 | Phase 1 Subtotal  | 1,485,042          |
|  |  |        |       |                 | Contingency (10%)   | 148,504            |
|  |  |        |       |                 | Project Fees (Design / Engineering / Admin. / Staking & Testing / etc. 20%) | 326,709            |
|  |  |        |       |                 | <b>Estimated Phase 1 Total:</b>   | <b>\$1,960,255</b> |

## Implementation, Management and Sustainability

- Costs associated with the development of the Sorensen Farm buildings and trails on potential lake shore property are unable to be determined at this time as it is unknown as to when these lands will become the property of Lincoln County. Other potential future expansion opportunities that are not included in cost estimates include: adventure area (canopy walk, zipline, and/or mountain coaster), trail connection to Norwegian Creek Park, and mini golf.

Lincoln County is prepared to financially maintain Hole-in-the-Mountain Park, however, the timelines and/or costs of the larger development projects listed above will be dependent upon whether Lincoln County Hole-in-the-Mountain Park will be able to receive funding from additional leveraged resources (e.g. LCCMR’s Legacy funds, DNR’s Outdoor Recreation Grants, among other funding resources) to maximize Lincoln County’s financial commitments to these projects.

### General Operations and Budget

Lincoln County is committed to the long-term sustainability of the campground and trails in terms of operations and management. Lincoln County Parks Department will be the responsible entity for any, and all, development of the site.

Lincoln County has established policies for the park and trail systems. Through their annual budgeting process, the county provides operating funds for the park’s operation, maintenance, and development. Lincoln County Park Department’s Park Supervisor, appointed by the Lincoln County Commissioners, serves to oversee the campground and its trails.

*Table 5(b): Development Cost Summary*

| Phase 2   |  |       |       |                 |   |                    |
|---|--|-------|-------|-----------------|---|--------------------|
| Item  | Description  | Qty.  | Units | Est. Unit Price | Estimated Cost  | Estimated Total    |
| <b>General Sitework for Phase 2 Area</b>                          |  |       |       |                 |   |                    |
| 1   | Mobilization   | 1     | LS    | 85,000          | 85,000  |                    |
| 2   | Earthwork & Erosion Control  | 1     | LS    | 27,500          | 27,500  |                    |
| 3   | Selective Clearing and Grubbing  | 1     | LS    | 7,500           | 7,500   |                    |
| 4   | Removals   | 1     | LS    | 12,750          | 12,750  |                    |
| 5   | Vehicular and pedestrian wayfinding / signage, ada parking                                     | 1     | LS    | 1,500           | 1,500   |                    |
| 6   | Restoration - seeding  | 4     | AC    | 7,000           | 28,000  |                    |
| 7   | Tree/shrub plantings   | 1     | LS    | 12,500          | 12,500  |                    |
|   |  |       |       |                 | <i>Subtotal</i>   | <i>174,750</i>     |
| <b>Campground Area</b>  |  |       |       |                 |   |                    |
| 8   | Restroom Building/Pavilion (east camp)   | 1     | LS    | 600,000         | 600,000   |                    |
|   |  |       |       |                 | <i>Subtotal</i>   | <i>600,000</i>     |
| <b>Chalet / Sledding Hill Parking &amp; Connector Trails Area</b> |  |       |       |                 |   |                    |
| 9   | 8' Wide Aggregate Trail  | 1,500 | SY    | 8               | 12,000  |                    |
| 10  | 8' Wide Bituminous Trail with agg. base  | 1,663 | SY    | 30              | 49,890  |                    |
| 11  | West Bituminous Parking/Entry Lot Pavement with Agg. Base                                      | 6,097 | SY    | 30              | 182,910   |                    |
| 12  | Parking Lot and Trail Lighting   | 1     | LS    | 25,000          | 25,000  |                    |
| 13  | Parking Lot Stormwater Treatment   | 1     | LS    | 12,500          | 12,500  |                    |
|   |  |       |       |                 | <i>Subtotal</i>   | <i>282,300</i>     |
| <b>Chalet Area</b>  |  |       |       |                 |   |                    |
| 14  | Chalet Building updates to interior/exterior, compliance with accessibility and plumbing codes | 1,500 | SF    | 130             | 195,000   |                    |
| 15  | Chalet Building Expansion  | 1,000 | SF    | 450             | 450,000   |                    |
| 16  | Outdoor Concrete Plaza & walkways near Chalet  | 3,160 | SF    | 8               | 25,280  |                    |
|   |  |       |       |                 | <i>Subtotal</i>   | <i>670,280</i>     |
| <b>Miscellaneous Items</b>  |  |       |       |                 |   |                    |
| 17  | Stabilize historic cabin   | 1     | LS    | 7,500           | 7,500   |                    |
| 18  | Monument Entrance Sign   | 1     | LS    | 20,000          | 20,000  |                    |
|   |  |       |       |                 | <i>Subtotal</i>   | <i>27,500</i>      |
|   |  |       |       |                 | Phase 2 Subtotal  | 1,754,830          |
|   |  |       |       |                 | Contingency (10%)   | 175,483            |
|   |  |       |       |                 | Project Fees (Design / Engineering / Admin. / Staking & Testing / etc. 20%) | 386,063            |
|   |  |       |       |                 | <b>Estimated Phase 2 Total:</b>   | <b>\$2,316,376</b> |



**Implementation, Management and Sustainability**

Lincoln County Commissioners have an annual operations and maintenance budget for its parks and trails. Revenue generated from the campground is, and will continue to be, used to cover the costs of operations, maintenance, and development of the campgrounds and trails. Currently, all park revenue and expenses are tracked in one fund code for the entire parks system. As a result, it is difficult to know the exact revenue and expenses generated by each park, although the current staff are able to provide approximate percentages. As Hole-in-the-Mountain Park continues to grow and add revenue generating activities and programming, it may be beneficial that the County begins tracking revenue and expenses by park. Some grant sources may require operating numbers strictly for the park in which funding is being sought.

Table 6 highlights the estimated annual operations costs based on the phased site improvements outlined in the Master Plan. The operational cost estimates were prepared by WSB in 2020 and are based on assumptions made for the level of effort and resulting costs necessary to maintain the improvements annually following construction/ implementation.

Operational costs are based on 2020 estimates and should be suitable for basic operating budget assumptions. Inflation should be applied over time based on economic factors. It should be expected that costs will need to be refined through stages of the implementation process as more specifics related to personnel, actual improvements constructed, and materials/supplies associated with the project are considered in greater detail.

