

Section IX

Implementation and Management Plan

Overview

Implementing the master plan for Spring Lake Regional Park Reserve will require significant initial and long-term capital investments for physical development, ecological and cultural stewardship, operations, and maintenance. Realistically, implementation will occur over a number of years as funding and other resources are made available. This section considers an overall strategy for implementing the plan that takes these factors into consideration. An overview of Dakota County's operational and management practices as it pertains to this park is also included.

Implementation Cost Projections

The following provides an overview of the potential costs to implement each aspect of the master plan.

Site Preparation and Development Program Cost Projections

The cost analysis defines the potential costs associated with each development component of the master plan. It is based on a combination of site-specific development requirements and projects of similar size and complexity. The costs are also based on having the work completed by private contractors and specialists. It does not take into consideration work that could be performed by County staff, volunteer groups or by other means.

The cost figures are based on master plan level evaluation, which brings with it inherent limitations. The cost figures are intended to be used for general budgeting purposes, project phasing, and comparing the relative cost of one item to that of another. The costs are in 2003 dollars. Although intended to be conservative, actual costs will vary depending on the year that each aspect of the master plan is implemented, implementation parameters, economic conditions affecting bidding, and the actual site conditions found in the field during construction.

Development Program Cost Projections		
Master Plan Component	General Description of Cost Items Included in Estimate	Cost Estimate (In Dollars)
General Park Deconstruction	1) General deconstruction and cleanup of debris piles, old developed sites, and miscellaneous junk piles within the park – budget figure only for existing park land, not inholding properties.	300,000
Schaar's Bluff Area Park Drive and Parking Lots	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Rural-section asphalt park drive road 2) Development of stormwater convenience systems – natural systems and built systems (culverts, storm sewer, etc.) 3) Improvements and redevelopment of picnic area parking lots with concrete curbs and asphalt surface. Total of 140 spaces. 4) Cultural Center parking lots with concrete curbs and asphalt surface. Total of 80 spaces. 5) General roadway signage 6) Miscellaneous roadway-related site amenities 7) Restoration & landscape enhancements 	360,000
Hilary Path Park Drive and Harbor/Trailhead Parking Lot	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Rural-section asphalt park drive road 2) Development of stormwater conveyance systems – natural systems and built systems (culverts, storm sewer, etc.) 3) The Harbor parking lot with concrete curbs and asphalt surface. 4) General roadway signage 5) Miscellaneous roadway-related site amenities 6) Restoration & landscape enhancements 	140,000
Lodge and Village Park Drive and Parking Lots	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Rural-section asphalt park drive road from Pine Bend to lodge (does not include road to boat launch) 2) Development of stormwater conveyance systems – natural systems and built systems (culverts, storm sewer, etc.) 3) Improvements and redevelopment of lodge parking lot with concrete curbs and asphalt surface. Total of 60 spaces. 4) The Village parking lot with concrete curbs and asphalt surface. 40 spaces. 5) General roadway signage 6) Miscellaneous roadway-related site amenities 7) Restoration & landscape enhancements 	375,000
The Preserve Area Trailhead Parking Lot	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Rural-section asphalt park drive road from Pine Bend to parking lot 2) Development of stormwater conveyance systems – natural systems and built systems (culverts, storm sewer, etc.) 3) Parking lot with concrete curbs and asphalt surface. Total of 20 spaces. 4) General roadway signage 5) Miscellaneous roadway-related site amenities 6) Restoration & landscape enhancements 	50,000

Master Plan Component	General Description of Cost Items Included in Estimate	Cost Estimate (In Dollars)
Boat Launch and Picnic Area Park Drive and Parking Lots	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Rural-section asphalt park drive road from the park drive 2) Development of stormwater conveyance systems – natural systems and built systems (culverts, storm sewer, etc.) 3) Parking lot and turnaround with concrete curbs and asphalt surface at boat launch 4) Parking lot at picnic area with concrete curbs and asphalt surface. Total of 40 spaces 5) Boat launch – one ramp 6) Retaining walls 7) General roadway signage 8) Miscellaneous roadway-related site amenities 9) Restoration & landscape enhancements 	410,000
Regional Trail	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Trail development (asphalt surfaced) – 7.1 miles at 10' wide 2) Trailhead and trailside amenities (benches, etc.) 3) Signage program 4) Storm sewer systems (culverts, diversions). 5) Misc. improvements (retaining walls, etc.) 	980,000
Nature Trails	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Trail development/improvements – 9.2 miles of soft-surfaced trail 2) Trailhead and trailside amenities (overlooks, benches, observation platforms) 3) Interpretive signage program 4) Footbridges 5) Storm sewer systems (culverts, diversions). 6) Misc. improvements (retaining walls, etc.) 	540,000
Cultural Trails	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Trail development/improvements – 3.8 miles of soft-surfaced trail 2) Trailhead and trailside amenities (overlooks, benches, observation platforms) 3) Interpretive signage program 4) Footbridges 5) Storm sewer systems (culverts, diversions). 6) Misc. improvements (retaining walls, etc.) 	230,000
Cultural Center – Schaar’s Bluff	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Cultural Center building (based on 6,000 s.f. facility) 2) Associated walkways and trails (does not include stairs down to Riverside Day-Use Area) 3) Outdoor event area 4) Archaeological dig area 5) Miscellaneous site amenities 6) Utilities (well, septic system, etc.) 7) Restoration & landscape enhancements 	1,900,000

