

**METROPOLITAN COUNCIL**

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**DATE:** March 27, 2012  
**TO:** Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission  
**FROM:** Arne Stefferud, Planning Analyst-Parks (651-602-1360)  
**SUBJECT:** (2012-xxx) Rice Creek Chain of Lakes Park Reserve Master Plan  
Amendment, Anoka County  
Metropolitan Parks & Open Space Commission District F: Daniel Schlaferman

**INTRODUCTION**

Anoka County has submitted a master plan amendment for Rice Creek Chain of Lakes Park Reserve for Metropolitan Council review and approval. The amendment proposes adding 87 acres to the park north of I-35W to provide an access point to this portion of the park reserve. The land proposed for the addition is currently privately owned and has an appraised value of \$348,000. (See Attachment 1: Letter from Karen Blaska, Anoka County)

This memorandum analyzes the master plan against the criteria for reviewing regional park master plans. It recommends approving the master plan amendment because it is consistent with applicable portions of the *Updated 2030 Regional 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*. 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.

# MASTER PLAN ANALYSIS

## 1. Boundaries and Acquisition Costs

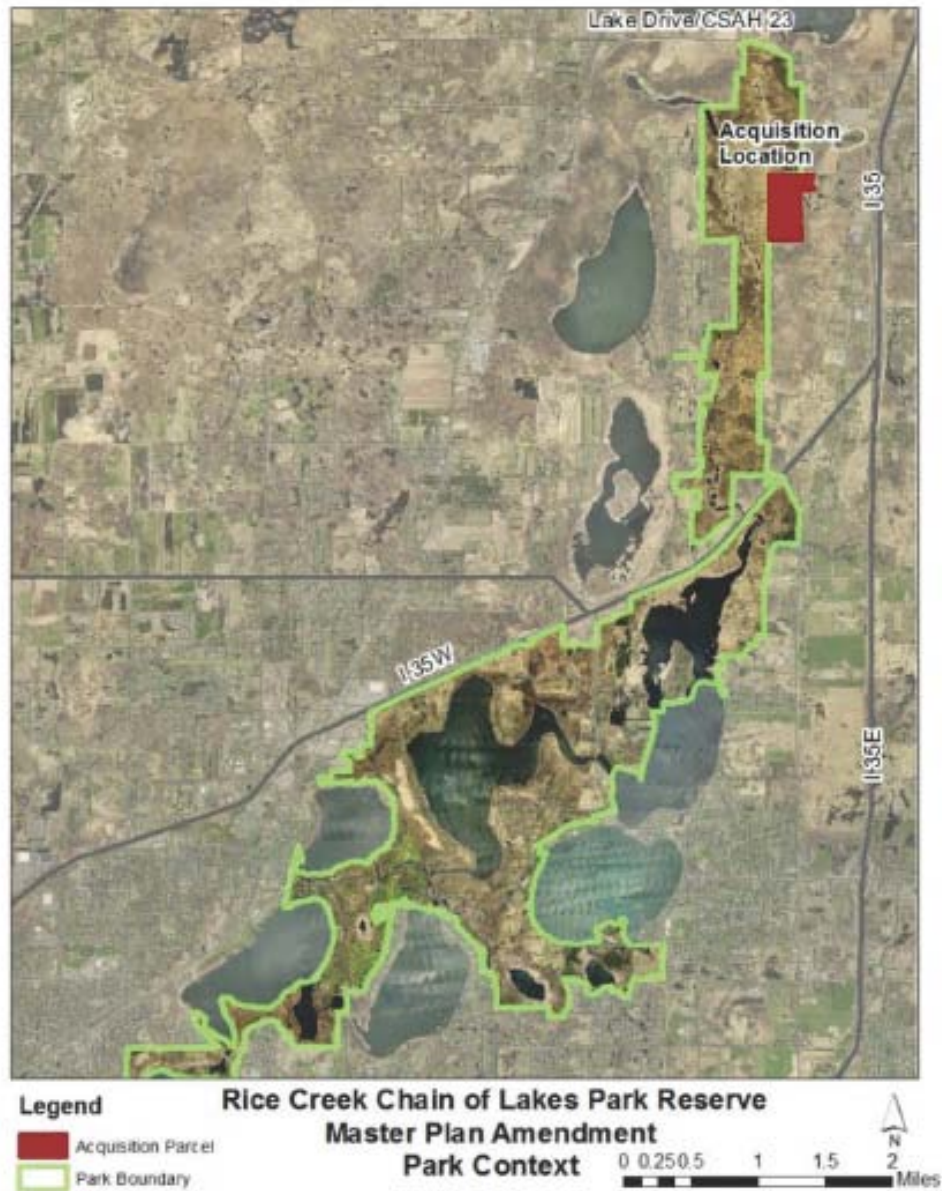
Rice Creek Chain of Lakes Park Reserve is located in the cities of Columbus, Lino Lakes and Centerville in northeastern Anoka County. The park reserve boundary includes 5,500 acres containing significant native wildlife habitat, water resources and archeological sites. Figure 1 illustrates the park reserve's location in a regional context.

