

METROPOLITAN COUNCIL
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DATE: February 7, 2012

TO: Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission

FROM: Jan Youngquist, AICP; Planning Analyst-Parks (651) 602-1029

SUBJECT: (2012-xxx) Cedar Lake Farm Regional Park Master Plan, Scott County
(Referral No. 50017-1)
Metropolitan Parks & Open Space Commission District B (Robert Moeller)

INTRODUCTION

Scott County has submitted the Cedar Lake Farm Regional Park Master Plan for Metropolitan Council review and approval.

The *2030 Regional Parks Policy Plan* (Chapter 2 – Planning Strategy 1), 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 staff report contains a review of the Cedar Lake Farm Regional Park Master Plan based on its consistency with the *2030 Regional Parks Policy Plan* and recommends approval of the master 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 parks 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

The *2030 Regional Parks Policy Plan* that was adopted in 2005 identified a regional park search area in southern Scott County along the shores of Cedar Lake. In 2007, the Metropolitan Council approved Scott County’s Cedar Lake Farm Regional Park Acquisition Master Plan, which allowed the County to seek regional parks funding for acquisition of

land for the regional park. Subsequent land acquisition included property purchased with assistance from Metropolitan Council grants; 173 acres of land acquired at no cost through park dedication associated with the development of an adjacent subdivision; and a donation that came through the Regional Parks Foundation of the Twin Cities.

The regional park is located along the southwestern shore of Cedar Lake in Helena Township, approximately 3 miles northwest of New Prague. A 25-acre portion of the park opened to the public in 2009, which offers public recreation including a swimming beach, fishing shore, community events, picnicking, horse-shoe courts and group camping.

This master plan includes the County's vision for further development of the regional park. The vision is that Cedar Lake Farm Regional Park is a regional destination where:

- Families and groups picnic and play and gather as a community in a picturesque lakeside setting
- People are reconnected with food, from the soil to the table, in a setting that celebrates the site's history as a community gathering locale and farmstead. It's a place to uncover your gardening and cooking skills and to build your capacity to choose, grow and prepare healthy and sustainable food
- Conservation practices have improved wildlife habitat and biological diversity and contributed to improved water quality

Figure 1: Cedar Lake Farm Regional Park Location



MASTER PLAN REVIEW ANALYSIS

The *2030 Regional Parks Policy Plan* requires that regional park master plans address the eleven items listed below.

1. Boundaries and Acquisition Costs

The park boundary that was defined in the 2007 acquisition master plan included 297 acres. As part of the planning process for this development master plan, the park boundary was analyzed for its functional value, including natural resources, development amenities, recreation, vehicular and pedestrian circulation, buffering, cultural resources and viewsheds. Consideration was also given to park operations as well as enforcement of the boundary and lands. Based on this review, the overall acreage of the park has been reduced to 254 acres.

Modifications to the park boundary consist of both additions to, and removal of, lands from the boundary. The master plan proposes adding 13.84 acres of land to the boundary in the northwest corner of the park. This land would be a future park acquisition considered as an inholding. The benefits of adding this land include: buffering of County Road 89, improving the usability of the northernmost park area for amenities, and providing opportunities for woodland restoration. This land is bounded by roads on the north and the west, resulting in a park boundary that is easily identified and managed.