Table 5(c): Development Cost Summary

| Phase 3  |   |        |       |                 |   |                    |
|--|---|--------|-------|-----------------|---|--------------------|
| Item   | Description   | Qty.   | Units | Est. Unit Price | Estimated Cost  | Estimated Total    |
| <b>General Sitework for Phase 3 Area</b>         |   |        |       |                 |   |                    |
| 1  | Mobilization  | 1      | LS    | 100,000         | 100,000   |                    |
| 2  | Earthwork & Erosion Control   | 1      | LS    | 75,000          | 75,000  |                    |
| 3  | Selective Clearing and Grubbing   | 1      | LS    | 25,000          | 25,000  |                    |
| 4  | Removals (existing Trailer sites, camp, existing pavements, structures, amenities,)     | 1      | LS    | 9,500           | 9,500   |                    |
| 5  | Vehicular and pedestrian wayfinding / signage, ada parking                              | 1      | LS    | 3,000           | 3,000   |                    |
| 6  | Restoration - seeding   | 13     | AC    | 7,000           | 88,900  |                    |
| 7  | Tree/shrub plantings  | 1      | LS    | 25,000          | 25,000  |                    |
|  |   |        |       |                 | <i>Subtotal</i>   | <i>326,400</i>     |
| <b>Roadways &amp; Horse Hill Campground Area</b> |   |        |       |                 |   |                    |
| 8  | 8' Wide Aggregate Trails  | 2,886  | SY    | 8               | 23,088  |                    |
| 9  | Aggregate Roads   | 11,871 | SY    | 10              | 118,710   |                    |
| 10   | Aggregate Parking Lot   | 222    | SY    | 10              | 2,220   |                    |
| 11   | Camping Spurs at Horse Hill (includes power pedestal)                                   | 31     | EA    | 2,500           | 77,500  |                    |
| 12   | Restroom and Shower Building  | 1      | LS    | 480,000         | 480,000   |                    |
| 13   | Water main extension/services for horse hill campground                                 | 1      | LS    | 220,750         | 220,750   |                    |
| 14   | Sanitary sewer main extension/services for horse hill campground (assumes lift station) | 1      | LS    | 467,000         | 467,000   |                    |
| 15   | Septic System for campground and restroom/shower building                               | 1      | LS    | 60,000          | 60,000  |                    |
|  |   |        |       |                 | <i>Subtotal</i>   | <i>1,449,268</i>   |
| <b>Miscellaneous Items</b>                       |   |        |       |                 |   |                    |
| 16   | Pedestrian Underpass  | 1      | LS    | 390,000         | 390,000   |                    |
| 17   | Push Button Horse/Ped Crossing Warning  | 1      | LS    | 25,000          | 25,000  |                    |
| 18   | Historic Trading Post and Wagon Trail Intrepretive Nodes - with bench / sign            | 1      | LS    | 6,500           | 6,500   |                    |
| 19   | Temporary Manure Storage Amenity  | 1      | LS    | 4,500           | 4,500   |                    |
| 20   | 20x30 wooden horse corral (2)   | 1      | LS    | 8,000           | 8,000   |                    |
|  |   |        |       |                 | <i>Subtotal</i>   | <i>434,000</i>     |
|  |   |        |       |                 | Phase 3 Subtotal  | 2,209,668          |
|  |   |        |       |                 | Contingency (10%)   | 220,967            |
|  |   |        |       |                 | Project Fees (Design / Engineering / Admin. / Staking & Testing / etc. 20%) | 486,127            |
|  |   |        |       |                 | <b>Estimated Phase 3 Total:</b>   | <b>\$2,916,762</b> |

**Implementation, Management and Sustainability**

Some of the estimated project costs in Phase 1 are designed to lay the groundwork for expansion of park amenities in future phases, such as the Phase 4 (see Table 5(d)) campground expansion.

While breaking project costs down into manageable phases leads smaller financial investments at given time, if Lincoln County finds that it wishes save money on the park’s improvements overall, multiple phases could be completed at once, thereby reducing mobilization costs overall as well as taking advantage of the higher value of a dollar today relative to the expected lower of a dollar in future years due to inflation. For example, an expected Phase 4 campground expansion estimate is \$484,540 at the time this plan was completed. If this expansion is completed in the near term, this cost will not change much. If completed ten years from now in 2030, the budgeted value of this project in 2020 dollars is expected to be \$389,781 (assuming a steady 2.2% inflation rate). This means that in 2030, the county will need to budget about 23% more to accomplishing the project, which would be \$602,336.

Table 6 is an overall summary of the estimated expenses and revenues for each phase of the park’s improvements. Line-item level details for each phase is provided in Table 7. A notable portion of the estimated expenses for Phase 1 is allocated to personnel costs associated with greater staffing needs for the park based on the scope of proposed improvements. Another significant portion of the Phase 1 operational costs are associated with habitat management activities to maintain and improve the health and character of the woodland and grass environments.

Table 5(d): Development Cost Summary

| Phase 4                                  |  |       |       |                 |   |                  |
|--|--|-------|-------|-----------------|---|------------------|
| Item                                     | Description  | Qty.  | Units | Est. Unit Price | Estimated Cost  | Estimated Total  |
| <b>General Sitework for Phase 4 Area</b> |  |       |       |                 |   |                  |
| 1  | Mobilization   | 1     | LS    | 36,500          | 36,500  |                  |
| 2  | Erosion Control  | 1     | LS    | 3,500           | 3,500   |                  |
| 3  | Earthwork  | 1     | LS    | 32,500          | 32,500  |                  |
| 4  | Selective Clearing and Grubbing  | 1     | LS    | 25,000          | 25,000  |                  |
| 5  | Restoration - seeding  | 3     | AC    | 7,000           | 21,000  |                  |
| 6  | Tree/shrub plantings   | 1     | LS    | 15,000          | 15,000  |                  |
|  |  |       |       |                 | <i>Subtotal</i>   | <i>133,500</i>   |
| <b>Campground Expansion Area</b>         |  |       |       |                 |   |                  |
| 7  | Aggregate roadways for campground expansion  | 1,704 | SY    | 10              | 17,040  |                  |
| 8  | RV Campsite Aggregate Pads (Remaining sites) with Picnic Table, Fire Pit, Power Pedestal | 34    | EA    | 2,500           | 85,000  |                  |
| 9  | Water main extension & services for campground expansion                                 | 1     | LS    | 167,500         | 167,500   |                  |
| 10                                       | Sanitary Sewer main extension & services for campground expansion                        | 1     | LS    | 215,000         | 215,000   |                  |
|  |  |       |       |                 | <i>Subtotal</i>   | <i>484,540</i>   |
| <b>Miscellaneous Items</b>               |  |       |       |                 |   |                  |
| 11                                       | Overlook pavilion and historic cemetery interpretive station                             | 1     | LS    | 50,000          | 50,000  |                  |
| 12                                       | Playground Equipment and Exercise Stations   | 1     | LS    | 80,000          | 80,000  |                  |
|  |  |       |       |                 | <i>Subtotal</i>   | <i>130,000</i>   |
|  |  |       |       |                 | Phase 4 Subtotal  | 748,040          |
|  |  |       |       |                 | Contingency (10%)   | 74,804           |
|  |  |       |       |                 | Project Fees (Design / Engineering / Admin. / Staking & Testing / etc. 20%) | 164,569          |
|  |  |       |       |                 | <b>Estimated Phase 4 Total:</b>   | <b>\$987,413</b> |