Master Plan Component	General Description of Cost Items Included in Estimate	Cost Estimate (In Dollars)
Group Picnic Area - - Schaar's Bluff Area	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Restroom near east shelter 2) Miscellaneous enhancements (play structure relocation, additional picnic "nooks", upgrade basic site amenities, etc.) 3) Restoration and landscape enhancements 	180,000
Riverside Day-Use Area	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Stairway down for cultural center. 2) Floating docks 3) Picnic tables and grills 4) Misc. improvements 5) Restoration & landscape enhancements 	200,000
Bluff-Edge Treatment	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Edge treatment (based on fence-style with stone columns and rails) 2) Signage 3) Restoration & landscape enhancements 	280,000
Independent Family Picnic Areas	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Misc. improvements (picnic tables, grills, etc.) 2) Restoration & landscape enhancements 	20,000
The Harbor	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Five moored houseboats on floats 2) Trails from parking lot 3) Bathhouse/restroom 4) Picnic shelter overlooking lake (south of harbor area) 5) Miscellaneous enhancements (fire pits, picnic table, etc.) 6) Utilities (well, septic system, etc.) 7) Restoration & landscape enhancements <p>Note: Cleanup of current site is not included in the above.</p>	550,000
Lodge and Group Camp	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Miscellaneous enhancements (benches, picnic tables, grills, etc.) 2) Storage shed <p>(Note: Does not include expansion of the lodge)</p>	40,000
The Village	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Village cabins (9) 2) Bathhouse and restroom 3) Trails – soft-surfaced 4) Flexible use tent sites (6) 5) Miscellaneous site amenities 6) Utilities (well, septic system, etc.) 7) Restoration & landscape enhancements 	680,000

Master Plan Component	General Description of Cost Items Included in Estimate	Cost Estimate (In Dollars)
Picnic Area – West End	1) Misc. improvements (picnic tables, grills, trash containers, etc.) 2) Fire ring	15,000
Island Camping	1) Grills and picnic tables (4 sites) 2) Miscellaneous improvements	25,000
Maintenance Building	Given uncertainties on location and scale, no cost estimate provided.	0
Community gardens	1) Relocate community gardens	10,000
Signage Program	1) Internal park signage program, in addition to signage included under other costs items.	125,000
Total Master Plan Cost Estimate		7,410,000
Contingency and Professional Fees and Charges (Surveying, Design, Engineering, Etc.) 25%		1,852,500
Total Master Plan Cost Estimate and Professional Fees and Charges		9,262,500

Ecological Stewardship Program Cost Projections

Restoration and management of the ecological resources within the park will be a significant cost factor as the master plan is implemented. Since the ecological stewardship program is in its infancy, Dakota County Parks does not have any data available for projecting costs associated with ecological restoration and management. Under the circumstances, projecting these costs offers certain practical limitations, especially given the fact that a living environment has many nuances that will take years to completely understand.

Lacking baseline data, a unit-basis cost projection was completed to define the potential cost magnitude of restoring and managing the park's ecological resources. The following provides a breakdown of potential costs for both initial restoration and long-term stewardship. The unit costs were derived from past projects in this region of a similar nature. The cover type categories are limited to those that represent a cross-section of the plant communities that would be restored within the park. The critical difference between each category is the propensity for trees versus grasses, upland versus lowland, and hydrologic and soil variables that affect restoration efforts, timeframes, and costs.

Potential Initial Restoration Costs						
Cover Type	Acres*	Range of Cost/Acre			Total Cost Estimate	
Oak Forest System	480.00	1,500	to	4,000	720,000	to 1,920,000
Oak Savanna System	430.00	1,500	to	4,000	645,000	to 1,720,000
Prairie System	90.00	1,500	to	3,500	135,000	to 315,000
Seepage Meadow System	15.00	1,500	to	5,000	22,500	to 75,000
Total Potential Cost for Remedial Work					1,522,500	to 4,030,000

Potential Yearly Long-Term Maintenance and Management Costs						
Cover Type	Acres*	Range of Cost/Acre			Total Cost Estimate	
Oak Forest System	480.00	100	to	200	48,000	to 96,000
Oak Savanna System	430.00	100	to	200	43,000	to 86,000
Prairie System	90.00	100	to	175	9,000	to 15,750
Seepage Meadow System	15.00	100	to	225	1,500	to 3,375
Total Potential Cost for <u>Yearly</u> Maintenance Work					101,500	to 201,125

* Acreage is based on the overall vision for restoring the natural areas of the park as defined in *Section V – Natural Resources Stewardship* and does not include developed areas.