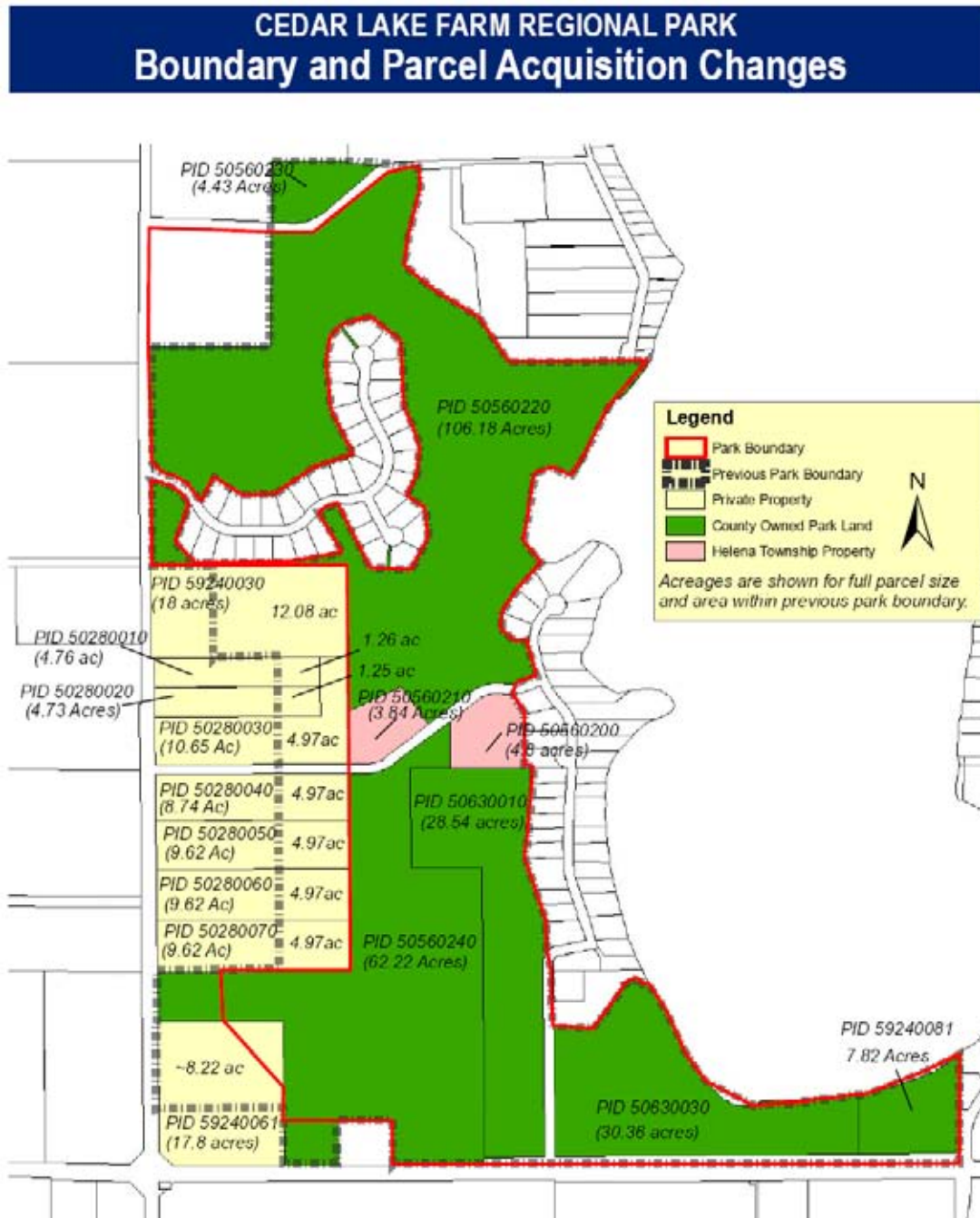
Figure 2: Cedar Lake Farm Regional Park Acreage and Acquisition Changes

PID	Previous Park Acreage By Parcel	Acreage Removed	Acreage Added	New Park Acreage By Parcel
County-owned Park Property				
50560220	106.18			106.18
50630010	28.54			28.54
50630030	30.36			30.36
59240081	7.82			7.82
50560230	4.43	-4.43		0
50560240	62.22	-5.4		56.82
Private Lands (Inholdings)				
50280010	1.26	-1.26		0
50280020	1.25	-1.25		0
50280030	4.97	-4.97		0
50280040	4.97	-4.97		0
50280050	4.97	-4.97		0
50280060	4.97	-4.97		0
50280070	4.97	-4.97		0
59240061	9.62	-8.22		1.4
59240030	12.08	-12.08		0
59130040	0		13.84	13.84
Helena Township Property				
50560200	4.81			4.81
50560210	3.84			3.84
Total	297.26	57.49	13.84	253.61

The master plan also proposes removing 57.49 acres previously included in the park boundary. These lands were found overall to offer low functional value to the park and would present boundary management challenges. Nine of the eleven parcels being removed from the boundary had been identified for partial acquisition, which would have presented challenges in subdivision of the parcels. Scott County currently owns 9.83 acres of the land to be removed from the park boundary, which was acquired through park dedication.