**Implementation, Management and Sustainability**

Table 5(e): Development Cost Summary

| Phase 5  |   |       |       |                 |   |                  |
|--|---|-------|-------|-----------------|---|------------------|
| Item   | Description   | Qty.  | Units | Est. Unit Price | Estimated Cost  | Estimated Total  |
| <b>Roads, Trails and Primitive/Group Camp Area</b> |   |       |       |                 |   |                  |
| 1  | Mobilization  | 1     | LS    | 21,500          | 21,500  |                  |
| 2  | Earthwork & Erosion Control   | 1     | LS    | 45,000          | 45,000  |                  |
| 3  | Selective Clearing and Grubbing   | 1     | LS    | 22,500          | 22,500  |                  |
| 4  | Restoration - seeding and minimal tree/shrub plantings  | 6     | AC    | 7,500           | 45,000  |                  |
| 5  | Aggregate 2-way Drive to Prairie Trailhead  | 4,666 | SY    | 25              | 116,650   |                  |
| 6  | Aggregate Parking Lot (prairie trailhead)   | 1,428 | SY    | 25              | 35,700  |                  |
| 7  | 8' Wide Aggregate Trail Primitive Camping Loop  | 3,995 | LF    | 20              | 79,900  |                  |
| 8  | Tables / grills at primitive camping area   | 1     | LS    | 10,000          | 10,000  |                  |
| 9  | Culvert connection for agg. 2-way drive   | 1     | LS    | 7,000           | 7,000   |                  |
| 10   | Trailhead pavilion west of Chalet parking lot area  | 1     | LS    | 63,500          | 63,500  |                  |
| 11   | Vault Toilet  | 1     | LS    | 40,000          | 40,000  |                  |
| 12   | Vehicular and pedestrian wayfinding/signage, ADA parking  | 1     | LS    | 1,500           | 1,500   |                  |
|  |   |       |       |                 | <i>Subtotal</i>   | <i>488,250</i>   |
| <b>Miscellaneous Items</b>                         |   |       |       |                 |   |                  |
| 13   | Interpretive Nodes (kettle hole, overlook, prairie)   | 1     | LS    | 9,500           | 9,500   |                  |
| 14   | Bench / Seating area near Kettle Hole   | 1     | LS    | 3,000           | 3,000   |                  |
| 15   | 3 optional campsites west of chalet parking lot (assume electrical only, no water or sewer hookups) | 3     | EA    | 2,500           | 7,500   |                  |
|  |   |       |       |                 | <i>Subtotal</i>   | <i>20,000</i>    |
|  |   |       |       |                 | Phase 5 Subtotal  | 508,250          |
|  |   |       |       |                 | Contingency (10%)   | 50,825           |
|  |   |       |       |                 | Project Fees (Design / Engineering / Admin. / Staking & Testing / etc. 20%) | 111,815          |
|  |   |       |       |                 | <b>Estimated Phase 5 Total:</b>   | <b>\$670,890</b> |

Table 6: Summary of Operational Costs

| <b>Overall Summary</b> |                          | <b>Estimated Expenses</b> | <b>Estimated Revenue</b> |
|------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|
|                        | Current estimated (2020) | \$ 177,216                | \$ 121,200               |
|                        | Phase 1 *                | \$ 472,990                | \$ 49,680                |
|                        | Phase 2                  | \$ 7,704                  | \$ 3,900                 |
|                        | Phase 3                  | \$ 31,054                 | \$ 48,608                |
|                        | Phase 4                  | \$ 34,354                 | \$ 65,856                |
|                        | Phase 5                  | \$ 6,902                  | \$ 7,056                 |

## Implementation, Management and Sustainability

### Environmental Stewardship

The long-term environmental stewardship of Hole-in-the-Mountain Park is primarily dependent on the commitment of the Lincoln County Board of Commissioners and Lincoln County Parks Department. The details within the Ecological Management Plan section of this document provide direction on how Lincoln County Parks can best manage the natural resources of the park to ensure their long-term thriving. Some of the management and restoration costs (natural resources operational costs) for these areas have been included as line-item costs in Table 7(b) on lines 25 and 26.

Due to lack of sufficient budget allocation to managing the woodland and prairie environments relative to the spread of invasive species in the park, a larger budget investment is now required to prevent a troublesome problem from growing worse. As ground layer grasses and shrubs are displaced by non-native invasive species, precipitation runoff speeds up, erosion increases, and downstream impacts to culverts, stream channels and trail can be expected. Budgeting for habitat maintenance is ultimately an infrastructure investment across the whole park and is an important operational cost that should not be discounted.

### Maintenance

Hole-in-the-Mountain Park has utilized a “camp host” model to assist with critical functions of the park such as cleaning of the Chalet, assistance with registrations and enforcement of rules. The host in turn receives camping for free. This has been a cost-effective model that will likely continue in the park.

Providing campers with a clean, safe, and enjoyable recreational experience is a paramount goal of Lincoln County Parks Department. Maintenance of the campground facilities is essential in attaining that goal. General maintenance includes mowing lawns, cleaning the Chalet and other facilities, trash pickup, maintenance of water and electrical services, and cleanup of campsites as needed.

*Table 7(a): Operational Cost Estimates*

| Phase 1                                 |   |                    |                   |  |
|---|---|--------------------|-------------------|--|
| Item                                    | Description   | Estimated Expenses | Estimated Revenue | Notes  |
| <b>Park Operations</b>                  |   |                    |                   |  |
| 1                                       | Personnel Services  | 95,000             |                   | full time HiTM park & program manager (includes wages & benefits)  |
| 2                                       | Marketing   | 10,000             |                   | budget for advertising of park features and programmatic offerings   |
| 3                                       | Professional services for online Reservation/Ticketing System | 2,400              |                   | Maintenance, Hosting Fees, etc. (12 months @ \$200/month)  |
|   | <b>Annual Subtotal</b>  | <b>107,400</b>     | -                 |  |
| <b>Sledding Hill</b>                    |   |                    |                   |  |
| 4                                       | Personnel Services  | 30,240             |                   | 4 Sledding Hill Operators, 2 Chalet Operators, 1 Maintenance Operator (36 Days @ 10 hrs./day @ \$12/hr)                      |
| 5                                       | Utilities   | 5,000              |                   | Lighting, Electric for lift & snowmaking & Water for Snowmaking  |
| 6                                       | Garbage   | 600                |                   | 4 months @\$150/mo.  |
| 7                                       | Repairs & Maintenance   | 3,000              |                   | Annual Lift Inspections & Misc. Repairs  |
| 8                                       | Supplies  | 2,500              |                   | Tubes, Signs, Equipments   |
| 9                                       | Tickets - Daily Pass  |                    | 27,000            | 36 Days @ 75 participants / per day @ \$10 ticket  |
|   | <b>Annual Subtotal</b>  | <b>41,340</b>      | <b>27,000</b>     |  |
| <b>Chalet &amp; Parking Area (west)</b> |   |                    |                   |  |
| 10                                      | Personnel Services  | 2,496              |                   | 1 Maintenance Staff (52 weeks @ 4 hrs./week @\$12/hr)  |
| 11                                      | Snow & Ice Removal  | 3,000              |                   | 4 months @ \$750/month   |
| 12                                      | Repairs & Maintenance   | 4,000              |                   | Facility Repairs & Maintenance, Includes HVAC & Mechanical Systems, Parking Lot/Sidewalk Maintenance                         |
| 13                                      | Supplies  | 1,000              |                   | Misc. Items  |
|   | <b>Annual Subtotal</b>  | <b>10,496</b>      | -                 |  |
| <b>East Campground Area</b>             |   |                    |                   |  |
| 14                                      | Personnel Services  | 4,704              |                   | 1 Maintenance Staff (28 weeks @ 14hrs./week @\$12/hr)  |
| 15                                      | Utilities   | 17,500             |                   | Electric, Sewer and Water Service: 7 months @ \$2500/month (\$1500 electric, \$500 water, \$500 sewer-includes dump station) |
| 16                                      | Garbage   | 700                |                   | Increased Usage 7 months @ \$100/month   |
| 17                                      | Parking lot   | 1,500              |                   | pavement maintenance / snow & ice removals   |
| 18                                      | Repairs & Maintenance   | 2,000              |                   | Restroom Supplies, misc. maintenance tasks   |
| 19                                      | Supplies  | 2,000              |                   | Replacement Tables, Fire Pits, etc.  |
| 20                                      | Camping   |                    | 22,680            | Additional revenue from water/sewer hookups and seasonal (avg increase of \$15/day)  |
|   | <b>Annual Subtotal</b>  | <b>28,404</b>      | <b>22,680</b>     |  |