As the table defines, the range of potential costs at a master plan level is quite broad simply due to the uncertainties of what will be encountered. With the restoration needs of the park being extensive, economies of scale will also come into play. However, highly disturbed areas that require extensive restoration may also exceed the average per acre cost as listed. Note that these cost projections relate to the actual restoration of the native plant communities and do not include any grading and site preparation that may be necessary prior to that activity.

Cultural Stewardship Program Cost Projections

Stewardship of cultural resources will have a variety of cost implications, including:

- ▶ Archeological investigations across the site. (Phase I and Phase II as define in *Section VI – Cultural Resources Stewardship Plan*).
- ▶ Interpretive program to exhibit select sites. This includes signage and informational kiosks.
- ▶ Physical development of select sites for exhibiting purposes. Excavation of old foundations is one example.
- ▶ Acquiring artifacts for exhibit in the Cultural Center.

With the limited information available about many of the archaeological sites, projecting the cost to address the above is difficult to ascertain. At the master plan level, a budget of \$75,000 is included for completing a Phase I archaeological study of the park.

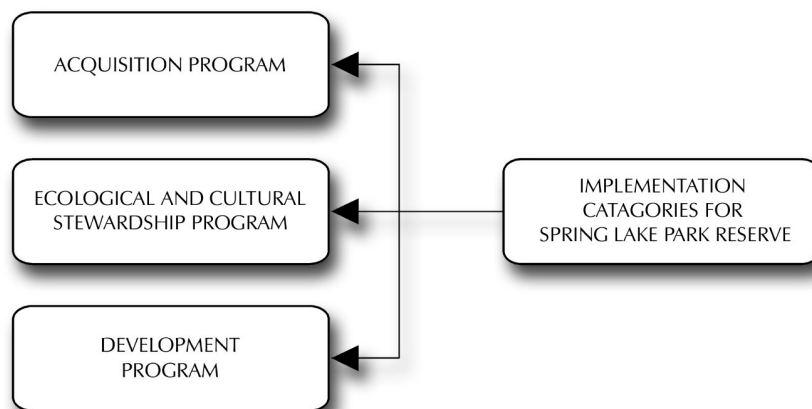
Property Acquisition Cost Projection

The assessed value of all of the inholding properties totals \$2,210,357. (Refer to *Section IV – Park Boundary and Acquisition Plan* for the assessed value of each property.) Actual purchase price is likely to be higher than the assessed value, perhaps considerably. In addition, deconstruction of structures and ecological stewardship on the inholding properties could approach \$450,000, not including costs associated with cleaning up contaminated soils. To date, there have been no formal discussions nor negotiations with any of the current inholders on acquiring their properties.

Implementation Strategy and Priorities

As illustrated in figure 9.1, the implementation plan is broken down into three categories.

Figure 9.1 – Implementation categories for Spring Lake Park Reserve.



The following considers the overall priorities *between* categories, which is followed by discussion related to the priorities *within* each category.

Implementation Priorities Between Categories

With the fragmentation caused by the inholdings within the park, land acquisition ranks at the top of the implementation priorities. Although some development can occur around these properties, the park will not function as a cohesive whole until all of the acquisition is completed.

Implementing the development program is of equal priority to ecological and cultural stewardship programs. By taking a balanced approach to implementation of these programs, both development *and* ecological/cultural goals defined by the master plan will be simultaneously pursued to take advantage of funding opportunities that may arise from various sources. This approach also provides greater flexibility in developing effective implementation sequences that link physical development and ecological/cultural restoration objectives together whenever it is advantageous to do so. The following table provides a strategy statement for each of the categories to establish a starting point for developing specific implementation priorities.

Priority	Category	Overall Strategy Statement
1	Acquisition Program	Acquisition of the private inholdings is the top overall priority since amassing the land is essential to the park's function.
2 (Equal Priority)	Development Program	Phased implementation of the development plan is a priority to expand recreational and educational opportunities as defined by the master plan. Development of the Schaar's Bluff area and the trail system are top priorities.
	Ecological/Cultural Stewardship Program	On par with development of the park, moving forward on ecological and cultural stewardship programs is a high priority, especially addressing the top priorities as defined in <i>Section V – Natural Resources Stewardship Plan</i> .

By focusing on a balanced implementation approach, the recreational, cultural, and ecological values of the park will grow in relative equilibrium. However, inherent to the implementation strategy is the need for flexibility to react to the real conditions, circumstances, and opportunities that present themselves. The greatest utility of the implementation plan is that it provides a framework for Dakota County to develop funding packages and grant applications to achieve the vision for the park as defined by the master plan.

Strategy for Land Acquisition

As a top priority, Dakota County will be actively working with inholders to develop acquisition strategies for each of the privately-held properties within the park. Consistent with policy, Dakota County will strive to develop good-faith relationships with each property owner to make sure that they understand the master plan and the County's commitment to acquiring properties located within the park boundary.