With the revised park boundary, a total of 24 acres remain to be acquired for the park, with a 2012 tax assessed property value of \$221,963.

Figure 3: Cedar Lake Farm Regional Park Boundary Modifications



2. Demand Forecast

The population of Scott County grew by 40,000 residents, or 45 percent, from 2000 to 2010, and is projected to grow by another 90,000 people in the next twenty years, for a total estimated 2030 population of 220,000. This population growth will increase the demand for regional parks and trails.

Scott County examined demographic trends and projections along with outdoor recreation trends and preferences in order to help determine what facilities should be developed at Cedar Lake Farm Regional Park. The County also compiled an inventory of existing and planned park facilities in Scott County and adjacent counties to identify possible recreation gaps that could be filled at Cedar Lake Farm Regional Park. The findings from this review confirmed the appropriateness of the major amenities that are planned for the regional park.

3. Development Concept

Cedar Lake Farm Regional Park has been divided into three development areas, including the North Woods, Market Learning Center and Lakeside Recreation Center.

North Woods: This portion of the park focuses on preserving the site's high quality natural amenities and includes: two wildlife viewing and lake overlooks; 1.5 miles of trail through maple-basswood forest and wetlands with birding and wildflower observation opportunities; and an off-leash dog park.

Figure 4: North Woods Area—Cedar Lake Farm Regional Park



Market Learning Center: This area of the park focuses on the theme: “Food from the Soil to the Table” and includes agricultural demonstration field gardens, restored prairie and wetlands, and a paved trail loop. The Market Learning Center activity area will include:

gardens; orchards; outdoor classrooms; picnic space; as well as a four-season classroom and operations building, which will offer year-round programming as well as food preparation and cooking instruction facilities. Open space around the gardens and building will be used for farmers markets, fairs and festivals.

Figure 5: Market Learning Center—Cedar Lake Farm Regional Park



Lakeside Recreation Area: This area includes the main park entrance and the most recreational development of the park. The beach area will be expanded and a splash pad will be provided to offer a water play feature during times of poor water quality at the swimming beach. Two fishing piers are planned—one located in the active use area and one near the group camp site on the east end of the park. A canoe and kayak launch is planned with a boat house for boats that will be rented onsite as well as rental space for privately owned boats. A dock with day-use slips will be provided for park visitors who arrive by boat.

Near the existing pavilion, the volleyball courts will be upgraded and new horseshoe courts will be added. A playground is also planned, which will have a farm and food theme. Several informal picnicking sites will be located near the beach and playground area.

The existing lakeside gathering area provides space for outdoor weddings, receptions, family reunions, and community events. A large group picnic area will be located to the east, along the south side of the lake.

The existing 1913 dairy barn has become a popular landmark in the area and has sweeping views of Cedar Lake. The barn will serve three primary functions: an indoor large group reservation event site; programming space; and a warming facility to support year-round activities. The upper level of the barn includes a 2,850 square foot open area with capacity for 150 people seated and 460 people standing. Restrooms and a kitchen will be added to support this area as an event gathering space. The lower level of the barn will be restored to serve as a four-season multi-purpose space for events, small gatherings and educational

Figure 6: Lakeside Recreation—Cedar Lake Farm Regional Park



classes. The silo located to the west of the barn can be converted to an elevator if accessibility between the upper and lower levels of the barn is desired in the future. An alternative use for the silo is to convert it to a climbing wall.

The farm house on site was built circa 1900 and is in fair to good condition. Proposed uses for the house include meeting space, overnight lodging, or a bride’s cottage as a support space for wedding parties. The master plan indicates that renovation of the house is based on securing non-County funds and resources, such as partnerships with the Spring Lake Area Alternative Learning Center and the Scott Historical Society. If no progress has been made within five years, the plan calls for demolition of the house.

East of the barn is a large open space for winter recreation, such as sledding, ice skating, snow or ice sculpture activities and trial winter camping. An 18-hole disc golf course will follow the trail system in this area. A group camp site will be located on the easternmost portion of the park, within a maple-basswood forest.