## Implementation, Management and Sustainability

Table 7(b): Operational Cost Estimates

| Trails and Roadways Maintenance  |   |                    |                   |   |
|--|---|--------------------|-------------------|---|
| 21   | Personnel Services                      | 2,100              |                   | Monthly grading of trails and drive surfaces (assume county equipment is used, not included in estimate) 7 months @ 12 hrs./month @ \$25/hr |
| 22   | Repairs & Maintenance                   | 2,000              |                   | 2 applications of dust control on drive areas   |
| 23   | Grounds Improvement                     | 2,500              |                   | Additional aggregate: Washouts & annual maintenance   |
| 24   | Supplies                                | 500                |                   | Misc. Items   |
| <b>Annual Subtotal</b>   |   | <b>7,100</b>       | -                 |   |
| Overall Park Natural Resource Management (does not include future farm property) |   |                    |                   |   |
| 25   | Woodland management - buckthorn removal | 262,500            |                   | 175 acres @ \$1,500/acre (every year for first 3 to 4 years, then could be reduced to every other year)                                     |
| 26   | Prairie management (prescribed burns)   | 15,750             |                   | 105 acres @ \$150/acre (pro-rated estimated cost based on performing every 3 to 5 years on average)   |
| <b>Annual Subtotal</b>   |   | <b>278,250</b>     | -                 |   |
| <b>PHASE 1 Total Estimated Expenses and Revenue:</b>                             |   | <b>\$ 472,990</b>  | <b>\$ 49,680</b>  |   |
| Phase 2  |   |                    |                   |   |
| Item   | Description                             | Estimated Expenses | Estimated Revenue | Notes   |
| Chalet Improvements / Expansion & Campground Restroom Building                   |   |                    |                   |   |
| 1  | Utilities                               | 3,000              |                   | Increase in size and usage: 12 months @ \$250/month, Parking Lot & Trail Lights   |
| 2  | Personnel services                      | 4,704              |                   | 1 Maintenance Staff (28 weeks @ 14hrs./week @ \$12/hr)  |
| 3  | Chalet Rental                           |                    | 3,900             | \$150/day @ 26 days per year  |
| <b>Annual Subtotal</b>   |   | <b>7,704</b>       | <b>3,900</b>      |   |
| <b>PHASE 2 Total Estimated Expenses and Revenue:</b>                             |   | <b>\$ 7,704</b>    | <b>\$ 3,900</b>   |   |
| Phase 3  |   |                    |                   |   |
| Item   | Description                             | Estimated Expenses | Estimated Revenue | Notes   |
| Horse Hill Campsites   |   |                    |                   |   |
| 1  | Personnel Services                      | 4,704              |                   | 1 Maintenance Staff (28 weeks @ 14hrs./week @ \$12/hr)  |
| 2  | Utilities                               | 14,000             |                   | Electric and Water Service: 7 months @ \$2000/month (\$1500 electric, \$500 water)  |
| 3  | Garbage                                 | 700                |                   | Increased Usage 7 months @ \$100/month  |
| 4  | Repairs & Maintenance                   | 3,000              |                   | Annual Septic Maintenance, Restroom Supplies, Manure Removal  |
| 4  | Supplies                                | 500                |                   | Misc. Items   |
| 5  | Camping                                 |                    | 48,608            | 20% occupancy for 28 weeks @ \$40/day with full hook ups  |
| <b>Annual Subtotal</b>   |   | <b>22,904</b>      | <b>48,608</b>     |   |

Table 7(c): Operational Cost Estimates

| Trails and Roadways Maintenance                      |                       |                    |                   |   |
|--|-----------------------|--------------------|-------------------|---|
| 6  | Personnel Services    | 1,400              |                   | Monthly grading of trails and drive surfaces (assume county equipment is used, not included in estimate) 7 months @ 8 hrs./month @ \$25/hr  |
| 7  | Repairs & Maintenance | 4,500              |                   | 2 applications of dust control on drive areas, Ped. underpass cleaning & maintenance  |
| 8  | Grounds Improvement   | 1,750              |                   | Additional aggregate: Washouts & annual maintenance   |
| 9  | Supplies              | 500                |                   | Misc. Items   |
| <b>Annual Subtotal</b>                               |                       | <b>8,150</b>       | -                 |   |
| <b>PHASE 3 Total Estimated Expenses and Revenue:</b> |                       | <b>\$ 31,054</b>   | <b>\$ 48,608</b>  |   |
| Phase 4  |                       |                    |                   |   |
| Item   | Description           | Estimated Expenses | Estimated Revenue | Notes   |
| East Campground Expansion / Play & Exercise areas    |                       |                    |                   |   |
| 1  | Personnel Services    | 4,704              |                   | 1 Maintenance Staff (28 weeks @ 14hrs./week @ \$12/hr)  |
| 2  | Utilities             | 23,100             |                   | Electric, Sewer and Water Service: 7 months @ \$3300/month (\$2000 electric, \$650 water, \$650 sewer)  |
| 3  | Garbage               | 1,050              |                   | Increased Usage 7 months @ \$150/month  |
| 4  | Repairs & Maintenance | 2,500              |                   | Restroom Supplies, playground, misc. maintenance tasks  |
| 5  | Supplies              | 3,000              |                   | Replacement Tables, Fire Pits, playground parts, etc.   |
| 6  | Camping               |                    | 65,856            | 20% occupancy for 28 weeks @ \$40/day with full hook ups  |
| <b>Annual Subtotal</b>                               |                       | <b>34,354</b>      | <b>65,856</b>     |   |
| <b>PHASE 4 Total Estimated Expenses and Revenue:</b> |                       | <b>\$ 34,354</b>   | <b>\$ 65,856</b>  |   |
| Phase 5  |                       |                    |                   |   |
| Item   | Description           | Estimated Expenses | Estimated Revenue | Notes   |
| East Campground Expansion / Play & Exercise areas    |                       |                    |                   |   |
| 1  | Personnel Services    | 3,052              |                   | Monthly grading of trails and drive surfaces (assume county equipment is used, not included in estimate) 7 months @ 4 hrs./month @ \$25/hr, 1 Maintenance Staff (28 weeks @ 7hrs./week @ \$12/hr) |
| 2  | Garbage               | 350                |                   | Increased Usage 7 months @ \$50/month   |
| 3  | Repairs & Maintenance | 1,500              |                   | 2 applications of dust control on drive areas, vault toilet maintenance   |
| 4  | Grounds Improvement   | 1,000              |                   | Additional aggregate: Washouts & annual maintenance   |
| 5  | Supplies              | 1,000              |                   | Replacement Tables/Grills   |
| 6  | Camping               |                    | 7,056             | 20% occupancy for 28 weeks @ \$40/day with full hook ups  |
| <b>Annual Subtotal</b>                               |                       | <b>6,902</b>       | <b>7,056</b>      |   |
| <b>PHASE 5 Total Estimated Expenses and Revenue:</b> |                       | <b>\$ 6,902</b>    | <b>\$ 7,056</b>   |   |

