

**C** Community Development Committee  
For the Metropolitan Council meeting of January 17, 2007

Item: 2006-342

**ADVISORY INFORMATION**

**Date Prepared:** December 19, 2006

**Subject:** Elm Creek Park Reserve Development Master Plan

**Summary of Committee Discussion:**

The Committee discussed the following topics:

1. A concern was raised with regard to the development of “camper” cabins in regional parks. A question of whether other regional parks have cabins was posed. Staff indicated that state parks have cabins and that the master plan for Lebanon Hills Regional Park in Dakota County has plans for yurts, which are tent-like structures. Further research after the meeting found that Baker Park Reserve has eight cabins.

Concern was voiced regarding the policy implications of the Council providing funding for cabins in regional parks. Staff indicated that the issue currently before the Community Development Committee was for approval of the master plan—specific funding of master plan elements would be determined during the Regional Parks capital improvement program process. Staff offered to initiate discussions of policy issues regarding cabins and project eligibility for capital funding with the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission.

2. A question was asked regarding the process for acquisition and the determination of price of the inholding parcels. Staff indicated that the acquisition costs shown in the master plan were the 2006 tax assessed values of the properties. Three Rivers Park District would enter into negotiations with the property owners on a willing seller basis, and would pay fair market value for the land. A follow-up question was asked regarding the anticipated price per acre of the inholding properties. Staff explained that the price would vary by parcel and that some of the parcels had houses or other improvements on them that would affect the purchase price.

The Committee unanimously approved the following recommendation:

**Recommendations:**

That the Metropolitan Council approve the Elm Creek Park Reserve Development Master Plan (Referral No. 19864-1).

# C Community Development Committee

Meeting date: December 18, 2006

## ADVISORY INFORMATION

<b>Date:</b>	December 11, 2006
<b>Subject:</b>	Elm Creek Park Reserve Development Master Plan, Three Rivers Park District (Referral No. 19864-1)
<b>District(s), Member(s):</b>	District 1, Roger Scherer
<b>Policy/Legal Reference:</b>	MN Statute 473.313
<b>Staff Prepared/Presented:</b>	Jan Youngquist, Senior Planner– Parks (651-602-1029)
<b>Division/Department:</b>	Community Development/Regional Systems Planning and Growth Strategy, Parks

### Proposed Action/Motion

That the Metropolitan Council approve the Elm Creek Park Reserve Development Master Plan (Referral No. 19864-1).

### Issue(s)

Is the Elm Creek Regional Park Reserve development master plan consistent with applicable Metropolitan Council policy plans?

### Overview and Funding

Three Rivers Park District has submitted a development master plan for Elm Creek Regional Park Reserve for Metropolitan Council review and approval. Elm Creek Regional Park Reserve is located in the north portion of Hennepin County, in the cities of Maple Grove, Dayton and Champlin. The original master plan was approved prior to the opening of the park reserve in the fall of 1974. Three Rivers Park District currently owns 5,279 acres within the boundaries of the park reserve. This master plan update was prepared to reflect updated natural resource information and management techniques, to recommend adjustments to the park reserve boundary, and to meet current and future park user needs through proposed recreational facilities.

This review concludes that the Elm Creek Regional Park Reserve development master plan contains sufficient information to meet the requirements of the *2030 Regional Parks Policy Plan* and that it is generally consistent with the requirements of the plan.

The total estimated cost for implementation of the master plan includes development costs of \$13,158,000 and acquisition costs for six inholding parcels of \$1,134,500, for a total of \$14,292,500 in 2006 dollars.

Approval of this master plan does not commit the Council to any funding at this time. Future development funding based on this master plan would be done through the Regional Parks Capital

Improvement Program (CIP). Council action is required to approve the CIP and to approve specific grants.

The Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission reviewed the master plan at its meeting on November 14. They discussed the following issues:

1. A question was asked regarding the charges for winter recreation activities. Three Rivers Park District staff cited examples of some of the charges, including tubing--\$12 for two hours; cross country skiing--\$40 for an annual pass or \$5 for a day pass; and downhill skiing--\$200 for an annual pass or approximately \$10-\$12 for a lift ticket.
2. The master plan shows a future mountain bike area. A question was asked whether there are any existing mountain bike trails. Three Rivers Park District staff indicated that visitors are using the cross country ski trails for mountain biking, but that activity is damaging the trails.
3. The master plan indicates that that the largest increase in population is projected to occur in the 60-79 year old age group. A commission member asked what kind of activities are planned for seniors. Three Rivers Park District staff discussed the planned expansion of the nature center, as well as the intent to provide more educational programs. District staff also hopes that camping will become multi-generational.

