



Anoka County
PARKS DEPARTMENT

Parks and
Recreation Office
763-324-3300

Park
Maintenance
763-324-3326

Park Services
763-324-3360

Natural Resources
763-324-3413

Bunker Beach
Water Park
763-324-3310

Chomonix
Golf Course
763-324-3434

Wargo
Nature Center
763-324-3350

May 7, 2020

Emmett Mullin
Regional Parks System Manager
Metropolitan Council
390 N Robert Street
St. Paul, MN 55101

Re: Rum River Parks System Addition Application

Dear Emmett:

This letter serves as Anoka County's application for Rum River North and Rum River South County Parks, along with Rum River Central Regional Park to become a Regional Park and be included within the Regional Parks System. Per Minnesota State Statute 473.147, subd. 1, which states that the Metropolitan Council (Council) shall plan for the Regional Parks System. The updated *2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan* committed the Council to convene a region-wide discussion about system additions in 2019/20. To inform the discussion, the Met Council has asked the implementing agencies to provide a response for each system addition proposal that addresses the following topics:

1. System Addition Proposal:

Anoka County is proposing that Rum River North and Rum River South County Parks, which are owned and operated by Anoka County, along with Rum River Central Regional Park become one regional park for inclusion into the Regional Parks System.

The three parks are located along the Wild and Scenic Rum River; Rum River North is 73 acres and located in the City of St. Francis; Rum River South is 13 acres and located in the City of Anoka; and Rum River Central, an existing regional park is 343 acres and located in the Cities of Ramsey and Oak Grove. Combined, the regional park would be more than 425 acres along the Rum River, as shown in Exhibits A and B.

2. General Criteria:

The Rum River itself is a regional draw for the County with the headwaters originating from Mille Lacs Lake in north central Minnesota. The state designated wild and scenic recreation river offers recreation opportunities such as canoeing, kayaking, fishing and canoe camping. The Rum River is well known for its world class smallmouth bass, walleye, and northern fishing opportunities. The proposal to combine the three parks into one regional park, Rum River Regional Park, will allow the county to invest in and expand water related facilities and amenities to

create a water recreation destination in the north metro area. In addition to water recreation, the park supports other outdoor recreation opportunities, such as biking, walking/hiking, picnicking, birdwatching, horse-back riding and cross-country skiing. There are also play structures, observation decks/area, restroom facilities and drinking fountains.

The proposal will also protect an additional mile and a half of riverbank habitat and conserve an additional 86 acres of naturally occurring and human built natural resources that support outdoor recreation, making the total acreage for the park 425 acres.

3. Agency and Other Support:

The County has passed a Resolution of Support for the application proposal. See Exhibit B. The County is requesting letters of support from the local agencies, which will be included with the application.

4. Public Participation:

Previous public participation occurred during the development of the County's 2006 Comprehensive System Plan, where the proposed system addition was vetted and supported by a stakeholder group of approximately 25 county residents. Recent, public engagement regarding the proposal has been through social media and advertising informing the public about the proposal.

5. Regional Context:

Inclusion of Rum River Regional Park into the Regional Parks System will advance the *Thrive MSP 2040* and the Regional Parks System outcomes. The Stewardship outcome is advanced by the inclusion of the park in the regional system, which allows the county to responsibly conserve and manage the park's natural and recreation resources in a balanced manner. It also allows for the protection of an additional 1.5 miles of riverbank habitat. Inclusion of the park in the regional system will also advance the Prosperity outcome by allowing investment into the park, ensuring the region is attractive to businesses, workforce and residents alike creating a better quality of life. Inclusion of the park will also enhance Livability in the area through increased access to nature and outdoor recreation in the regional system, particularly for underserved populations in and around the south park unit in Anoka where the nearest regional park is located in Ramsey or Andover.

6. Anticipated Funding Request and Timeline:

If approved, this proposal could be implemented immediately. Since the County currently owns and operates the parks, no funding would be required to implement the addition. In 5-10 years, the County does anticipate the need for redevelopment the parks.

Anoka County hopes the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission and the Met Council will approve Rum River Regional Park for inclusion within the Regional Parks System.