**Figure 1: Rice Creek Chain of Lakes Park Reserve in Regional Context**



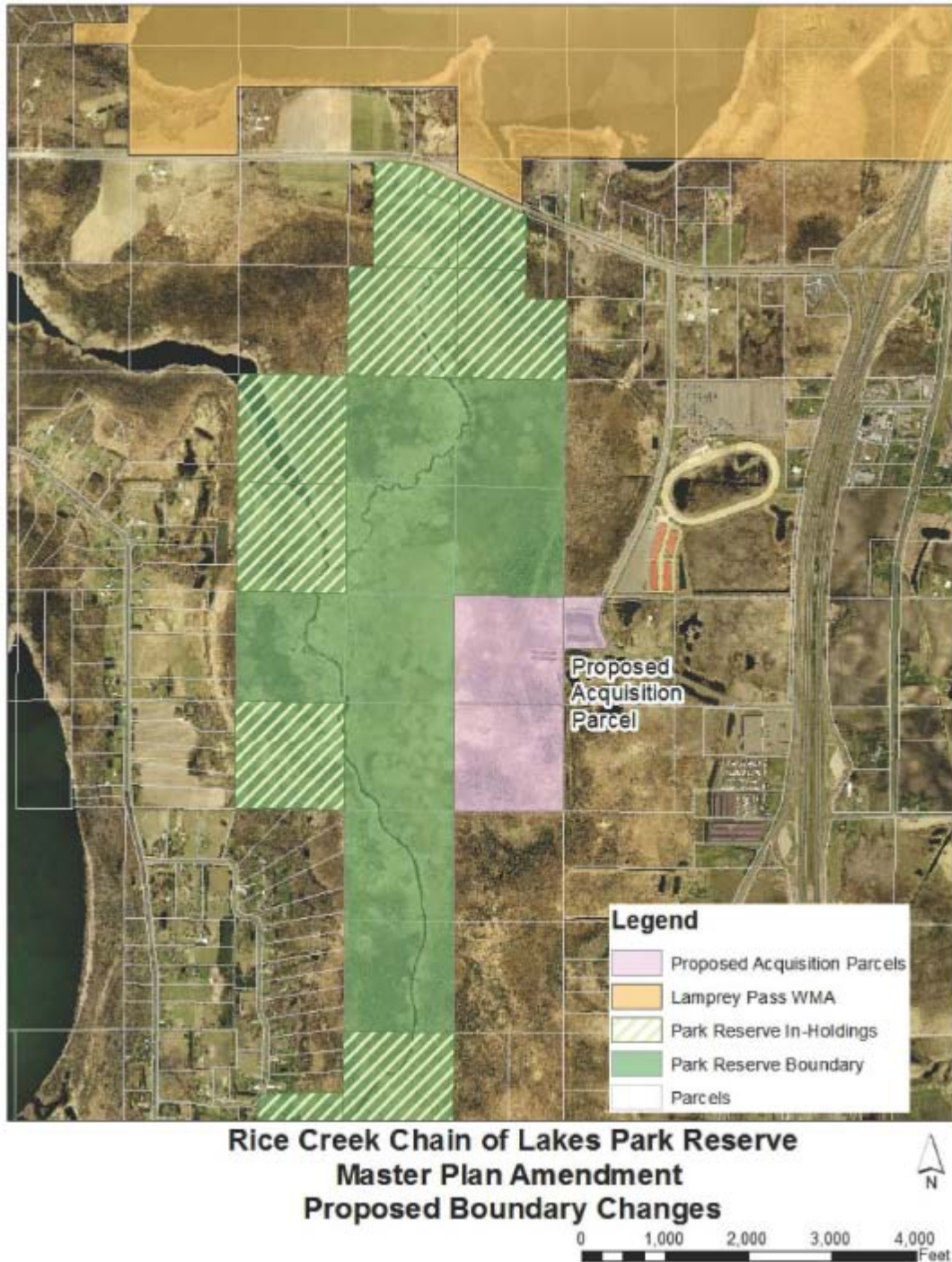
The park reserve is bisected by I-35 W. The master plan amendment proposes adding 87 acres to the park's boundary to that portion of the park north of I-35W to provide public access that area of the park which has not been accessible due to surrounding wetlands and privately owned land. Figure 2 illustrates the park's boundary, I-35 W and the proposed addition.