The Commission unanimously approved the recommendation.

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

**DATE:** October 30, 2006

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

**FROM:** Jan Youngquist, Senior Planner-Parks (651) 602-1029

**SUBJECT:** Elm Creek Park Reserve Development Master Plan, Three Rivers Park District  
(Referral No. 19864-1)

## **INTRODUCTION**

Three Rivers Park District has submitted a development master plan for the Elm Creek Park Reserve for Metropolitan Council review and approval.

The *2030 Regional Parks Policy Plan* (Chapter 2 – Policies and Strategies, Section D – Planning, Strategy 4A- Master Plans), describes the role of the master plan in the regional park system. The policy requires that any project proposed for funding in the Metropolitan Regional Parks Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) be consistent with a Metropolitan Council approved regional park master plan.

This memorandum contains a review of the Elm Creek Park Reserve Development Master Plan based on its consistency with the *2030 Parks Policy Plan*.

## **AUTHORITY TO REVIEW**

Minnesota Statute 473.313, Subdivision 1 requires Regional Park Implementing Agencies to, “prepare, after consultation with all affected municipalities, and submit to the Metropolitan Council, and from time to time revise and resubmit to the council, a master plan and annual budget for the acquisition and development of regional recreation open space located within the district or county, consistent with the council’s policy plan.” (i.e., the *2030 Regional Parks Policy Plan*)

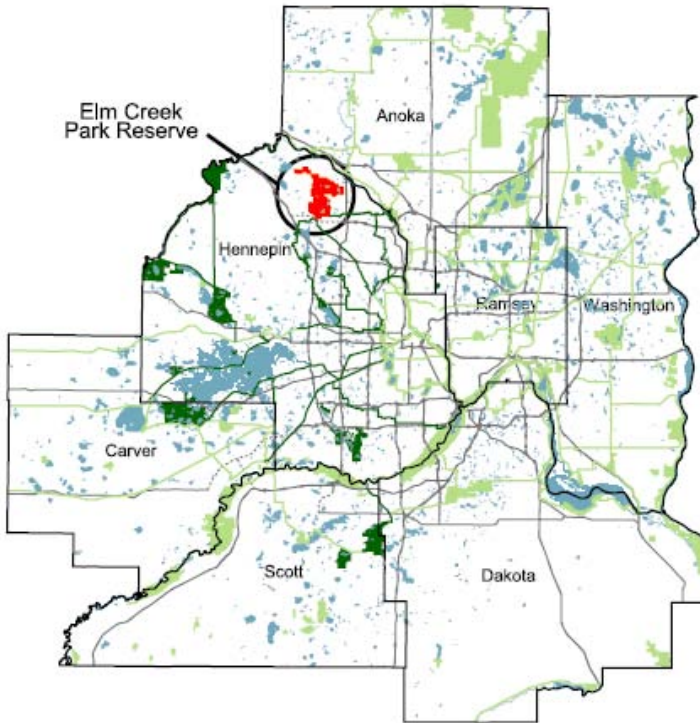
Minnesota Statute 473.313, Subdivision 2 authorizes the Metropolitan Council to review, with the advice of the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission, master plans for the regional park system. Plans are reviewed for their consistency with the *2030 Regional Parks Policy Plan* and other Council policy plans. If a master plan is not consistent with Council policy, the Council should return the plan to the implementing agency with its comments for revision and resubmittal.

## **BACKGROUND**

Elm Creek Regional Park Reserve is located in the north central portion of Hennepin County, between Interstate 94 and the Mississippi River. The park reserve lies within three cities—Dayton, Champlin and Maple Grove. The location of the park reserve is depicted in Figures 1 and 2. The original master

plan was approved prior to the opening of the park reserve in the fall of 1974. This master plan update was prepared to reflect updated natural resource information and management techniques, to recommend adjustments to the park reserve boundary, and to meet current and future park user needs through proposed recreational facilities. The planning timeframe for the 2006 Master Plan is through 2030. Three Rivers Park District Master Plans are updated every ten years, however, to correlate with population and demographic trends identified in the decennial US Census and local community comprehensive plans.