The development outlined in the master plan has been divided into four phases, with a total estimated cost of \$7,494,000, as shown in Figure 7.

Figure 7: Cedar Lake Farm Regional Park Estimated Development Costs

Phase 1 Cedar Lake Farm Regional Park Phasing and Cost Estimate – Site Improvements	
Phase 1 Site Improvement	Cost
Construct playground area and surrounding informal picnic areas	\$300,000
Relocate picnic shelters near lakefront picnic area	\$15,000
Construct canoc/kayak launch	\$25,000
Create patio area on east side of existing pavilion building	\$20,000
Construct fishing pier and boat dock slips	\$90,000
Develop Lakeside gathering ‘Fest Tent Area’	\$20,000
Implement multi-use paved trail circulation (south of 255th Street)	\$292,000
Construct disc golf course elements along southern trail	\$10,000
Construct volleyball and horseshoe courts	\$40,000
Expand beach area	\$10,000
Construct boat house/equipment rental building near canoc/kayak launch	\$100,000
Make barn weather-tight and secure	\$52,000.00
Make homestead weather-tight and secure	\$78,000.00
Phase 1 Total	\$1,052,000

Phase 2 Cedar Lake Farm Regional Park Cost Estimates – Site Improvements	
Phase 2 Site Improvements	Cost
Complete demolition and realignment of Juniper Avenue	\$260,000
Establish entrance road and parking lot on east side of Juniper Avenue	\$710,000
Establish parking lot on the west side of Juniper Avenue to serve as interim trailhead location until Market Learning Center is developed	\$125,000
Implement multi-use paved trail circulation (north of 255th Street)	\$220,000
Relocate out buildings to accommodate parking lot on west side of barn	\$20,000
Establish parking lot on west side of barn	\$240,000
Construct maintenance facility	\$650,000
Renovate Barn- main level and upper floor, including addition of exterior doors, decking and mechanicals	\$628,000
Phase 2 Total	\$2,853,000

Phase 3 Cedar Lake Farm Regional Park and Cost Estimates – Site Improvements	
Phase 3 Site Improvements	Cost
Construct large group picnic area and pavilion on south side of Cedar Lake	\$250,000
Construct restroom facility to serve picnic camper cabin area	\$200,000
Construct road access and parking lot to serve large group picnic area	\$125,000
Establish off leash dog area and parking on north side of park	\$75,000
Develop group camp, associated lakeside gathering area and fishing pier	\$60,000
Renovate homestead main level and upper floor, including mechanicals	\$125,000
Renovate outbuildings	\$175,000
Phase 3 Total	\$1,010,000

Phase 4 Cedar Lake Farm Regional Park Cost Estimates – Site Improvements	
Phase 4 Site Improvements	Cost
Add splash pad water play feature adjacent to beach area	\$80,000
Develop Market Learning Center facility	\$1,250,000
Phase 4 Total	\$1,330,000

Cost Estimates Phases 1-4	
Subtotal	\$6,245,000
20% Contingency	\$1,249,000
Preliminary Cost Estimate Total	\$7,494,000

4. Conflicts

During the planning process, some residents living adjacent to the park expressed concern about interior park trails being located too close to their properties. The conceptual trail alignment was designed based on site topography with buffering using additional landscaping to limit sight and sound disruption for both park users and residents. As plans for the trail are developed, Scott County will notify the adjacent residents as well as the general public and ask for feedback on the plans.

The master plan calls for relocating the main park entrance road to the west by 800 feet. This will improve sight lines, which will increase safety as well as parking and circulation, and will allow the lakeside landscape to be fully maximized with amenities. The road will be moved closer to one residential property, however. As construction plans are developed, public input will be sought, including input from the adjacent property owner. The new road location meets all transportation spacing guidelines and landscaping will be provided for sight and noise buffering.

The park entrance road transitions into a residential road beyond the main park entrance. Residents of this neighborhood are concerned about increased traffic into their subdivision as a result of park visitors continuing along the roadway past the park. The master plan indicates that signage and landscaping will be used to minimize park traffic from continuing into the neighborhood.