Section IV – Park Boundary and Acquisition Plan highlights all of the inholding properties and the level of priority for acquisition. As defined, all properties are of high or medium priority since each is critical to the park's function. Although no hierarchal distinction is given, particular emphasis will be given to acquiring properties that affect trail corridors and contribute to fragmentation of ecological systems. Acquiring properties affecting the regional trail will be a particular priority since it is part of a larger regional trail corridor that runs from South St. Paul to Hastings.

The actual timeframe for acquiring inholder properties depends upon each situation. In some cases, properties will be acquired based on a negotiated purchase price. In others, life estates and trail or conservation easements may be used on an interim basis prior to full acquisition. In cases where no other alternatives are left, Dakota County will consider condemnation as a last resort, in accordance with stated policy.

As part of implementing the master plan, Dakota County will be developing and routinely updating a status report for each property. This information will be consolidated with similar information for other regional and county parks as part of an overall county-wide strategy for park land acquisition.

Parallel to the process of acquiring inholding properties, Dakota County will be considering alternative ways to preserve adjoining open space. As defined in *Section IV – Park Boundary and Acquisition Plan*, the Farm Land and Natural Area Preservation Program will be considered for this use, as well as other options that may arise.

Dakota County will also stay abreast of land use proposals and changes that could adversely impact the park. This will be largely accomplished by working with Nininger Township on land use zoning and development guidelines. Should land use proposals or land use changes adversely affect the park, Dakota County will consider if changes to the park's boundary are justified, as defined *Section IV – Park Boundary and Acquisition Plan*.

Strategy for Implementing the Development Program

The implementation strategy for the development program follows more traditional routes. In general, future capital improvements will be funded through Metropolitan Council regional park grants. Dakota County also has an Environmental Remediation Settlement for \$2,000,000 that can be used for development, acquisition, and ecological stewardship in the Schaar's Bluff area. Dakota County will follow established protocol on the use of each of these funding avenues.

The table on the next page lists the line items defined in the previous cost estimate in order of relative priority. Note that these priorities are not linked to specific implementation time frames since actual project phasing will be a function of demand, opportunity, and funding availability. Note also that these priorities are subject to change in future years as demand continue evolve. In addition, each priority may require more than one phase to complete.

Priority	Development Component	Comment	Costs (\$'s)
1	General Park Deconstruction	High priority for development and ecological stewardship.	300,000
2	Schaar's Bluff Area Park Drive and Parking Lots	Required to service the Cultural Center development area.	360,000
3	Cultural Center – Schaar's Bluff (Phase 1)	Phase 1 would focus on the development of the four-season shelter, which is a facility that would be in high demand.	1,400,000
4	Cultural and Nature Trails	Trail expansion is a high priority, but is limited due to inholder properties. Timing greatly affected by ability to acquire land or at least trail easements.	770,000
5	Regional Trail	Timing linked to funding for the larger regional trail as defined in the master plan. Timing greatly affected by ability to acquire land or at least trail easements.	980,000
6	Lodge and Group Camp	Adds some modest improvements to these existing facilities.	40,000
7	Boat Launch and Picnic Area Park Drive and Parking Lots	Required as part of the relocation of the boat launch. Would tie into the existing road.	410,000
8	Group Picnic Area – Schaar's Bluff Area	Modest improvements to this popular use area.	180,000
9	Cultural Center – Schaar's Bluff (Phase 2)	Completes the Cultural Center facility.	500,000
10	Riverside Day-Use Area	Expands recreational and educational opportunities in the Schaar's Bluff area. Timing dependent on acquiring an inholder property at the base of the bluff.	200,000
11	Lodge and Village Park Drive and Parking Lots	Required to service the new Village development area.	375,000
12	The Village	Expands year-round camping and program opportunities in the park.	680,000
13	Hilary Path Park Drive and Parking Lots	Required to service The Harbor development area.	140,000
14	The Harbor	Provides unique park experience. Timing dependent on acquiring an inholder property.	550,000
16	Island Camping	Provides a unique camping experience. Timing dependent on acquisition of the islands by a State or Federal agency, and then a cooperative arrangement with Dakota County.	25,000
16	Picnic Area – West End and Independent Picnic Areas	Modest improvements to this picnic area. Also includes independent picnic areas throughout the park.	35,000
17	Bluff Edge Treatment	Replaces existing barricade-style fence. Could be lower priority if existing fence is structurally-sound.	280,000
18	The Preserve Area Trailhead Parking	Improves access to The Preserve area of the park. Timing dependent on acquiring an inholder properties in the middle section of the park, which is necessary to develop the trail system.	50,000
19	Community Gardens	Will have to be moved at some point, but not a high priority.	10,000
20	Maintenance Facility	Timing dependent on results of other study considering system-wide maintenance facility need.	0
	Signage Program	Phased in as part of other development phases.	125,000
Total Project Costs - All Phases			7,410,000
25% Contingency and Project Fees and Charges			1,852,500
Total Project Costs			9,262,500