*Figures 1 & 2—Location of Elm Creek Park Reserve*



## ANALYSIS

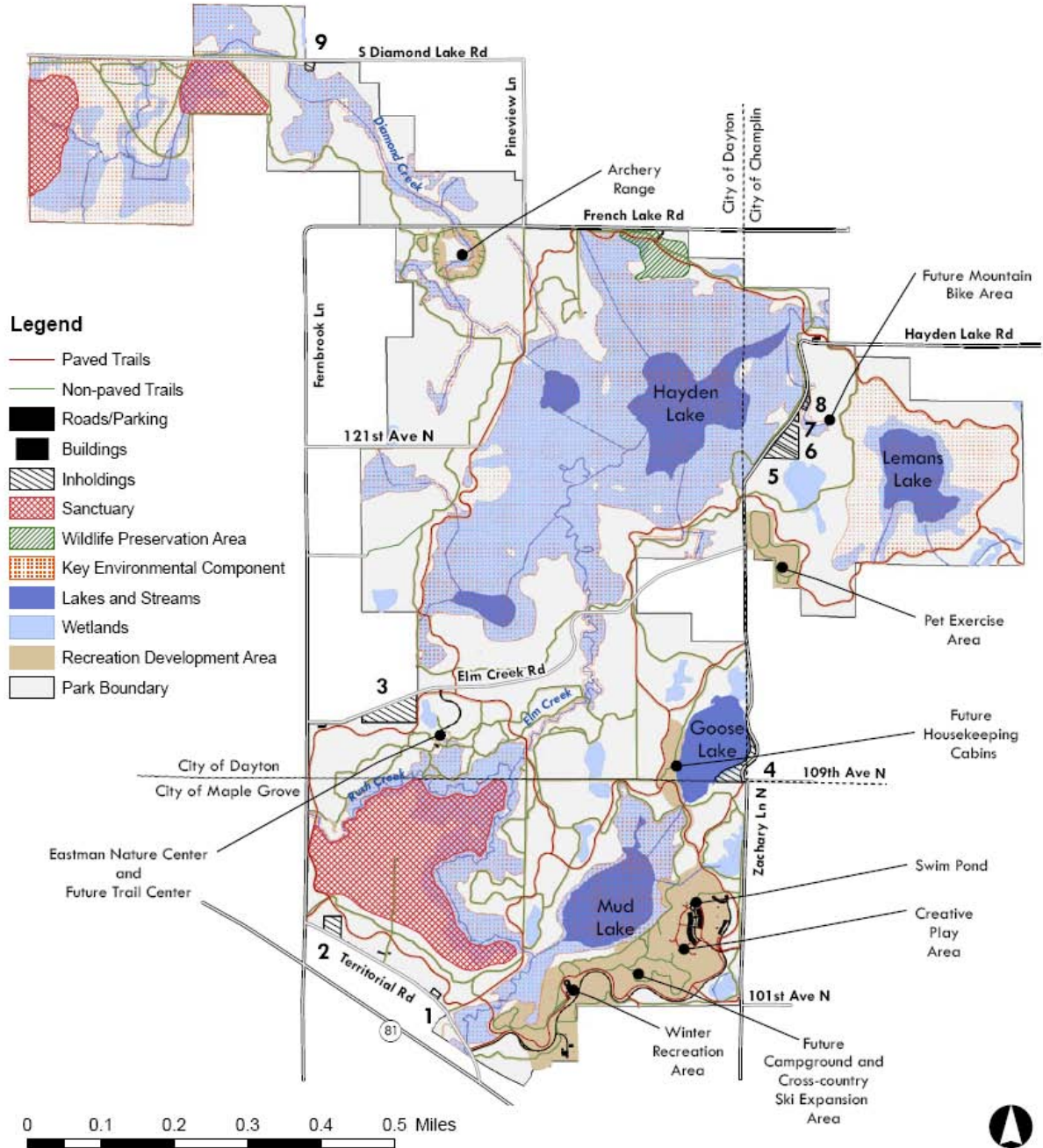
### 1. Boundaries and Acquisition Costs

Land acquisition for Elm Creek Park Reserve began in the mid 1960s and the park officially opened in 1974. Three Rivers Park District currently owns 5,279 acres within the boundaries of the park reserve. The previous master plan identified nine inholdings for future acquisition, consisting of 33 acres, with a total 2006 tax assessed value of \$2,165,800. The current boundaries of the park reserve and the location of the nine inholding parcels are shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3—Park Reserve Boundary and Inholding Analysis Map

# Elm Creek Park Reserve

## Inholding Analysis Map



The master plan update process examined the variety of strategies that could be employed to meet the master plan goals while minimizing acquisition costs. Each inholding parcel was evaluated based on its impact to natural resources goals, recreational development goals and the interior integrity of the

park reserve. Subsequently, each parcel was assigned a rating of Critical, Significant Benefit or Low Value, as defined below:

**Critical**—Inholdings whose exclusion from the park reserve would be in significant conflict with the master plan goals. Purchase of these properties is very important.

**Significant Benefit**—Inholdings that hold significant benefit to the park, but whose primary benefit may not require direct purchase. Trail easements, conservation easements, or other protective covenants on these properties may suffice.

**Low Value**—Inholdings where purchase or protective covenants are not needed to meet the master plan goals. The recommended action is to adjust the park reserve boundary to exclude these inholdings.

The rating and recommended strategy for each inholding parcel are indicated below, in Figure 4. Parcels 1 and 2 (4.8 acres with a 2006 tax assessed value of \$648,300) are recommended for removal from the park reserve boundary. Parcel 3 (12.2 acres with a 2006 tax assessed value of \$383,000) has been recommended for removal from the park reserve boundary; however, the master plan also recommends acquiring a 100-foot wide conservation easement buffer for the portion of the property that is adjacent to the park reserve. The cost of the easement will be dependent on negotiations with the property owner; therefore an estimation of cost would be premature at this point.