# APPENDIX A:

## Meeting Notes from Masterplan Update Process

### Hole in the Mountain (HITM) Project

12.12.2019 | Meeting Notes and Proposed Next Steps

#### Vision for Park in 2030

The following staff visions for "HITM Park in 2030" are:

*"An all-season kind of park."*

*"Elevate the community's understanding of what the park has to offer."*

*"It is an EXCITING place to bring my kids, and am proud of."*

*"It is a promoted park that people within 50 miles are aware of an enticed to visit once a year."*

*"The 2-3 niches that this park excels at are strengths that have helped set this park apart from others."*

*"Young people are involved in the life of the park."*

*"The park has a relevance and energy that meet or exceeds that of the 1970's and 1980's."*

#### Facts and ideas about the park

Campsites in the area- 108 sites at Norweigan Creek, 30 sites at horsecamp, 20 sites at HITM.

Lots of buckthorn. Ash trees are ¼ of tree canopy. Concerned about future impact of emerald ash borer. There is tree regeneration on site.

Half of trails are eroding and many sections are blocked by downed trees. Loam soils on site.

Park staff is on site 12 months of the year. Campground hosts present in summer.

South Dakota State University uses the park for some ecology teaching purposes. SDSU mountain bike club come to the park.

The Sportsmans Club has held an annual work day that has benefitted the park.

The Nature Conservancy owns 1000 acres around the south side of Lake Benton- their office is in Clear Lake, SD and they have ability with prescribed fire.

There is seasonal demand for HITM Park. The uses change with the seasons. The biggest single demand/request of the park concern trail usage.

There are lots of conflicting uses- equestrian, snowmobile, hiking and mountain biking. The equestrian community is declining but politically savvy. Snowmobilers want to use the park as a pass through in their larger trail network, but tree blow downs prevent this currently. Snowmobilers have to ride along roads in this part of the state, this park is the only off-road riding locally. More demand for snowshoeing. Cross country skiers come from SD, mainly for training. The park previously had four miles of cross country trails and a groomer.

## Hole in the Mountain (HITM) Project

12.12.2019 | Meeting Notes and Proposed Next Steps

Rustic cabins would cost about \$8000 each, but would be a revenue generator for the park for all seasons.

The private farm parcel is deeded to the park. The landowner has a life estate for as long as he lives. This land is 160 acres.

The Nature Conservancy has 1,000 acres next to the park which has benefitted the Dakota Skipper Butterfly and excludes motorized uses.

The Sioux have a strong history to the site. In this part of MN we have Santee Sioux in Flandreau and upper and lower Sioux near Granite Falls. The Sioux will still actively identify this land as belonging to them. They likely have indigenous knowledge of the area that can benefit management of the site.

Part of the park was provided on a Lawcon Grant, which means that these park areas must provide a recreation benefit in perpetuity.

### Questions asked

Could HITM Park be used as a cross country running course for the high school?

Can the park satisfy an overnight camping need for the school district? (There are no group camp sites at the park).

Why don't locals use the park?

### Project timeline goals

Complete research by spring/summer.

Stakeholder visioning meeting by May 2020.

Identity & schedule any needed summer engagement meetings by May 2020.

Campground hosts involved in engagement campaign from June-August 2020.

Execute marketing for engagement by late May 2020.

Complete engagement campaign by August/September 2020<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Engagement plan is an effort to determine the needs of existing and new park users to ensure demand would support improvement efforts. This data will help inform the development of conceptual plans and cost estimates for the Master Park Plan.

## Hole in the Mountain (HITM) Project

12.12.2019 | Meeting Notes and Proposed Next Steps

Host follow-up results meeting with stakeholders in September 2020.

Conceptual plan development begins in October 2020.

Conceptual plan revealed in November 2020.

Solicit for conceptual plans and costs estimates<sup>2</sup> in October 2020.

Solicit for park operational cost forecasting<sup>3</sup> in October 2020.

Begin rewrite of masterplan in October 2020.

Submit plan to GMRPTC by February 2021.

Apply for grants for legacy funding in 2021.

### Action Steps, December 2019 – April 2020

A significant outcome from our meeting is that having a stakeholder visioning meeting for HITM Park was identified as a next step. Such a meeting would take place in April or May. Available dates for the National Park Service to be available are **April 20-24**, April 27 – May 1, and **May 4-5**. **Bold** indicates preferred dates.

The purpose of the meeting would be to work with stakeholders to determine the following:

- Goals and Outcomes for HITM Park
- Strategies for achieving desired outcomes
- Evaluating a curated suite of engagement options and distributing the engagement campaign across all the stakeholder groups
- Field work to evaluate trail conditions and determine which trail segments should be retired and where new trail segments should be routed
- Other amenities that stakeholders would like to see in the park
- Assessment of volunteer groups that may be available to assist with Park projects
- ???

We brainstormed a tentative list of project stakeholders. These stakeholders are potential partners in the process of strengthening HITM into a premiere Regional Park. Reaching out and connecting to these

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<sup>2</sup> Engagement of an Engineering/Architectural firm experienced in Park Master Planning to create conceptual plans and cost estimates and also address feasibility of concepts due to park terrain.

<sup>3</sup> Engagement of an individual or firm experienced in park operations to assist in the development of operational costs relative to the proposed future plans.

## Hole in the Mountain (HITM) Project

12.12.2019 | Meeting Notes and Proposed Next Steps

entities to determine their interest level in participating in park visioning and improvement is a task for January-March.

The Nature Conservancy  
Sioux Tribe(s)  
US Fish & Wildlife Service  
MN DNR Forester, Willmar Office  
South Dakota State University (Landscape Architecture Dept., Bike Club, Natural Resources Dept. or clubs)  
Sportsmans Club  
Railroad  
Drift Clippers Snowmobilers  
City of Lake Benton  
Lincoln County  
MN DOT  
Drone Pilots  
Visual Artist (Virtual Reality)  
Boy Scouts/Girl Scouts  
X Country running (clubs or school teams)  
Te Tonka Ha Events  
Equestrians- Saddle Horse Days  
Artists Groups- Lisa knows people  
Bicycle Shops- Brookings, Marshall  
Lake Benton Chamber of Commerce (CBB)  
Travel SW, Explore MN  
Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission (GMRPTC)  
Wind Turbine Companies stationed with investments in Lake Benton  
Environmental Education organizations  
4H Clubs  
SW Regional Development Commission  
Lake Benton and Elkton School  
Area Campgrounds & Lodging establishments

Additional preparation work that may be important for the April/May visioning meeting:

- Identify places in the community where passive surveys can be positioned.
- Send a survey to recurring seasonal campground guests.
- Generate ideas for events could be created to support the HITM Park and build a capacity of use and stewardship over time.
- Recognize what kinds of pent-up demand there is in the region and begin to consider the ways in which the park can be organized to meet this demand.
- Begin to develop asset maps of HITM Park that can be used at the April/May meeting and throughout the summer.

