

C Community Development Committee

Meeting date: August 6, 2012

ADVISORY INFORMATION

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| Date: | July 24, 2012 |
| Subject: | Annual Visit Estimate of the Regional Parks System for 2011 |
| District(s), Member(s): | All |
| Policy/Legal Reference: | Minnesota Statutes 85.53 and 473.351, <i>2030 Regional Parks Policy Plan</i> Finance Policy |
| Staff Prepared/Presented: | Jan Youngquist, AICP, Planning Analyst—Parks (651-602-1029) |
| Division/Department: | Community Development, Parks and Natural Resources |

Proposed Action

None—information item only.

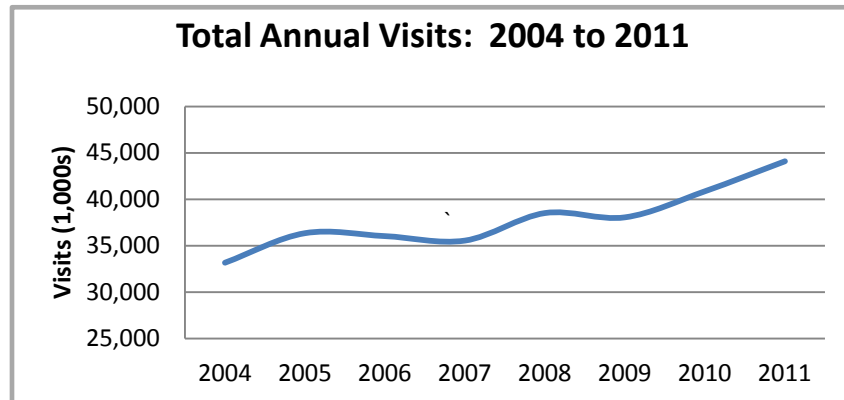
Background

Each year, the Metropolitan Council estimates the number of annual visits to the regional parks system as a whole, as well as to each individual regional park and trail. In addition to being used by the local regional park implementing agencies for budgeting and planning purposes, the use estimates are also used in the funding formulas for the distribution of regional park funds, as required by Minnesota Statutes 85.53 and 473.351 as well as the Finance Policies delineated in the *2030 Regional Parks Policy Plan*.

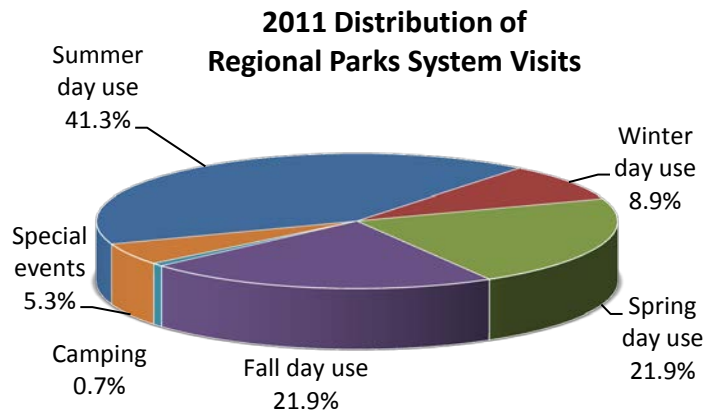
The following are highlights from the [Annual Use Estimate Report of the Metropolitan Regional Parks System for 2011](#) report:

- An estimated **43,924,400 visits** were made to the Metropolitan Regional Parks System in 2011, which is an increase of 7.5% from 2010.
- Six regional facilities were added to the estimate in 2011 including:
 - The Dakota Rail Regional Trail in Carver County, which is the County's first regional trail
 - Bunker Hills-Chain of Lakes, Coon Creek, East Anoka County, and Rum River Regional Trails in Anoka County
 - The Landing, a Special Recreation Feature operated by Three Rivers Park District that was added to the regional parks system through the update to the [2030 Regional Parks Policy Plan](#) in 2010

- Estimated annual visits have increased 33 percent since 2004. A total of 95 park and trail units were sampled in 2011 compared to 73 units sampled in 2004.



- The following chart indicates the distribution of estimated visits by seasonal day use, camping and special events:



- The five most-visited regional parks, trails and special recreation features in 2011 were:

| Park/Reserve/Trail | 2011 Visits |
|--|--------------------|
| 1. Minneapolis Chain of Lakes Regional Park | 5,122,900 |
| 2. Como Regional Park, Zoo and Conservatory Special Recreation Feature | 4,047,800 |
| 3. Mississippi Gorge Regional Park | 2,256,400 |
| 4. Central Mississippi Riverfront Regional Park | 1,626,600 |
| 5. Minnehaha Parkway Regional Trail | 1,555,500 |

- Fifty-four percent of all estimated visits occurred in regional parks and trails in Minneapolis and St. Paul. This reflects a decrease in the share of visits to those parks and trails in the regional system over time (65.7% share in 2000). This is due primarily to the addition of park and trail facilities and population growth occurring outside these two cities.

- Twenty-five percent of all visits in 2011 were to regional trails and 75 percent were visits to regional parks, park reserves and special recreation features. Although Anoka County Riverfront, Minneapolis Chain of Lakes, and Mississippi Gorge are regional parks, the majority of visits to these parks are for trail use. If the trail visits to these regional parks were included in the trail totals, over 40 percent of all 2011 visits were to regional trails.
- Fifty-five percent of all visits to regional parks and trails are considered “local” visits. A local visit is defined as a visit to a park or trail by a person who lives within the jurisdiction of the park agency that owns or operates that park or trail. Conversely, 45 percent of all visits to regional parks and trails are “non-local” visits, which clearly demonstrates that the system serves a regional audience.
- Walking and biking are the top activities in the regional parks system, followed by swimming, jogging, picnicking and relaxing. This information is based on data from the [Metropolitan Council Regional Parks and Trails Survey 2008](#).