5. Public Services

Cedar Lake Farm Regional Park is outside of the current Metropolitan Urban Service Area (MUSA). Public sanitary sewer service is available to a portion of the property through the Cedar Lake Water and Sanitary Sewer District, which is connected to the City of New Prague municipal system. The park has four sanitary sewer connections to provide capacity for all of the planned facilities with the exception of the Market Learning Center, which is outside of the district boundary. Scott County will consult with the district regarding servicing the Market Learning Center through the existing sewer connections during future site planning for the facility.

6. Operations

The Scott County Board of Commissioners is the governing and policy board with jurisdictional and operational authority for Scott County regional parks and trails. In 2010, Scott County and Three Rivers Park District entered into an operating partnership to collaboratively operate the regional parks system facilities in the County. Three Rivers will assist in the operations of regional parks and trails within Scott County.

Scott County's Park Ordinance Number 29 provides for the safe and peaceful use of County parks and trails. This Ordinance is enforced for all users and activities at Cedar Lake Farm Regional Park. The Scott County Sheriff's Office is responsible for patrolling the park. A Sheriff's Deputy or Community Service Officer will respond to calls for service needs. Scott County and Three Rivers are evaluating long-term public safety operations to provide safe, consistent, efficient and cost-effective service.

Maintenance of Cedar Lake Farm Regional Park has been overseen by Scott County. Starting in 2011, under the partnership agreement, Three Rivers Park District also provides maintenance and will have an expanded role in carrying out maintenance in the future.

7. Citizen Participation

Scott County formed a Citizen Design Team (CDT) made up of volunteers who actively participated in all aspects of the planning process. The CDT met monthly from July 2010 to March 2011 to evaluate park needs, identify unique features of the site and refine the design concepts.

A public planning workshop was held in August 2010, at which residents shared their knowledge related to the site and were able to ask questions and share concerns. Approximately 48 residents participated. This workshop followed a public policy workshop that was facilitated by the Citizens League. The workshop was set up like a focus group to engage discussion regarding opinions on the park and trail system overall. Two field trips to Cedar Lake Farm were held in September and October 2010: one for the CDT and one for the public. Approximately 25 people participated in the field trip. The final resident input process came at a public open house on February 17, 2011 where the preferred park concept was presented. Approximately 58 people attended.

8. Public Awareness

Scott County uses a variety of resources to promote its park and trail system, including:

- Scott County SCENE newsletter
- Press releases
- Brochures, newsletters and direct mailings
- County website as well as city/township park and recreation websites
- Regional park and trail maps
- Advertisements in recreation and tourism publications
- GoScottGo.org website
- Potential collaboration with Three Rivers Park District marketing as part of the new partnership agreement between these two agencies

9. Accessibility

The master plan states that Scott County is committed to providing activities, access and resources for all park visitors, including people with disabilities and members of special population groups. Scott County supports equal access for all users to its facilities. Park facilities will be designed to meet or exceed ADA guidelines and will be aligned to accommodate a wide range of user groups. Current County policies strive to keep park, trail and open space facilities affordable for all residents.

10. Natural Resources

Cedar Lake Farm Regional Park is located within a Regional Conservation Corridor as identified by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. These conservation corridors are targeted for habitat protection throughout the seven-county metropolitan area. Additionally, conservation planning conducted by Scott County in 2007 identified a majority of the park to be within the County's Natural Area Corridors.

The existing land cover at the park consists of forests, woodland, grasslands, wetland, agricultural lands and rural development, as described in Figure 8 and mapped in Figure 9. There are no sites of biological significance or native plant communities within the park.

