

**METROPOLITAN COUNCIL**  
**390 North Robert Street, St. Paul, MN 55101**  
**Phone (651) 602-1000 TDD (651) 291-0904**

**DATE:** June 23, 2009

**TO:** Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission

**FROM:** Arne Stefferud, Planning Analyst-Parks (651) 602-1360

**SUBJECT:** (2009-223) Reimbursement authorization for Ramsey County regional park projects financed with FY 2011 Parks and Trails Fund appropriation

**Introduction**

Ramsey County has three projects that will be financed from its share of the State Fiscal Year 2011 Parks and Trails Fund appropriation. The County would like to begin work on those projects prior to July 1, 2010—which is the start date of State Fiscal Year 2011. The premise for the earlier start date is to align the work on these projects with the County’s calendar fiscal year and to insure that the work would be completed by June 30, 2012—the end date for work financed with the State Fiscal Year 2011 Parks and Trails Fund appropriation.

This memorandum contains a review of the County’s request and uses applicable terms of the reimbursement Strategy 2(f) of the *2030 Regional Parks Policy Plan*. Staff recommends authorization to expend funds for these projects prior to July 1, 2010 with the stipulation that no grant funds to reimburse Ramsey County for these projects will be disbursed to the County until the FY 2011 Parks and Trails Fund appropriation is available and a grant agreement or amendment to existing grant agreements are executed for those projects.

**Authority to review**

Minnesota Statute Section 473.315 authorizes the “Metropolitan Council with the advice of the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission to make grants from any funds available to it for recreation open space purposes to any municipality, park district or county located wholly or partially within the metropolitan area to cover the cost, or any portion of the cost, of acquiring or developing regional recreation open space in accordance with the [*Regional Recreation Open Space*] *Policy Plan*”.

**Background**

Last November the voters approved an amendment to the State’s constitution that raised the sales tax 3/8ths percent for the next 25 years. This new revenue is dedicated into four accounts—including the “Parks and Trails Fund”. Revenue in the Parks and Trails Fund must be spent to “support parks and trails of regional or statewide significance.” This can include expenditures to operate and maintain parks and trails, as well as expenditures for land acquisition and capital improvements. These appropriations must supplement—not supplant traditional funding sources.

The 2009 Legislature appropriated \$27,781,000 from the Parks and Trails Fund for the next two fiscal years to the Metropolitan Council for the following purposes:

- An earmark appropriation of \$40,000 for a grant to Hennepin County to plant trees along Victory Memorial Parkway.

- \$2,774,000 for Park Acquisition Opportunity Grants described in the previous section of this memorandum.
- \$24,967,000 for grants to the regional park agencies that is disbursed under a formula in the law. That formula considers each park agencies' population; the amount of park and trails visits and non-local visits each agency hosts per year; the amount each agency spends on regional park system operations and maintenance; and the amount of regional park and trail land each agency manages. Based on this formula, each park agency received a specific appropriation for grants. In this case, Ramsey County's share was \$974,000 for State Fiscal Year 2010 and \$1,170,000 for State Fiscal Year 2011.

### **Reimbursement request analysis**

Ramsey County would like to expend its own funds to begin work on the following projects proposed to be funded from the State Fiscal Year 2011 Parks and Trails Fund appropriation:

1. \$141,000 to complete the Nature Play Area and Children's Garden at Bald Eagle Otter Lakes Regional Park Nature Center. This project will be funded with \$954,000 from the FY 2010 appropriation and \$141,000 from the FY 2011 appropriation. It is best to award all contracts for the project in 2010. As noted in Ramsey County's letter, the County will finance any of the FY 2011 costs prior to execution of the FY 2011 grant agreement under the assurance that those costs will be eligible for reimbursement from the FY 2011 appropriation.
2. \$130,000 for Tamarack Nature Center Volunteer Corps at Bald Eagle-Otter Lakes Regional Park. The volunteer corps would develop nature play leaders, gardeners and naturalists for the Nature Play Area and Children's Garden cited above. The County would like to begin this program in January 2010 instead of waiting until July 2010 when the FY 2011 appropriation is available. As noted in Ramsey County's letter, the County will finance the costs prior to execution of the FY 2011 grant agreement under the assurance that those costs will be eligible for reimbursement from the FY 2011 appropriation.
3. \$343,000 for Battle Creek Regional Park restoration of a 200 acre prairie and oak savannah. The County would like to begin this project in the Fall of 2009 so that maximum time is available to complete the project, which must be completed by June 30, 2012. As noted in Ramsey County's letter, the County will finance the costs prior to execution of the FY 2011 grant agreement under the assurance that those costs will be eligible for reimbursement from the FY 2011 appropriation.

Strategy 2(f) of the *2030 Regional Parks Policy Plan* states:

#### **Strategy 2(f): Reimbursement**

Reimbursement will be considered for development provided the project in question is consistent in timing, scale, type and cost with an approved master plan, that all information required for a development grant is submitted to the Council prior to the regional park implementing agency undertaking the project and that the Council approves the project.