## Hole in the Mountain (HITM) Project

12.12.2019 | Meeting Notes and Proposed Next Steps

NPS supporting actions that the NPS can take leading up to the April/May visioning meeting:

- Locate examples of highly ranked park masterplans from the Midwest that can be used as precedent to learn from for the purposes of understanding how the HITM Park masterplan can be edited.
- Determine which public meeting facilitation techniques should be considered for the visioning meeting in April/May.
- Create documents (maps, forms, flyers, etc.) to be used in the visioning meeting.
- Facilitate monthly check-in meetings to keep the effort on track.
  - NPS will create a Doodle Poll to see what dates in late January work to schedule a conference call to check-in and report updates.



## Hole in the Mountain (HITM) Project

12.12.2019 | Meeting Notes and Proposed Next Steps

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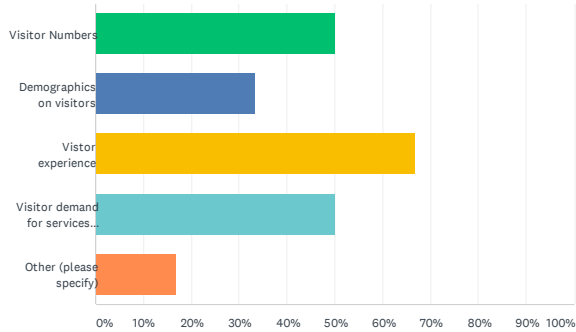
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**Q1 What information has the Park Board and County lacked in the past, that if collected in the future, would help with decision-making on Hole in the Mountain Park?**

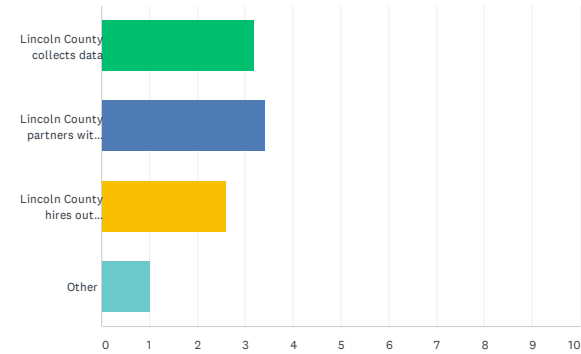
Answered: 6 Skipped: 0



| ANSWER CHOICES                             | RESPONSES |   |
|--|-----------|---|
| Visitor Numbers                            | 50.00%    | 3 |
| Demographics on visitors                   | 33.33%    | 2 |
| Visitor experience                         | 66.67%    | 4 |
| Visitor demand for services and facilities | 50.00%    | 3 |
| Other (please specify)                     | 16.67%    | 1 |
| Total Respondents: 6                       |           |   |

**Q2 Please rank the priority order for how you would like to collect this data with #1 being the area you would most likely support for data collection.**

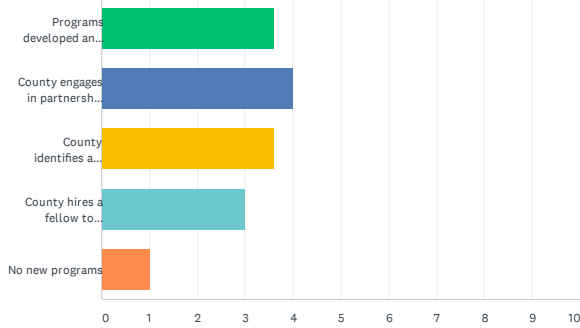
Answered: 6 Skipped: 0



|  | 1           | 2           | 3           | 4            | TOTAL | SCORE |
|--|-------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|-------|-------|
| Lincoln County collects data   | 50.00%<br>3 | 16.67%<br>1 | 33.33%<br>2 | 0.00%<br>0   | 6     | 3.17  |
| Lincoln County partners with another organization to collect data (examples may include a partnership with a university) | 40.00%<br>2 | 60.00%<br>3 | 0.00%<br>0  | 0.00%<br>0   | 5     | 3.40  |
| Lincoln County hires out someone to collect data   | 20.00%<br>1 | 20.00%<br>1 | 60.00%<br>3 | 0.00%<br>0   | 5     | 2.60  |
| Other  | 0.00%<br>0  | 0.00%<br>0  | 0.00%<br>0  | 100.00%<br>5 | 5     | 1.00  |

**Q3 Please rank the structure you want to see for programs/programming in the park with #1 being the structure you would support the most?**

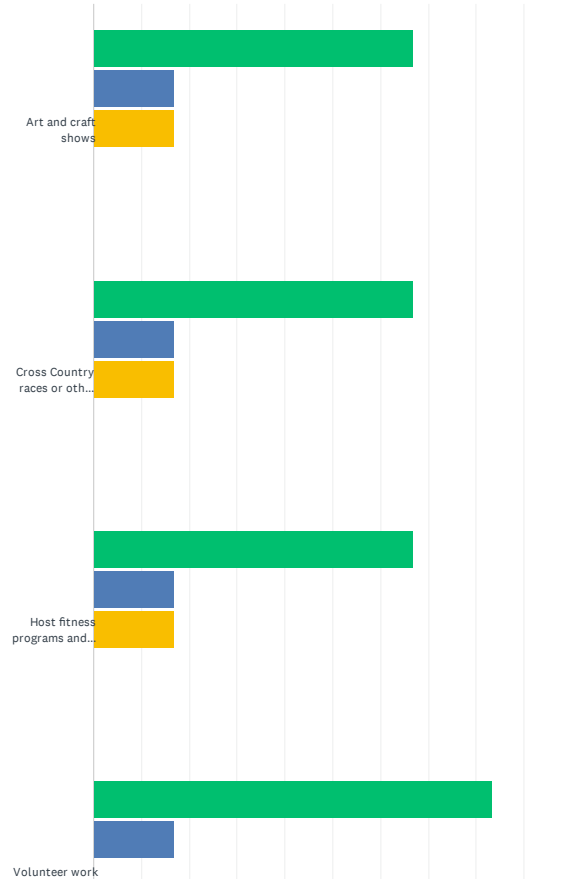
Answered: 6 Skipped: 0



|  | 1           | 2           | 3           | 4           | 5            | TOTAL | SCORE |
|--|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|-------|-------|
| Programs developed and run by the County   | 40.00%<br>2 | 0.00%<br>0  | 40.00%<br>2 | 20.00%<br>1 | 0.00%<br>0   | 5     | 3.60  |
| County engages in partnerships with community groups and organizations to sponsor events     | 50.00%<br>3 | 0.00%<br>0  | 50.00%<br>3 | 0.00%<br>0  | 0.00%<br>0   | 6     | 4.00  |
| County identifies a lead community organization to coordinate all programming and activities | 0.00%<br>0  | 80.00%<br>4 | 0.00%<br>0  | 20.00%<br>1 | 0.00%<br>0   | 5     | 3.60  |
| County hires a fellow to oversee programming   | 20.00%<br>1 | 20.00%<br>1 | 0.00%<br>0  | 60.00%<br>3 | 0.00%<br>0   | 5     | 3.00  |
| No new programs  | 0.00%<br>0  | 0.00%<br>0  | 0.00%<br>0  | 0.00%<br>0  | 100.00%<br>5 | 5     | 1.00  |