Parcels 4-9 (16.1 total acres with a combined 2006 tax assessed value of \$1,134,500) are critical to Elm Creek Park Reserve and should remain within its boundary.

**Figure 4—Inholding Evaluation and Recommendation**

<b>Inholding Evaluation Summary and Recommendation Table</b>				
<b>Parcel</b>	<b>Rating</b>	<b>Acres</b>	<b>2006 Tax Assessed Value</b>	<b>Recommended Strategy</b>
1	Low Value	0.8	\$245,100	Remove from master plan boundary
2	Low Value	4.0	\$403,200	Remove from master plan boundary
3	Significant Benefit	12.2	\$383,000	Obtain conservation easement
4	Critical	4.7	\$430,000	Purchase
5	Critical	7.8	\$167,700	Purchase
6	Critical	1.4	\$202,800	Purchase
7	Critical	0.4	\$19,200	Purchase
8	Critical	1.0	\$117,800	Purchase
9	Critical	0.8	\$197,000	Purchase
<b>Summary</b>				
<b>Summary</b>		<b>Acres</b>	<b>Projected Cost</b>	<b>Recommended Strategy</b>
Critical		16.1	\$1,134,500	Purchase
Significant Benefit		12.2	To be negotiated	Obtain conservation easement
Low Value		4.8	\$0	Remove from master plan boundary

The updated master plan boundary includes the 5,279 of land currently owned by Three Rivers Park District and the 16.1 acres in inholding parcels to be acquired, for a total of 5,295 acres with an acquisition cost of \$1,134,500 (in 2006 dollars).

## **2. Stewardship Plan**

Three Rivers Park District incorporates Best Management Practices for the operations and maintenance of all facilities and property. The Park District maintains its facilities and property at a high level of quality in order to extend the life and reduce the amount of resources needed for repair or replacement. Stewardship activities include boundary marking, building and signage maintenance, identification of significant areas of natural and cultural resources, and ongoing road and trail maintenance. Since Elm Creek Park Reserve has been operational since 1974, no new significant stewardship activities are required.