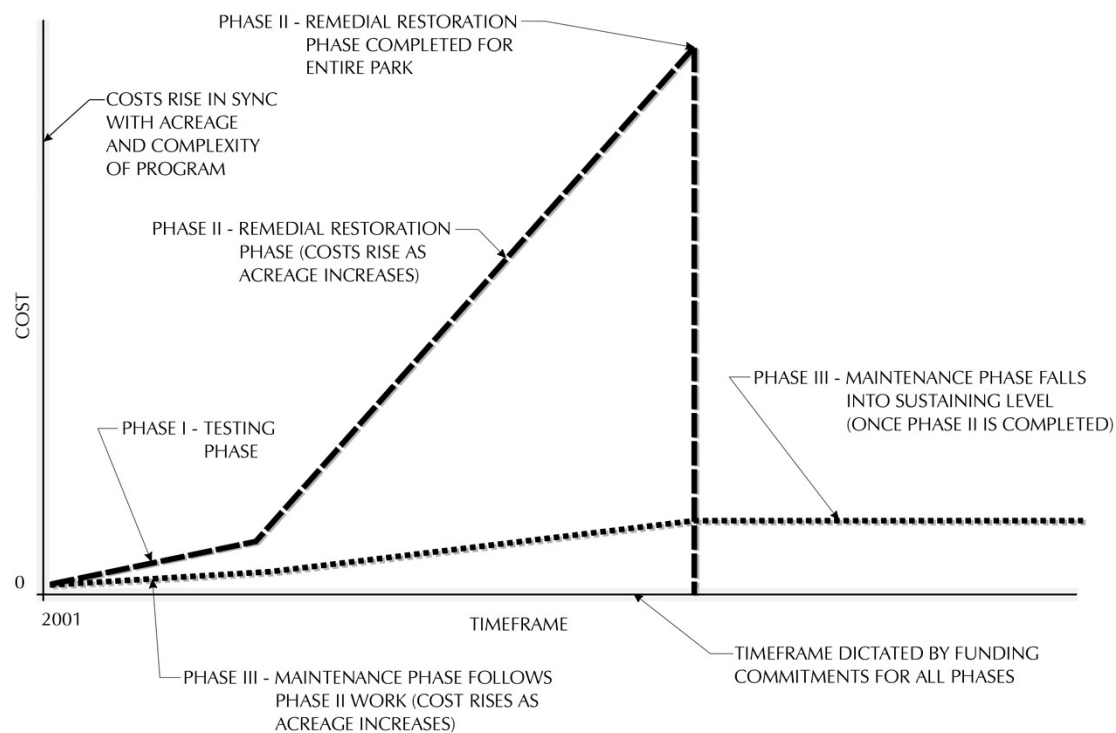
Strategy for Ecological Stewardship Program

Developing and implementing an ecological stewardship program for the park is also a top priority that emerged from the planning process. Although there are numerous acquisition and development initiatives that are high priorities, there is also a sense of urgency to move forward with the stewardship program as well. This is particularly important in that ecological stewardship is a long term issue in which results from near term action will be most appreciated in 10, 20, 50 years hence.

From a funding strategy perspective, the most critical factor is having a perpetual funding source in place for long-term stewardship prior to undertaking the initial restoration activities. Lacking this funding source, gains made during initial restoration can be lost if not followed by prudent management in future years.

With respect to a specific strategy, the funding program for initial restoration needs to be lock-stepped with the other phases of the stewardship program. Figure 9.2 provides an overview of how the three phases relate to each other in terms of funding levels needed to support them.

Figure 9.2 – Shifts in funding levels in support of stewardship programs.



As figure 9.2 illustrates, the cost for restoring the park's ecological systems far outpaces the costs of taking care of it once that is completed. Through proper management, the extra costs associated with restoring the park can be largely controlled in the future as long as the maintenance phase continues indefinitely. Also, the longer that the park's ecological systems remain in a state of decline before efforts are made to manage it, the more expensive (and scientifically challenging) it will be to restore them. The following table provides an overview of the key funding phases associated with the ecological stewardship program.

Implementation Priority	Implementation Focus Recommended Under this Phase	Total Estimated Costs (In Dollars)
Priority 1 – Preparation of Technically-Based Stewardship Program	Focus is on building upon the framework presented in the master plan to prepare a detailed stewardship program defining each phase of implementation. This includes a more detailed land cover inventory, refining prototypes, and developing restoration and management strategies for each condition that is found.	50,000 to 75,000
Priority 2 – Controlled Implementation of Stewardship Program	Focus is on implementing the program in a controlled, predictable manner that is supported by funding and scientific know-how.	Increases year-to-year as more acreage is restored

From a funding strategy standpoint, a typical capital improvement fund is an appropriate approach for funding the restoration phase of the stewardship program. With respect to the long-term management phase, consideration of other approaches may be necessary to ensure a reasonably consistent stream of funds is available to support the program. Two examples of approaches that can serve this need are defined in the following table.