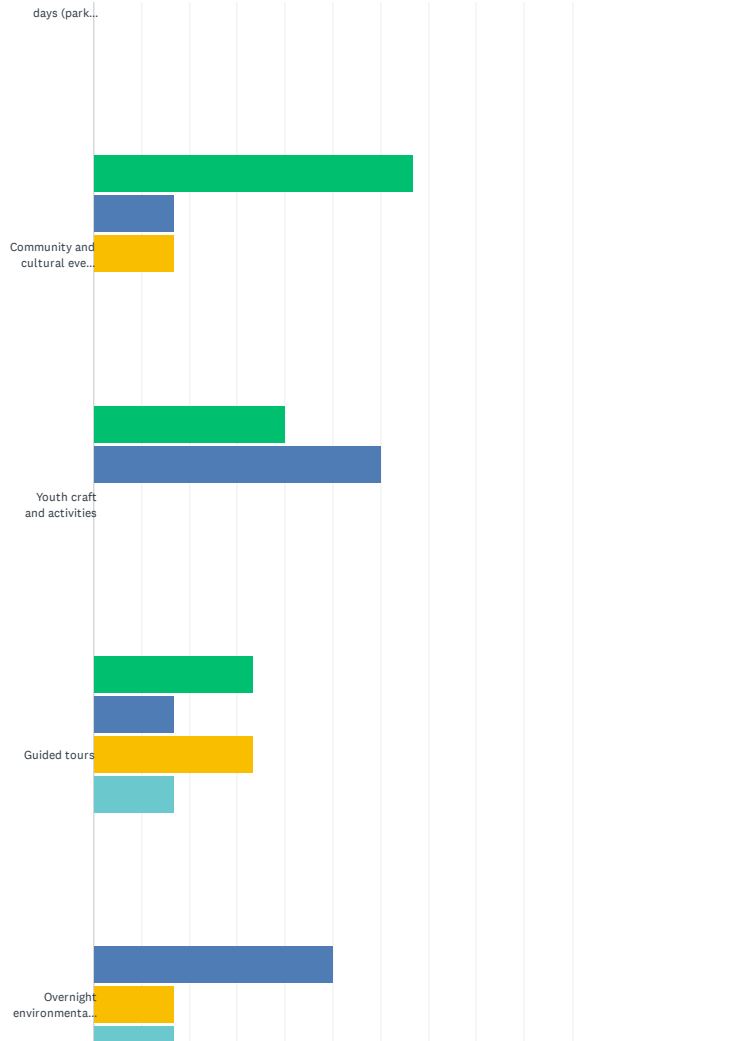
**Q4 Please rank what programs/programming you feel would be suitable for Hole in the Mountain Park. Please rank on a scale of 1 to 5 with 1 being programs very suitable for the park and 5 being not suitable.**

Answered: 6 Skipped: 0



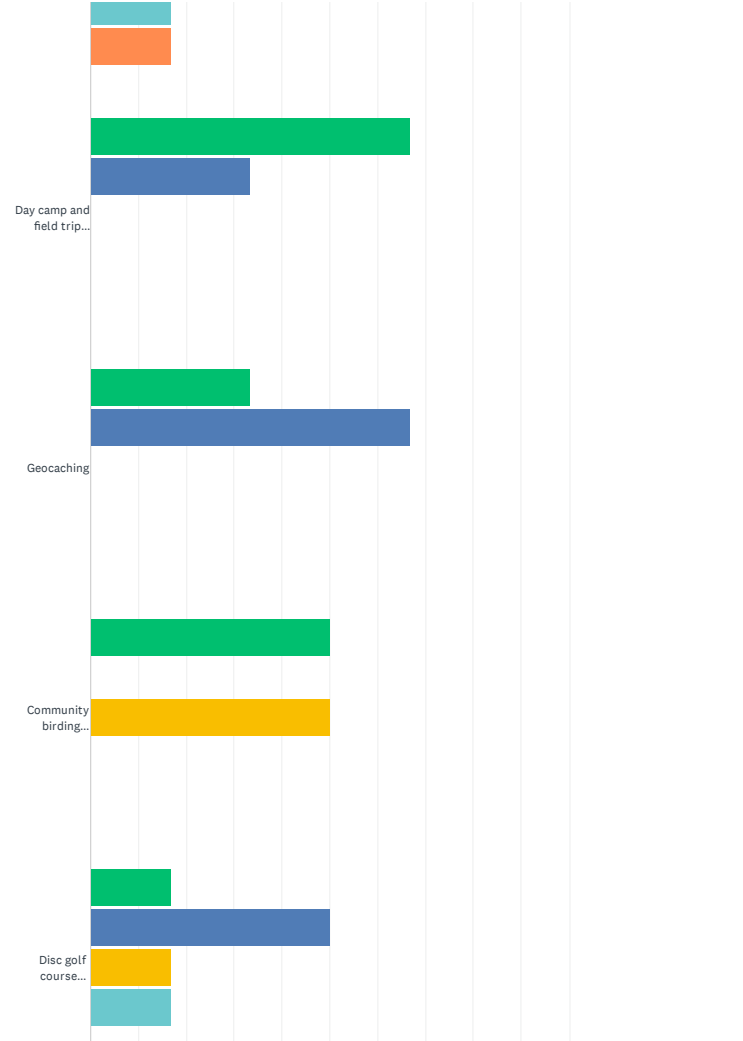
HITM Park Research and Programming Survey