## **3. Needs Analysis**

Currently, Elm Creek Park Reserve is the second most visited park within the Three Rivers Park District system, with over 499,000 visits in 2005. Metropolitan Council estimates show that the park reserve currently serves 188,000 households and that an additional 88,000 households will be located in the park reserve's service area by 2030, representing an increase of 47 percent.

Three Rivers Park District examined historical visitation patterns to its parks and park reserves from 1990 through 2004. Regression analysis showed a strong correlation between the annual increase in households within a park's service area and the annual increase in visitation to the park. The ratio of visits per household was also found to steadily increase over time, with an annual increase range of 3 to 7 percent. Therefore, future visitation to Elm Creek Park Reserve will increase due to new households in the area as well as the increased use per household.

Future visitation to Elm Creek Park Reserve was projected using the 2030 household estimates and the regression formulas from the historical comparative analysis. The low end of the projected visitation range was determined using a 3 percent annual increase and the high end of the range used a 7 percent annual increase. Visitation to Elm Creek Park Reserve in 2030 will fall between 890,000 and 1,094,000 annual visits, with a midpoint target of 992,000 annual visits.

## **4. Development**

Current amenities at Elm Creek Park Reserve include a swim pond, creative play area, winter recreation area, Eastman Nature Center, off-leash dog exercise area, archery course and an extensive paved and non-paved trail network. The master plan proposes new facilities and rehabilitation of some existing facilities to meet the expected increase in visitation as well as demographic and recreational trends. Figure 5 outlines the proposed development and associated costs from the master plan.



**Figure 5—Proposed Development and Estimated Costs**

<b>Development Area</b>	<b>Estimated Costs (in 2006 dollars)</b>
<b>Family campground</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 75 sites, grading, roads - \$1,750,000</li> <li>• Campground services/disc golf center building (2,000 SF with showers, toilets, office) - \$600,000</li> <li>• 10 cabins (\$40,000 per cabin including construction and interior finishing) - \$400,000</li> </ul>	\$2,850,000
<b>Disc golf – 18 hole course</b>	\$50,000
<b>2.5 km cross-country ski loop with snow making</b>	\$2,900,000
<b>Eastman Nature Center expansion</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exterior rehabilitation, functional updates and code renovation - \$2,650,000</li> <li>• 3,500 SF classroom addition - \$1,450,000</li> <li>• Interior redesign - \$475,000</li> <li>• Other non-construction costs, including temporary relocation, architectural/engineering, permits and other soft costs - \$325,000</li> <li>• Parking lot expansion (40 additional spaces) - \$200,000</li> </ul>	\$5,100,000
<b>Promotion of Eastman Nature Center as the trail center</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parking lot expansion (10 additional spaces)</li> </ul>	\$50,000
<b>Vista observation sites</b> (14 total at \$2,000 each)	\$28,000
<b>Off-leash dog exercise area improvements</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paved parking for 30 vehicles - \$150,000</li> <li>• Water - \$100,000 (assuming a well is needed)</li> <li>• Shade structure - \$20,000</li> </ul>	\$270,000
<b>Expansion of chalet to accommodate 400 guests</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Building expansion - \$1,200,000</li> <li>• Parking expansion - \$500,000</li> </ul>	\$1,700,000
<b>Stacked loop mountain bike trail network – 15 miles at \$12,000 per mile</b>	\$180,000
<b>Bottineau House Historic Site*</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relocation - \$0</li> <li>• Parking and interpretive signage - \$30,000</li> </ul>	\$30,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$13,158,000</b>

\* The historic Pierre Bottineau house was removed from a site near the park reserve to make way for a highway project. Pending an agreement with the state of Minnesota and the city of Maple Grove, the historic house will be relocated to a site within Elm Creek Park Reserve near the main entrance.

## 5. Conflicts

Acquisition of inholdings may be difficult, but Three Rivers Park District will work to minimize impacts on current landowners and to find mutually beneficial acquisition strategies, such as the use of life estates.

Other potential conflicts may include future roadway redevelopment or realignments. For example, official reuse and redevelopment of Elm Creek Road by Hennepin County would require realignment of several paved trail segments and construction of grade separated pedestrian crossings, since the road dissects the park reserve.