Funding Option	Overview	Advantages	Disadvantages
Ecological Management Fund	Consider the establishment of a fund similar to a building upkeep or maintenance fund that is used for ongoing maintenance of buildings, trails, and so forth within the park. Funding is typically on a year to year appropriation basis as directed by the County Board in concert with the Metropolitan Council.	Establishes a stand-alone fund for this purpose.	Only as secure as the commitment to contribute to the fund. Leaner economic times or other political directions can create uncertainty in ability to maintain funding levels from year to year, which makes this approach somewhat vulnerable. (Whereas future development initiatives and even building upkeep can be put off in many cases, stewardship of resources requires a sustained commitment to avoid losing ground.)
Ecological Stewardship Endowment Fund	Consider the establishment of an endowment fund for the perpetual maintenance of ecological systems within the park.	Principal investment that is put into the fund is “locked away” and cannot be used for any other purposes. Program is actually supported by the interest generated by the fund in a secure market as dictated by County policy. The advantage of this approach is that the stream of funding available is more assured and predictable. Also, seed money is a one-time investment that keeps on working for the County.	Current enabling laws governing the Metropolitan Council may preclude the use of grant dollars for creating an endowment fund. County may also have governing policies that could affect the use of this approach. Reconsideration of any current limitations would require state-level legislative action.

Funding Option	Overview	Advantages	Disadvantages
Private/Non-Profit Foundation	Consider the establishment of a private/non-profit foundation that supports stewardship initiatives.	Works similar to the ecological endowment fund, only held by a private/non-profit group instead of Dakota County. Private groups often have more latitude than a governmental agency to collect and direct funds.	Requires a working relationship with a private entity, where philosophical differences can occur. The overall capacity of a foundation to garner enough funds to make a significant contribution is often very uncertain.

As the table indicates, the endowment fund offers significant long-term security in ensuring a consistent level of funding from one year to the next. In addition, the endowment could be structured so that a certain percentage of the interest earned each year would be used to build principal, resulting in a larger pot of money to support expansion of the program. Figure 9.3 illustrates this relationship. Figure 9.4 illustrates how the growth of the stewardship fund is linked to the expansion of the stewardship program.

Figure 9.3 – Growth of endowment fund as a percentage of interest is reinvested.

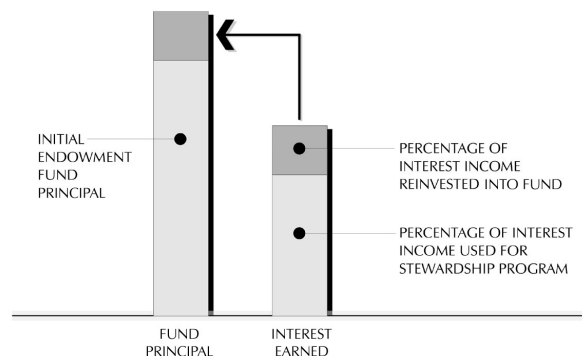
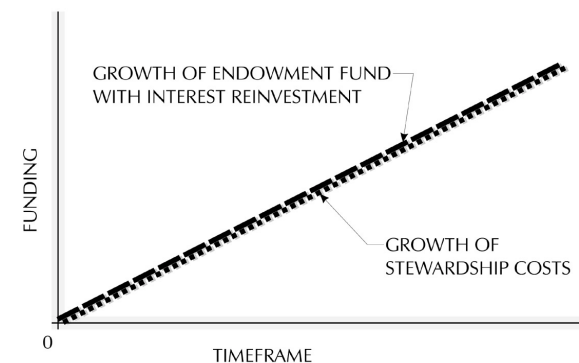


Figure 9.4 – Growth of endowment fund relative to expansion of stewardship program.



Under the framework of the endowment fund as presented, the long-term capital costs for the stewardship program could be substantially reduced over a pay-as-you-go approach since the fund generates interest income to support the program, as well as income to reinvestment back into the fund itself.

To be successful in implementing the stewardship program, Dakota County will continue to pursue traditional funding sources. At the same time, Dakota County will actively pursue other options, such as the endowment fund, in order to improve the prospects for long-term stewardship of the park's ecological resources.

Strategy for Cultural Stewardship Program

The strategy defined in *Section VI – Cultural Resources Stewardship Plan* will be followed for protecting the park's cultural resources. A budget of \$75,000 is recommended for a Phase I archaeological study.

Management Plan

The following considers a number of operations and management issues that affect the park. Each of these are part of and consistent with Dakota County's Comprehensive Park Plan.

Public Hunting

Public hunting has a long tradition in the Spring Lake area. Along a major flyway, waterfowl hunting has been especially popular. Under the master plan, hunting can continue around the islands and in Spring Lake as long as it remains legal (as dictated by the City of Rosemount, Nininger Township, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources and/or other State or Federal agencies that have jurisdiction over this issue). This is predicated on the assumption that the islands will be under the jurisdiction of a State or Federal agency and not be part of the park. If the islands remain part of the park, this policy will have to be reassessed in response to Metropolitan Council policies on hunting in regional parks.)