**Figure 2: Rice Creek Chain of Lakes Park Reserve Boundary and Proposed 87 Acre Addition**



The appraised value of the 87 acres is \$348,000. If this master plan is approved Anoka County will continue its negotiation with the landowner and hopes to acquire the land in 2013. Figure 3 illustrates the 87 acres in context of the park's boundary and acquisition status of other parcels within the existing park boundary.

**Figure 3: Rice Creek Chain of Lakes Park Reserve Proposed Boundary Change**

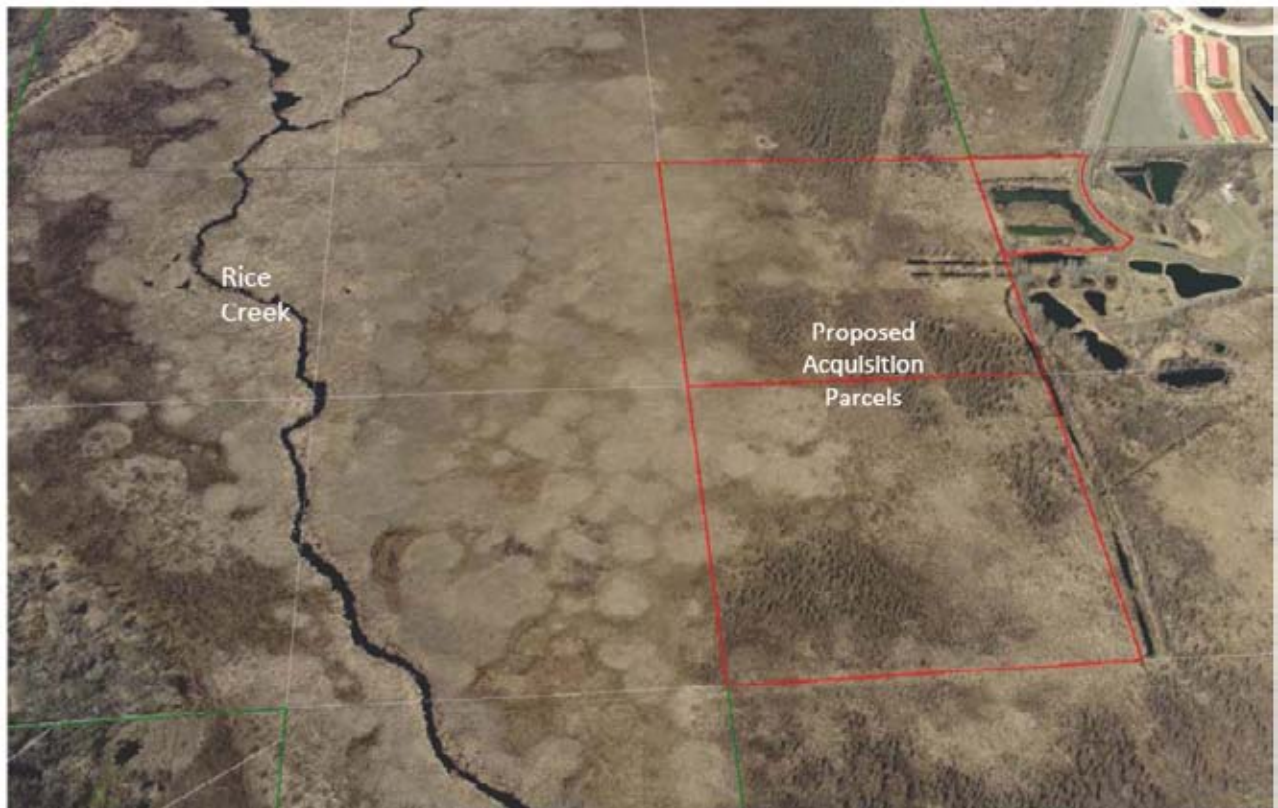




## 2. Stewardship Plan

The park reserve's current management of this area of the park reserve would apply to this proposed addition. The County works with the Rice Creek Watershed District on management of the area to maintain the existing natural habitat and water quality of Rice Creek which flows nearby. Figure 4 illustrates is the addition in relation to Rice Creek.

**Figure 4: Proposed Addition to Rice Creek Chain of Lakes Park Reserve in Relation to Rice Creek**



## 3. Demand Forecast

The population of Anoka County has grown steadily and is predicted to grow an additional 20% by 2030. The City of Columbus where the proposed addition is located is predicted to grow 40% during that time period. Visits to Anoka County's portion of the Metropolitan Regional Park System are currently at 3.2 million per year of which 400,000 visits are to Rice Creek Chain of Lakes Park Reserve.

The MN Dept. of Natural Resource's *Ten Year Forecasts of Minnesota Adult Outdoor Recreation Participation, 2004-2014* forecasts a steady level of participating in walking and hiking outdoors. A 2006 *National Survey of Fishing, Hunting and Wildlife Associated Recreation in Minnesota* report published by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife

Service showed a 52% increase in “viewing wildlife near home” activity from 1996 to 2006. These support the proposed expansion of the park reserve.

#### 4. Development Concept

The plan amendment proposes construction of a 4 car parking area, a natural surfaced loop trail and a concrete sidewalk linkage from the parking area to existing sidewalks for a total cost of \$52,000.