## **6. Public Services**

Utility services are provided to the park reserve by the city of Maple Grove for sewer and water, Xcel Energy and Conexus for electricity, Xcel Energy and Minnegasco for gas, Waconia for propane, and Sprint for phone service. The park reserve also has on-site wells and septic tanks in those areas not currently served by the above-listed utilities. The Park Police and the cities of Dayton, Champlin, Maple Grove and Brooklyn Park provide emergency services. No mass transportation currently serves the park reserve.

The Larry F. Haeg, Sr. Recreation Area, located in the southeast corner of the park reserve, has sanitary sewer and water service. The proposed development in this area will not require additional capacity or utility services. Eastman Nature Center, located in the western part of the park reserve, is not currently connected to sanitary sewer or water. The city of Dayton is expected to have sewer and water facilities available in that area by 2020. Redevelopment of Eastman Nature Center prior to that time would require septic and well services.

## **7. Operations**

### **Rules, regulations and ordinances**

The Three Rivers Park District Board has adopted a set of ordinances which define the Park District's rules and regulations. A copy of the ordinances is posted on the Park District website. Rules and regulations are also posted throughout the Park District's properties and facilities. Posted information includes park hours, permitted and prohibited activities, fees, maps of the park and/or trail, and emergency contact information. Three Rivers Park District Police and Park Service Officers regularly patrol park and trail property and will enforce ordinances via citations when necessary.

### **Operations –Public Safety**

Three Rivers Park District Safety Section consists of Park Police Officers, Park Service Officers and support staff. To meet the public safety needs generated by the addition of the facilities proposed in the master plan and the anticipated increase in visitation, the master plan recommends adding four part-time (2.0 FTE) Public Safety Officers and one full-time (1.0 FTE) Park Police Officer by 2030.

### **Operations –Maintenance**

In order to create an efficient and cost-effective work force, Three Rivers Park District organizes and budgets maintenance services in three geographic divisions. Within each division are two work clusters that typically provide maintenance service for four to six Park District parks, park reserves and/or regional trails. Staff and equipment are shared throughout the work cluster, which allows specialized skills to be applied across the sites and the shared use and cost of equipment and supplies.

### **Operations--Energy Conservation**

Several measures are taken to promote energy conservation, including timed lighting and thermostats, automatic irrigation systems, infrared heating in select maintenance facilities, and skylights where appropriate. Some buildings, facilities and portions of parks are closed in the winter to conserve energy. Three Rivers Park District uses geothermal energy to heat the chalet and maintenance facility at Elm Creek Park Reserve. The Park District will continue to evaluate the guidelines for sustainable development, such as Minnesota Sustainable Building Guidelines (B3 Project) and the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Rating System for appropriate use in each unique construction project.

### **Operations—Solid Waste Management**

Three Rivers Park District contracts solid waste removal. Receptacles are located at designated areas in the park system and include recycling facilities for cardboard, aluminum and paper. Additional recycling services are located in nature and visitor centers. Efforts are made in remote park offices to recycle paper products through central paper collection.

### **Maintenance Costs**

The 2006 annual cost for maintaining Elm Creek Park Reserve is projected to be \$1,261,930. When the master plan is fully implemented and all development is complete, the annual operating and maintenance costs are estimated to increase by \$251,729 to a total of \$1,513,659 in 2006 dollars.

### **Public Safety Costs**

The current annual cost for public safety services at Elm Creek Park Reserve is approximately \$185,000. Projected public safety costs upon completion of all proposed developments and a 2030 annual visitation level of 992,000 visits is \$332,500 in 2006 dollars. This figure includes the additional recommended public safety staff. There is also a one-time expected cost of \$79,000 for equipment and vehicles.

### **Facility Services/Programming Costs**

Facility service/programming costs at Elm Creek Park Reserve include winter recreation area attendants, lifeguards, concession attendants, naturalists and supervisory staff. The winter recreation area will be fully operational in 2007, with an annual cost of providing services of approximately \$555,000 in 2006 dollars. The addition of a second cross-country ski loop and expansion of the chalet are not expected to generate additional service costs.

The estimated 2006 cost of providing non-winter recreation services is \$255,000 and environmental education through Eastman Nature Center is \$357,000 for a total annual cost of \$612,000. When all proposed facilities are fully operational, the annual cost for non-winter services and programming is estimated to increase by \$42,000 for a total of \$654,000 in 2006 dollars.