Within the defined park boundary, no hunting or discharge of firearms will be allowed in accordance with established policy. The only exception to this will be controlled hunts conducted by Dakota County and authorized State agencies to control deer populations. When hunters are using the boat launch, all weapons will have to remain in their cases until boats are away from the shore and into the legal hunting zone.

The sportsmen using the area have shown a strong willingness to collaborate with Dakota County throughout the planning process. Dakota County will continue to maintain this working relationship to make sure that the hunting tradition is well managed and that any conflicts are addressed before they become major issues. As with Dakota County, the sportsmen want to maintain a strong hunting ethic and a high level of public safety as long as hunting is allowed in the area outside the park.

Public Involvement in Implementing the Master Plan

Dakota County is committed to continuing public involvement through the implementation of the master plan. The degree to which this will occur will vary depending on what aspect of the plan is being implemented. For larger scale projects, such as the Cultural Center, public involvement in the actual design process for the facility will be fairly extensive and involve representation from key stakeholders. In addition, forums for broader public input (e.g., open houses and presentations) would also be used as needed to communicate and exchange ideas with interested citizens. For smaller scale projects, such as a trail alignments, notifications of interested parties or advocates would be a more appropriate approach.

The objectives associated with involving citizens in the implementation process include:

- ▶ Determine who the stakeholders are and their interest in a particular development initiative.
- ▶ Understand their needs and unique perspectives.
- ▶ Identify and understand concerns and problems.
- ▶ Develop alternatives and find appropriate solutions with input from stakeholders.

In addition to formalized processes for particular projects, Dakota County has an established Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee (PARAC) that advises the County Board on development initiatives within the park. The public is welcome to attend its regularly scheduled meetings. Also, Dakota County is continuing to develop numerous tools to provide a consistent level of communication with interested citizens. (Refer to the Operations Section below for more detail on these tools.)

Master Plan Revisions and Updates

As noted on page 7.1, the master plan is a dynamic planning tool that will evolve and be fine-tuned as it moves through implementation steps. Over time, there may be justification for revisions and updates to the master plan in response to new information, trends, and general demands. Among the trigger points that could prompt review of the master plan are the following:

- ▶ Requests from citizens and special interest groups to review a particular aspect of the plan. This would occur when Dakota County has determined that adequate justification has been submitted to warrant review of a given situation.
- ▶ Recreational trend information uncovers a recreational need that has not been adequately addressed by the master plan.
- ▶ Changed circumstances pertaining to existing uses warrants review of the master plan.
- ▶ Existing built facilities have proven inadequate to meet demand or require design changes to improve their capacity to meet recreational needs or address maintenance and safety concerns.

If a review is found to be warranted, Dakota County will undertake an appropriate public process that includes input from PARAC and groups that are directly impacted by a given concern and other groups that have a general interest in the park. This multiple user group approach to reviewing a given situation ensures that conclusions drawn are ones that can be supported by the broader community. It also ensures that a balance between recreational uses and ecological preservation is maintained.

Operations and Maintenance Plan

The Dakota County Parks Department is charged with the operation of the County's park system, including Spring Lake Park Reserve. The Dakota County Board of Commissioners establishes policies and goals for the park system and through an annual budgeting process provides capital and operating funds for the Department. A Park and Recreation Advisory Committee (PARAC), appointed by the County Board of Commissioners, serves as an advocate for an improved and enhanced park and trail system in the County. The specific responsibilities of the PARAC, which are outlined in County Ordinance No. 120, are as follows:

- ▶ Review proposals and make recommendations concerning park and trail acquisition and development.
- ▶ Review and make recommendations concerning recreation programming, fees for facility use and park use policies.
- ▶ Recommend supporting or enhancing natural resources in County parks and regional trail corridors.

- ▶ Provide input into the County Park Policy Plan and Park Master Plans for park development site planning.
- ▶ Review and make recommendation on the Bikeway Capital Improvement Program, signage, kiosks, and trail connections.
- ▶ Perform fact-finding tasks as directed by the County Board.

Ordinances: Public use and enjoyment of the County park system, including Lebanon Hills Regional Park, is controlled by Ordinance No. 107, Park Ordinance, (the Ordinance) which was last revised on June 3, 1997. The Ordinance incorporates pertinent Minnesota statutes, and addresses the following issues:

- ▶ Regulation of Public Use
- ▶ Regulation of General Conduct
- ▶ Regulations Pertaining to General Parkland Operation
- ▶ Protection of Property, Structures, and Natural Resources
- ▶ Regulation of Recreation Activity
- ▶ Regulation of Motorized Vehicles, Traffic and Parking

Enforcement: Park visitors are informed of park rules and regulations in a variety of ways. Kiosks and signs are strategically located to address specific information about park hours, trails, permitted and prohibited activities, fees, and directions. Park patrol educate visitors and enforce the Ordinance, where necessary. They patrol the park in vehicles, on bicycles and on foot. During the winter months, park patrol on vehicles, snowmobiles and skis monitor park activities. In addition, a volunteer ski patrol maintains a presence on the ski trails and calls on the Park Patrol, as needed. Local law enforcement agencies and the Sheriff's Department respond to emergencies and criminal complaints.