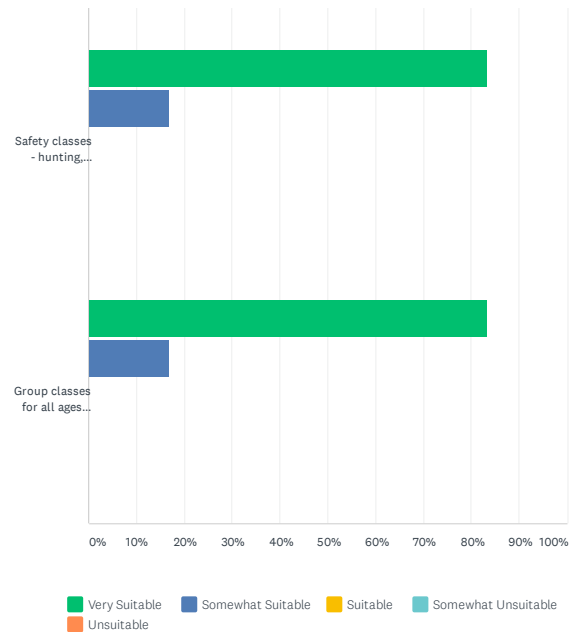
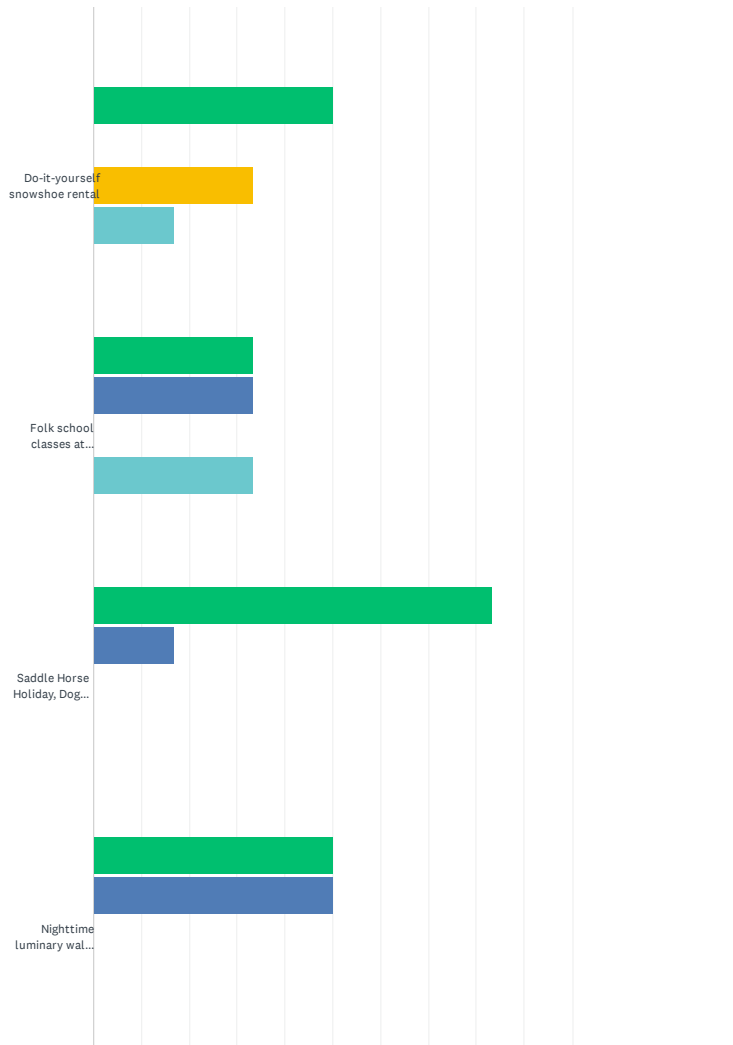
SurveyMonkey



HITM Park Research and Programming Survey

SurveyMonkey





HITM Park Research and Programming Survey

SurveyMonkey

|  | VERY SUITABLE | SOMEWHAT SUITABLE | SUITABLE    | SOMEWHAT UNSUITABLE | UNSUITABLE  | TOTAL | WEIGHTED AVERAGE |
|--|---------------|-------------------|-------------|---------------------|-------------|-------|------------------|
| Art and craft shows  | 66.67%<br>4   | 16.67%<br>1       | 16.67%<br>1 | 0.00%<br>0          | 0.00%<br>0  | 6     | 1.50             |
| Cross Country races or other school sponsored events   | 66.67%<br>4   | 16.67%<br>1       | 16.67%<br>1 | 0.00%<br>0          | 0.00%<br>0  | 6     | 1.50             |
| Host fitness programs and events (examples could include 5k races, Relay for Life, Tug of War Tournament, etc) | 66.67%<br>4   | 16.67%<br>1       | 16.67%<br>1 | 0.00%<br>0          | 0.00%<br>0  | 6     | 1.50             |
| Volunteer work days (park cleanup, invasive species, tree planting, trail maintenance, etc)                    | 83.33%<br>5   | 16.67%<br>1       | 0.00%<br>0  | 0.00%<br>0          | 0.00%<br>0  | 6     | 1.17             |
| Community and cultural events (examples could include a winter celebration event)                              | 66.67%<br>4   | 16.67%<br>1       | 16.67%<br>1 | 0.00%<br>0          | 0.00%<br>0  | 6     | 1.50             |
| Youth craft and activities   | 40.00%<br>2   | 60.00%<br>3       | 0.00%<br>0  | 0.00%<br>0          | 0.00%<br>0  | 5     | 1.60             |
| Guided tours   | 33.33%<br>2   | 16.67%<br>1       | 33.33%<br>2 | 16.67%<br>1         | 0.00%<br>0  | 6     | 2.33             |
| Overnight environmental education courses  | 0.00%<br>0    | 50.00%<br>3       | 16.67%<br>1 | 16.67%<br>1         | 16.67%<br>1 | 6     | 3.00             |
| Day camp and field trip activities for teachers/students or parents/children                                   | 66.67%<br>4   | 33.33%<br>2       | 0.00%<br>0  | 0.00%<br>0          | 0.00%<br>0  | 6     | 1.33             |
| Geocaching   | 33.33%<br>2   | 66.67%<br>4       | 0.00%<br>0  | 0.00%<br>0          | 0.00%<br>0  | 6     | 1.67             |
| Community birding activities where visitors can attempt to identify species within the park                    | 50.00%<br>3   | 0.00%<br>0        | 50.00%<br>3 | 0.00%<br>0          | 0.00%<br>0  | 6     | 2.00             |
| Disc golf course (permanent or seasonal)   | 16.67%<br>1   | 50.00%<br>3       | 16.67%<br>1 | 16.67%<br>1         | 0.00%<br>0  | 6     | 2.33             |
| Do-it-yourself snowshoe rental   | 50.00%<br>3   | 0.00%<br>0        | 33.33%<br>2 | 16.67%<br>1         | 0.00%<br>0  | 6     | 2.17             |
| Folk school classes at chalet such as basket weaving, snowshoe making, fly leaf casting, etc.                  | 33.33%<br>2   | 33.33%<br>2       | 0.00%<br>0  | 33.33%<br>2         | 0.00%<br>0  | 6     | 2.33             |
| Saddle Horse Holiday, Dog Day at the Park, Historic Re-  | 83.33%<br>5   | 16.67%<br>1       | 0.00%<br>0  | 0.00%<br>0          | 0.00%<br>0  | 6     | 1.17             |

HITM Park Research and Programming Survey

SurveyMonkey

|  |             |             |            |            |            |   |      |
|--|-------------|-------------|------------|------------|------------|---|------|
| enactments or other kinds of interest driven events                                |             |             |            |            |            |   |      |
| Nighttime luminary walks on special dates such as Halloween or Winter Solstice     | 50.00%<br>3 | 50.00%<br>3 | 0.00%<br>0 | 0.00%<br>0 | 0.00%<br>0 | 6 | 1.50 |
| Safety classes - hunting, chainsaw, etc.   | 83.33%<br>5 | 16.67%<br>1 | 0.00%<br>0 | 0.00%<br>0 | 0.00%<br>0 | 6 | 1.17 |
| Group classes for all ages such as cross country ski school, map and compass, etc. | 83.33%<br>5 | 16.67%<br>1 | 0.00%<br>0 | 0.00%<br>0 | 0.00%<br>0 | 6 | 1.17 |

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Q5 What other ideas or comments do you have related to research and programming?

Answered: 3 Skipped: 3