The total expected facility service/programming costs when all the proposed facilities are operational are \$1,209,000 in 2006 dollars.

### **Funding Sources**

Annual operating costs are funded through the Park District's general fund budget, with property taxes as the primary source of funds. Revenue is also received from the State of Minnesota as part of the Operations and Maintenance Fund allocation from the Metropolitan Council. Some of the annual rehabilitation costs also may be funded from the Three Rivers Park District Park Maintenance and Rehabilitation Fund, which includes revenues from the State Lottery In Lieu of Sales Tax as well as the Park District's general obligation bonds.

Three Rivers Park District does not collect an entry fee to any of its parks or park reserves. Revenue collected at Elm Creek Park Reserve comes from daily and annual passes to the winter recreation area, the swim pond, archery range and off-leash dog exercise area. The winter recreation area, when fully operational in 2007, is expected to generate \$629,000 in revenue, covering approximately 113 percent of its operational costs.

Revenue from the non-winter, fee-based recreational facilities is estimated at \$244,000 in 2006, covering approximately 96 percent of its associated costs. Eastman Nature Center is estimated to generate \$58,000 of revenue in 2006, covering approximately 16 percent of the total educational costs

associated with the center. The family campground, disc golf and the expansion of the chalet are expected to generate annual revenues totaling \$141,000 in 2006 dollars.

When all facilities in the master plan are fully operational, the combined revenue from user fees, passes and facility rentals is projected to be \$1,072,000, covering approximately 89 percent of the related facility service and programming costs.

## **8. Citizen Participation**

Initial input on the master plan update was obtained through a variety of methods. Three Rivers Park District met with city staff from Dayton, Champlin and Maple Grove, who were supportive of the potential changes in the master plan. On-site discussions using a focus-group approach were conducted with Elm Creek Park Reserve visitors. The results of these discussions helped refine and improve the proposed developments and reaffirm the public's demand for the proposed additional facilities and facility modifications.

Feedback on two options for developing mountain bike facilities was sought on the Minnesota Off-Road Cyclists' (MORC) website in its "forum" section. The first option consisted of multiple connected loops (stacked-loop) complex of single-track mountain bike trails. The second option consisted of a series of stand-alone single track loops accessed at points along an existing paved trail. Thirty individuals posted 58 comments, with two-thirds supporting the first option. The comments from the forum were taken into consideration for the recommendation of developing a stacked loop single-track trail network in this master plan.

Public review of the master plan will be available through the Three Rivers Park District website. The Park District will use its E-lert email network and new releases to alert the public to the master plan and its review period. In addition to having an electronic copy of the master plan, the website will include an online survey and feedback form.

The cities of Dayton, Champlin and Maple Grove will be given an opportunity to review the master plan.

## **9. Public Awareness**

Three Rivers Park District Marketing Communications Section oversees public relations, marketing, media relations, the website, brand management, event planning and promotions. Outreach tools that are used to promote the Park District include an annual district-wide map, website, direct mail, press releases, centralized reservation system, feedback phone lines, brochures, ads and on-site promotion.

The Park District also collaborates with a wide array of community, business and government organizations to promote its facilities, programs and services. The Park District also works with the Metropolitan Regional Park System and the State Office of Tourism in shared opportunities to create awareness and visibility. Cooperation with county agencies helps to provide information about scholarship programs for those receiving economic assistance.

## **10. Special Needs**

Three Rivers Park District is committed to providing access to all people, including people with disabilities and other special-population groups. In order to meet this commitment, all facilities described in the Master Plan will be developed in accordance with ADA standards and guidelines. Trails will be constructed with less than a five percent grade whenever possible, to accommodate wheelchairs, and benches will be raised in order to help people who have trouble rising from lower seats.

The Park District has programs to assist in providing access to the park for low income people. The “Parks for All People” program provides free passes for swimming and cross country skiing to qualified recipients of Hennepin County economic assistance programs. Discounted camping, equipment rental and educational programs are also available. There is no entrance fee to Elm Creek Park Reserve.