These projects are consistent with the terms of Strategy 2(f) for the following reasons:

1. The timing, scale and cost of the projects are consistent with the following Council approved master plans:

The Bald Eagle-Otter Lakes Regional Park master plan approved in August 1987.

The Battle Creek Regional Park master plan approved in March 1981.

2. Enough information has been submitted in this request regarding what would be financed with a Council grant to meet the requirements of Strategy 2(f). In this case, that information is contained in **Attachment 1**.
3. Ramsey County is requesting Metropolitan Council approval for these projects prior to undertaking them.

### **Conclusion**

This review concludes that Ramsey County's request to expend its own funds to begin work on projects proposed to be funded from the State Fiscal Year 2011 Parks and Trails Fund appropriation is consistent with the terms of Strategy 2(f). The timing of when Ramsey County is reimbursed for its expenditures on these projects is dependent on when the FY 2011 Parks and Trails Fund appropriation is available and on execution of grant amendments or grant agreements for those projects.

### **Recommendation**

That the Metropolitan Council authorize Ramsey County to expend funds on the following State Fiscal Year 2011 Parks and Trails Fund projects under the stipulation that the County will not be reimbursed for its expenses from the FY 2011 Parks and Trails Fund appropriation until the appropriation is available and after execution of grant amendments or grant agreements for these projects:

1. \$141,000 to complete the Nature Play Area and Children's Garden at Bald Eagle Otter Lakes Regional Park's Nature Center.
2. \$130,000 for Tamarack Nature Center Volunteer Corps.
3. \$343,000 for Battle Creek Regional Park restoration of a 200 acre prairie and oak savannah.

## Attachment 1: Letter from Greg Mack, Ramsey County



### Parks and Recreation Department

**Gregory A. Mack, Director**

2015 North Van Dyke Street  
Maplewood, MN 55109-3796

Tel: 651-748-2500

Fax: 651-748-2508

[www.co.ramsey.mn.us](http://www.co.ramsey.mn.us)



June 8, 2009

Arne Stefferud, Planning Analyst/Parks  
Metropolitan Council  
390 North Robert Street  
St. Paul, Minnesota 55101

### **RE: FY 2010 Appropriation from the Parks and Trails Fund**

Dear Arne:

Ramsey County is pleased about the Legislative appropriations from the Parks and Trails fund for projects within the Metropolitan Regional Park System. These funds provide a tremendous opportunity for Implementing Agencies to address critical needs. We understand that to reflect with state appropriations for each fiscal year, projects submitted to the Legislature by Implementing Agencies will be financed under specific grant agreements. However, in order to align with Ramsey County's fiscal year and assure our ability to deliver desired outcomes, Ramsey County requests Metropolitan Council authorization to expend funds on three projects prior to execution of the FY 2011 projects. The specific projects requested are:

- Bald Eagle-Otter Lakes Regional Park Tamarack Nature Center Nature Play Area and Children's Garden. The State appropriation level resulted in dividing this project into two fiscal years. FY 2010 includes \$954,000 and FY 2011 includes \$141,000. Since this is one project under a unified plan and common contractors, it is desirable to award all contracts in FY 2010. Ramsey County is prepared to advance funding prior to execution of the FY 2011 grant contract with the assurance that expenditures and contract commitments will be eligible for funding under the anticipated FY 2011 contract.
- Bald Eagle-Otter Lakes Regional Park Tamarack Nature Center Volunteer Corps. The intent of this project is to develop a volunteer corps of nature play leaders, gardeners and naturalists for Tamarack Nature Center's Destination for Discovery. It is desirable that this program begin in January 2010 and continue through 2011. Ramsey County is prepared to advance the funds for

**Minnesota's First Home Rule County**

printed on recycled paper with a minimum of 10% post-consumer content.



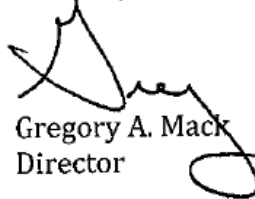
this project prior to execution of the FY 2011 grant contract with the assurance that expenditures will be eligible for funding under the anticipated FY 2011 contract.

- Battle Creek Regional Park Prairie Restoration. This project involves restoration of over 200 acres of prairie and oak savannah. Because these are natural systems, it is desirable to begin this project in fall 2009 so that the maximum time is available within the allowable grant timeframes (June 30, 2012). Ramsey County is prepared to advance funding to begin implementation of this work with the assurance that expenditures and contract commitments will be eligible for funding under the anticipated FY 2011 contract.

Ramsey County requests the Metropolitan Council's authorization to expend funds for these projects prior to execution of the FY 2011 grant contracts.

Thank you for consideration of this request. Authorization to expend funds on these projects prior to execution of the grant contract will enable Ramsey County to achieve the outcome presented to the Minnesota Legislature.

Sincerely,



Gregory A. Mack  
Director

GAM:vad