General Operations: The Parks Department has an annual budget of approximately \$3.5 million to operate and maintain the County's park system and approximately 35 permanent employees. In addition, approximately 30-40 seasonal employees are hired each year as maintenance workers, park patrol, concession workers, recreation workers, lifeguards, gate attendants, and campground attendants. Volunteers assist with outdoor education programs, patrol, park clean-ups and a variety of special events. Contractual agreements are also in place with outside agencies (e.g., Minnesota Conservation Corps, Tree Trust) for some maintenance and natural resource work.

Revenues from the facilities and services at Spring Lake Park Reserve in 2002 include: \$7,015 from the youth camp, \$7,138 from the picnic shelters; \$4,926 from the archery range; \$990 from the garden plots; \$1,181 from the model airplane field; \$6,195 from outdoor education programs; and \$290 from special use permits.

The Metropolitan Council's *Annual Use Estimate of the Metropolitan Regional Park System for 2002* reported that 96,300 visits were made to Spring Lake Park Reserve in 2002. Planned improvements to the park are expected to increase park use and, therefore, increase revenue.

Maintenance: Maintenance of facilities and lands is essential to protect public investment, enhance natural resource qualities and achieve the County's goals of providing users clean, safe, enjoyable year round park experiences. The Dakota County Parks Department has a clearly defined maintenance program. Reporting to the Park Director is the Manager, Park Development and Maintenance. The following staff report to the Manager:

- ▶ Maintenance Superintendent
- ▶ Planning/Engineering Assistant
- ▶ Senior Planner, Natural Resources

Reporting to the Maintenance Superintendent are the following staff:

- ▶ 4 Supervisors
- ▶ 1 Mechanic
- ▶ 15 Parkkeepers
- ▶ Seasonal maintenance workers

The predominant categories of tasks accomplished by maintenance staff are:

- ▶ Grounds maintenance
- ▶ Building custodial
- ▶ Facility maintenance/repair
- ▶ Equipment maintenance/repair
- ▶ Natural resource management
- ▶ Program support
- ▶ Miscellaneous shop duties
- ▶ Emergency response
- ▶ Other miscellaneous/unique duties

Spring Lake Park Reserve has a well-developed maintenance facility that also serves Lake Byllesby Regional Park, Miesville Ravine Park Reserve, and Big Rivers Regional Trail.

Accomplishing the maintenance needs of Spring Lake Park Reserve is a challenge. The linear nature of the park with multiple access points, water management problems, highly erodible soils, inholdings that restrict access, and surrounding land uses creates a whole set of impacts to the park that require a maintenance response.

Dakota County recognizes the need to remain committed to the maintenance needs of the park and to meet the new needs/priorities identified by the master plan. It is unlikely that existing staff and budget resources will be sufficient. Although increased funding is critical, perhaps even more important is increasing the number of staff. As an example, trail rehabilitation and natural resource management have an initial cash intensive need but ultimate success requires stewardship for many years to achieve desired results. This takes staff with the knowledge and time to commit to this stewardship. Traditional and non-traditional funding and staffing sources will have to be pursued to meet the maintenance needs of the park and the master plan objectives.

Outreach and Marketing

Dakota County has a comprehensive outreach effort, in an effort to increase public awareness of its park facilities, programs, and services. This outreach effort has various components, including the following:

Printed Materials: Dakota County has developed and distributes on a regular basis brochures and maps, including a park map, individual park winter and summer trail maps, archery range map, picnic opportunities brochure, and a comprehensive seasonal outdoor education program booklet. Park program fliers are also distributed to County departments, libraries, community agencies, outdoor retailers, and other contacts throughout the community.

Electronic Communication: Dakota County is expanding the use of its web page to inform citizens about the County's functions and services (e.g., Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee meetings, the master planning process, park facilities, and programs). In addition, public use of the County Parks Department's email continues to increase. The use of "push lists" in which interested citizens are on an automatic email list has proven to be an especially beneficial communication tool.

Other Outreach: Other forms of outreach and marketing include displays at the Dakota County Fair, articles in the County Update (a citizens' newsletter), the production of flyers and brochures and the display of information at County Service Centers and park kiosks. The County also publishes news releases and advertisements in local community and metropolitan area newspapers that highlight upcoming programs and facility openings. The County also promotes park use through radio and television interviews, feature articles and presentations to other County departments and local agencies.

Marketing Initiatives: Dakota County will be developing a comprehensive marketing plan to increase public awareness, understanding, and use of park facilities, services and programs. In addition, the marketing plan will identify the need to expand and diversify marketing and communication efforts to advance park use by minority populations and special needs groups.