Participation in activities and use of the park facilities is encouraged through promotional outreach programs with special-interest organizations such as Courage Center and Wilderness Inquiry. Interpreters and alternative forms of printed material can be made available for programmed events, if arrangements are made in advance.

## **11. Natural Resources**

### **Natural Resources Inventory**

The majority of Elm Creek Park Reserve is classified by the Minnesota Land Cover Classification System (MLCCS) as upland deciduous forest. Approximately four percent of the existing land cover is not naturally occurring and consists of artificial surfaces or planted, maintain or cultivated land cover. The remaining land cover is naturally occurring, including deciduous land covers as well as grasslands and land covers associated with varying moisture conditions.

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources recognizes 11 native plant communities within the park reserve. Many are located within natural resource priority areas and are protected from development. There are over 100 acres each of black ash-yellow birch-alder swamp and sugar maple forest.

The park reserve is also home to several rare, endangered or threatened species. Three Rivers Park District has been actively researching the Blanding’s turtle movement and reproduction rates for two decades. This research has been instrumental in designating an additional 28 acres of prime nesting habitat for the Blanding’s turtle in the north central area of the park reserve. This area is designated as a wildlife preservation area.

### **Surface Water and Groundwater Resources**

Elm Creek Park Reserve’s system of streams, lakes and wetlands account for 38 percent of the park reserve’s total acreage. The streams, lakes and associated wetlands are the basis for many of the plant communities and wildlife found in the park reserve. Protecting the water quality of all water bodies from further degradation and returning stream flows to a more historical pattern are critical to preserving other associated resources within the park reserve.

### **Vegetation Management**

Forested areas that were cleared for agricultural purposes have been slated for reforestation. These efforts include collecting native seed, utilizing herbicide and burning as preparation practices, broadcasting seed, propagating and planting seedlings and larger trees bare root. Although most of the uplands in the park reserve will be forested, maintaining some open areas, especially associated with

wetlands, will be necessary to preserve species like sandhill cranes, Blanding's turtles and leopard frogs.

### **Wildlife Management**

Much of the wildlife in the park reserve is associated with the streams and wetlands, including otters, beavers, trumpeter swans, bald eagles, sandhill cranes, least bitterns and Blanding's turtles. Re-establishing former water flows and improving water quality in the streams that flow through the park reserve are the most important considerations for preserving these species of wildlife.

### **REVIEW BY OTHER COUNCIL DIVISIONS:**

**Environmental Services – Surface Water Management** (Jim Larsen) –No comments.

**Environmental Services – Sewers** (Kyle Colvin) – The master plan appears to outline little or no additional service needs to the Regional Disposal System.

**Metropolitan Council Transportation** (Ann Braden) –The plan may want to reference the proposed Northwest Metro River Crossing study, which addresses the development of a new north-south highway corridor between Highway 169 and Highway 101 with a crossing of the Mississippi River between the cities of Dayton and Ramsey. The Scoping Decision document has recommended several alternative alignments for further study in a future Environmental Impact Statement. A common section of two of these alignments runs just outside of the upper northwest portion of the park reserve along Zanzibar Lane. Since it doesn't appear that any entrances to the park reserve are planned from Zanzibar Lane, this proposed new road and river connection probably would have no direct bearing on Elm Creek Park Reserve.

### **CONCLUSIONS:**

1. The *2030 Regional Parks Policy Plan* requires that master plans include information on eleven items reviewed in the "analysis section" above. It also requires that sufficient information be included on the estimated cost of the acquisition and development proposed in the master plan. This review concludes that the Elm Creek Park Reserve Development Master Plan (Referral No. 19864-1) contains sufficient information to meet the requirements of the *2030 Regional Parks Policy Plan* and that it is generally consistent with the requirements of the plan.
2. The estimated cost to implement the master plan, including the development costs of \$13,158,000 and the acquisition costs of \$1,134,500 for the six inholding parcels, totals \$14,292,500 in 2006 dollars.
3. Approval of this master plan does not commit the Council to any funding at this time. Future development funding based on this master plan would be done through the Regional Parks Capital Improvement Program (CIP). Council action is required to approve the CIP and to approve specific grants to Three Rivers Park District.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

That the Metropolitan Council approve the Elm Creek Park Reserve Development Master Plan (Referral No. 19864-1).