A portion of the proposed parking area would be located on land owned by the City of Columbus. That land also includes a pump house for the city’s municipal water service. Anoka County and the city would enter into a lease agreement to allow the construction of the parking area on city property. Figure 5 illustrates the development concept for this addition to the park reserve.

**Figure 5: Development Concept**



## **5. Conflicts**

The plan amendment noted that the City of Columbus raised concerns about the security of the municipal water supply pump house with vehicle and pedestrian traffic nearby. Anoka County and the City have agreed to examine this matter further if there is an issue.

## **6. Public Services**

The plan notes that no additional public utilities are necessary since existing restroom and visitor facilities are served now.

## **7. Operations**

Anoka County operates and maintains Rice Creek Chain of Lakes Park Reserve. The annual estimated costs of operations and maintenance for the proposed 87 acre addition is \$3,000. This will be financed with a variety of revenue sources including the Anoka County General Fund, picnic shelter and room rentals, program fees, and park entrance fees, plus the State appropriations passed through the Metropolitan Council to each of the 10 regional park implementing agencies.

## **8. Citizen Participation**

There was extensive inter-agency and citizen participation in drafting and reviewing the master plan amendment, which included:

- Reviews of the plan by the City of Columbus, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, MN Dept. of Natural Resources, and Rice Creek Watershed District.
- A community open house on January 18, 2012 to review and comment on the draft plan amendment. Based on those comments revisions to the plan were incorporated into the plan amendment. A summary of public comments is an appendix to the plan.
- Review and approval of the master plan amendment by the Anoka County Parks Commission and Anoka County Board of Commissioners.

## **9. Public Awareness**

The plan notes that Anoka County would work with the Metropolitan Council on increasing the public's awareness of Rice Creek Chain of Lakes Park Reserve. The County also publishes printed and web-based information materials on its regional parks and trails.