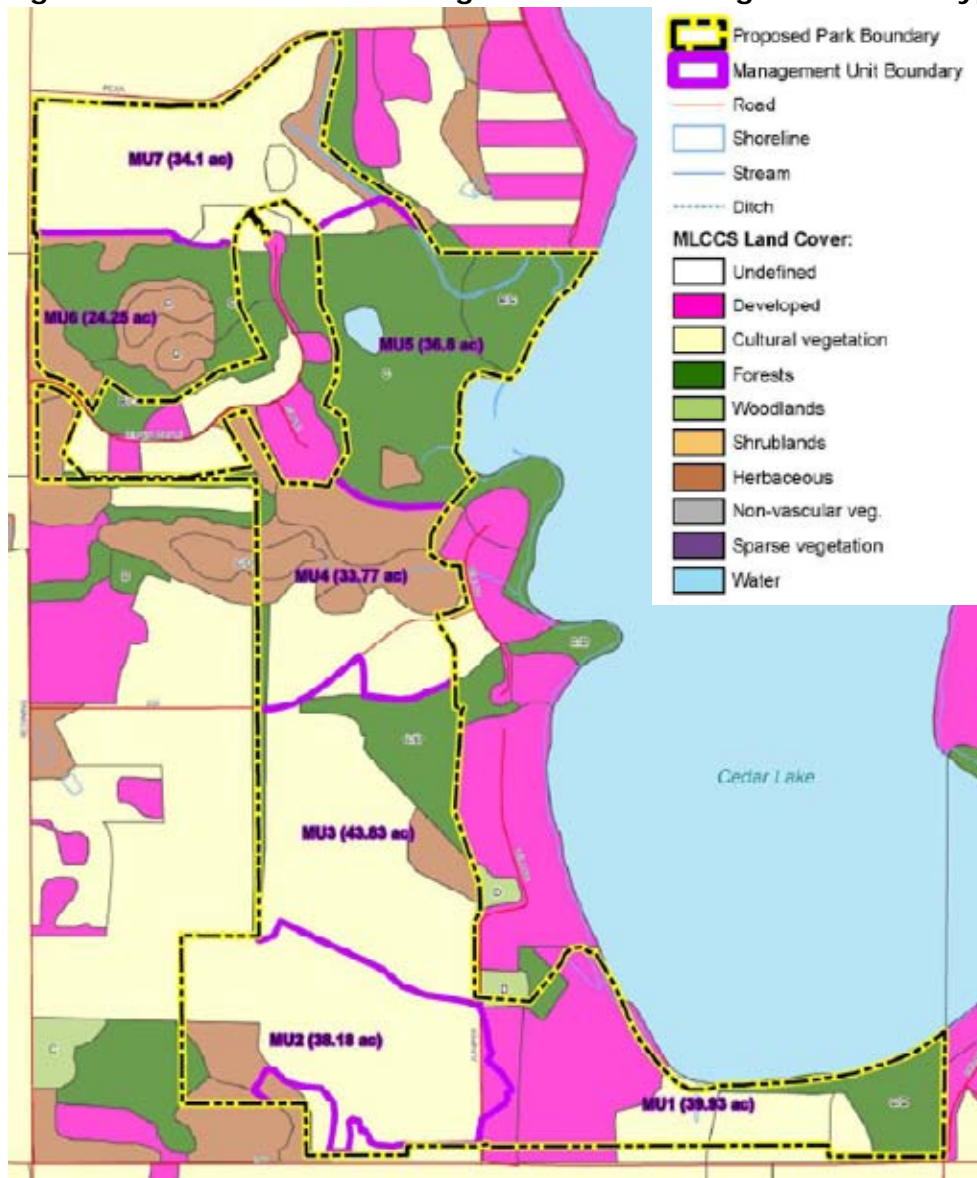
Cedar Lake has long been identified as having poor water quality and is listed by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency as an impaired water. A preliminary draft Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) study was completed to diagnose the factors contributing to the impaired condition. The study identified phosphorous as the primary nutrient of

concern. A draft TMDL Implementation Plan has been completed by the Scott Watershed Management Organization to address phosphorous loads.

Figure 8: Cedar Lake Farm Regional Park Major Land Cover Types

Land Cover Type	Acres	Percent of Park
Developed Areas (impervious surfaces, lawn, etc.)	18.89	8%
Planted Vegetation (e.g., crops, hayfield, pasture)	120.09	48%
Forests (closed canopy)	67.98	27%
Woodlands (moderate canopy)	0.36	0%
Shrublands (including shrub swamps)	0.00	0%
Herbaceous (including upland grasslands and non-forested wetlands)	42.27	17%
Open Water	1.25	0%
Total		100

Figure 9: Cedar Lake Farm Regional Park Existing Land Cover Types



The park's major natural resource issue is habitat fragmentation and deterioration in habitat quality. Restoring native ecosystems, enhancing degraded habitats, addressing invasive species infestations, providing ecological connections, and protecting and buffering core habitats are critical to maximize the conservation benefits of the regional park.