## **10. Accessibility**

All facilities proposed in the master plan will be developed in accordance with Americans with Disabilities Act requirements. Rice Creek Chain of Lakes Park Reserve

is located near public transportation routes. Plus the Anoka County "Traveler" transit system provides rides to specific locations for a minimal fee.

## **11. Natural Resources**

The master plan includes an extensive inventory of the natural resource features in the proposed addition to the park reserve. Due to the soil types, wetlands and habitat in the proposed addition, the development plan was created to avoid disturbance to natural resource features while providing access to park visitors to view wildlife and plants in this area of the park reserve.

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

#### **Environmental Services (Roger Janzig)**

Due to the fact that we do not have any facilities within the general vicinity of this project, we have no objections to the Plan Amendment.

#### **Environmental Services (Jim Larsen)**

The plan is complete. I have no comments.

#### **Metropolitan Council Transportation (Ann Braden)**

The plan is complete. I have no comments.

### **CONCLUSIONS:**

1. In conformance with the *Updated 2030 Regional Parks Policy Plan*, the Rice Creek Chain of Lakes Park Reserve Master Plan Amendment (Referral No. 50021-1) provides details on estimated costs related to land acquisition and development of the proposed 87 acre addition to the park reserve to provide visitor access to the park north of I-35W. The master plan amendment is complete and consistent with the requirements for master plans in the *Updated 2030 Regional Parks Policy Plan*.
2. Acquisition of the 87 acres is estimated to cost \$348,000.
3. Development of a 4 car parking area, natural surfaced trail loop and sidewalk extension from the parking area to existing sidewalk is estimated to cost \$52,000. These costs, plus the acquisition described in point 2 are eligible for Metropolitan Council Regional Park Capital Improvement Program (CIP) funding consideration if the master plan amendment is approved by the Metropolitan Council. However, Council approval of the master plan amendment does not obligate future funding from the Regional Parks CIP to finance those costs. Plan approval only allows Anoka County to seek funding for projects in the plan through the Regional Parks CIP.



**RECOMMENDATION:**

That the Metropolitan Council approve the Rice Creek Chain of Lakes Park Reserve Master Plan Amendment (Referral No. 50021-1)

**Attachment 1: Letter from Karen Blaska, Anoka County**



**Anoka County Parks and Recreation**

550 Bunker Lake Boulevard NW, Andover, MN 55304

February 24, 2012

Jan Youngquist, Senior Planner - Parks  
Metropolitan Council  
390 N. Robert St.  
St. Paul, MN 55101

Re: Request to amend the Rice Creek Chain of Lakes Park Reserve Master Plan

Dear Jan:

As you are aware, Rice Creek Chain of Lakes Park Reserve is a 5,500 acre park reserve located in the City of Lino Lakes. The park offers a wide variety of amenities including the Wargo Nature Center, Chomonix Golf Course, Rice Creek Campground, and Centerville Lake Beach. Other amenities include picnic areas, boat launch facilities, biking and hiking trails, playgrounds and a fishing pier.

While the majority of the park reserve and development is located south of Interstate 35W, there is a portion north of the interstate that is not currently accessible. Anoka County has an opportunity to acquire 87 acres of land that would provide an access point to the park reserve north of Interstate 35W. The 87 acres is not part of the current park reserve boundary. Therefore, Anoka County is proposing an amendment to the Rice Creek Chain of Lakes Park Reserve Master Plan to include those 87 acres.

Enclosed with this letter is an amendment to the Rice Creek Chain of Lakes Park Reserve Master Plan. Anoka County respectfully requests that it be reviewed and presented to the Metropolitan Regional Parks and Open Space Commission for recommendation to the Metropolitan Council for approval and adoption.

I look forward to working with you on approval of this amendment. If you have any questions, please contact me at your earliest convenience at 763-767-2865 or [karen.blaska@co.anoka.mn.us](mailto:karen.blaska@co.anoka.mn.us).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Karen Blaska", is written over a circular stamp that contains the text "ANOKA COUNTY".

Karen Blaska  
Park Planner

cc: John VanDeLinde, Director

**OPEN SPACES IN NEARBY PLACES**

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Fax: 763.755.0230