11. Stewardship Plan

The master plan includes a very detailed Natural Resources Management Plan, which is based on the following goals for the park:

- Restore the diversity, beauty and ecological integrity of native terrestrial and aquatic plant communities
- Improve habitat for desirable wildlife
- Improve the ecological functioning of the park and mitigate impacts of park development on natural systems by integrating ecological restoration with development
- Develop an ecological stewardship program for restoration and perpetual management of the park's natural areas
- Complement efforts to restore Cedar Lake

The Natural Resources Management Plan divided the park into seven management units and delineated the natural resource restoration and management tasks and schedules by unit. The estimated natural resource management and restoration costs are approximately \$940,651. These costs assume that contractors would carry out these activities. Scott County's management approach utilizes volunteers and Sentence to Serve crews, which can substantially reduce these costs.

REVIEW BY OTHER COUNCIL DIVISIONS:

Community Development – Environment and Surface Water Management (Jim Larsen 651-602-1159) – Wetland restoration is indicated to be a Management Unit 2 project. The location of the wetland proposed to be restored is in the southwest corner of the park. Some of the drained wetland, however, is located on adjacent properties to the west of the proposed park boundary, on privately owned land. While Council staff is supportive of the proposed plan, the document appears to be silent on what discussions/arrangements have been or will need to be made with those adjacent landowners for their 'buy-in' of the planned disabling of drainage tiles and other earthwork necessary to restore the hydrology to previously drained wetland. Additionally, it would also be preferable to restore native plant communities around the entire wetland basin, and not just the portion within the proposed park boundary.

Scott County Response: The County is working with the Scott Soil and Water Conservation District and the two owners of the properties where the wetland is located to implement this project. The property owner to the north (PID 50280070) is fully in support of restoring the wetland. The property owner to the south (PID 59240061) hasn't said no, but isn't very interested in the project being on his property. However, the property of this individual is adjacent to 2.5 acres of park land along CR 2 that is being removed from the park boundary (see Boundary and Acquisition Plan). He has expressed an interest in purchasing a portion of this area from the County and an interest in selling to the County the portion of his current property where the restored wetland is identified. Given the County's interest in modifying the park

boundary and in creation of the wetland and the private landowner interests, this appears to be an approach that will benefit all of the involved parties.

Environmental Services – Sewers (Roger Janzig 651-602-1119) – No concerns.

Transportation Planning (Ann Braden 651-602-1705) – No concerns.

CONCLUSIONS:

1. The Cedar Lake Farm Regional Park Master Plan is consistent with the requirements of the *2030 Regional Parks Policy Plan* and other Council policies.
2. The estimated costs to implement the master plan are \$8,656,614, which includes \$221,963 in estimated acquisition costs, \$7,494,000 in estimated development costs, and \$940,651 in estimated natural resource management and restoration costs.
3. The master plan adjusts the boundary of the park from 297 acres to 254 acres and proposes the sale of 9.83 acres of County-owned property that is not necessary to the function of the park. This land was acquired through parks dedication associated with the development of an adjacent subdivision and does not have a recorded restrictive covenant between the Metropolitan Council and Scott County limiting its use to regional recreation open space. Therefore, the terms of the *2030 Regional Parks Policy Plan* regarding the release of restrictive covenants does not apply. Since the sale of this land may result in net proceeds to Scott County, and there are acquisition and development costs associated with implementation of the master plan, Council staff recommends that these proceeds be reinvested in Cedar Lake Farm Regional Park.
4. 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) and Land Acquisition Opportunity Fund. Council action is required to approve the CIP and to approve specific grants to Scott County.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the Metropolitan Council:

1. Approve the Cedar Lake Farm Regional Park Master Plan, Scott County (Referral No. 50017-1)
2. Recommend that proceeds from the sale of County-owned land that is being removed from the boundary of the park be reinvested in land acquisition or development for Cedar Lake Farm Regional Park.