



# HOK-SI-LA PARK MASTER PLAN

LAKE CITY, MINNESOTA  
2019



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## Stakeholder Recognition

Hok-Si-La Park is a special place to many residents, groups, and visitors. The planning team would like to acknowledge and thank all of you for providing input and feedback through this planning process.

## City of Lake City Officials:

### **City Council**

Mayor Mark Nichols

Amy Alkire

Russell Boe

Faye Brown

Jason DeVinny

Cindy McGrath

Philip Gartner

### **Streets & Parks Commission**

Larry Flater

Darrell Peterson

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The Streets & Parks Commission recommended the Hok-Si-La Park Master Plan for adoption on May 21, 2019.

The plan was adopted by the City Council on June 10, 2019



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## Overview

Hok-Si-La is a 252-acre, municipally-owned and -operated park located in Lake City, Minnesota on the western shores of Lake Pepin. The park offers spectacular views of the Mississippi River, Lake Pepin, and the surrounding bluffs. Visitors enjoy the Mississippi River through tent camping, cabin camping, public boat launch, or enjoying the park's sandy beach. The park encompasses over a mile long stretch of the Mississippi River shoreline and includes an interpretive center, dining hall, screened shelters, a playground, volleyball and basketball courts, picnic areas, and a small chapel.

The park office is located within the interpretive center, which includes tourist information, a small store, a park history exhibit, and flora and fauna found along Mississippi River. The park is open year-round for general use and seasonally for camping, park buildings, and facilities (mid-April through mid-October). The park also includes hiking trails, bird watching, and groomed cross-country ski trails during the winter months.

## Park Users

Hok-Si-La Park includes a diverse set of user groups, including Lake City residents, regional visitors, surrounding Schools, 4-H clubs, local family reunions, birthday parties, weddings, company picnics, service organizations, church groups, and outdoor organizations.

## The Goals of this Master Plan are to:

- » Create a vision for the park and identify strategies to achieve that vision.
- » Review the current state of Hok-Si-La Park.
- » Represent current community values, recreation needs, and desires.
- » Address recreation, interpretation, and natural resource management in an integrated process.
- » Guide future investment in the park.
- » Meet Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission requirements for Regional Park Master Plans.



*The tree lined entry road to Hok-Si-La Park*



*Views of Lake Pepin from the park*

## Planning Process

The Consultant and Staff Plan Committee met periodically throughout the process to develop analysis, concept alternatives, and a preferred concept.

### Developing the Plan with Community Input

This plan has been developed with community input at different stages in the process. In the summer of 2018 a community survey was broadcast to Lake City residents and park users as well as stakeholder groups and regular guests from out of town. Surveys were available online and in paper format at the park. This initial survey returned 166 responses, the findings of which can be found on pages 18-19.

Using the input generated from the first round of outreach, three plan alternatives were developed to evaluate the community's appetite for different levels of intensity of development, as well as to test certain elements. These plans were presented in an open house on January 17th, 2019, and an online version of the open house was also made available for people who were not able to attend the meeting but wanted to provide feedback. The open house hosted approximately 60 people, and another 21 provided online feedback.

Throughout the process, City Staff have been engaging visitors in discussions about what they like and don't like about the park today, and what they would like to see in the park in the future.

The City and Consultant team is very grateful to the Lake City and Hok-Si-La Park community for their input about the future of the park. The plan is better for it, and we have aimed to make it reflect the ideas, desires, and concerns expressed.

*In-person and "virtual" open houses allowed for community review of different ideas and plan concepts.*





# 02. REGIONAL CONTEXT

Hok-Si-La Park is located in south-eastern Minnesota along the Mississippi River at the midpoint of Lake Pepin. The park sits within the northern part of the City of Lake City, which is located on U.S. Highway 61 and State Highway 63, about 70 miles southeast of Saint Paul and about 45 miles north of Rochester. The park covers over a mile of the western shore, about half-way between the two ends of Lake Pepin. Hok-Si-La Park is located approximately two miles south of Frontenac State Park and just over a mile north of downtown Lake City.

Hok-Si-La Park comprises approximately 252 acres adjacent to the Mississippi River. The park is surrounded by residential, agricultural, and business district land uses as well as natural features that restrict expansion and limit accessibility to the park. The park's west side is bounded by Highway 61 and a rail line, and the south side of the park is bounded by Central Point Road and a row of residential housing on the south shore of the point. The only public access by road to the park is via



Existing bike trails include the Mississippi River Trail (running from the headwaters of the Mississippi south to New Orleans)



Cyclists prepare to ride out from Hok-Si-La



Located on the Mississippi Flyway, the park sees significant seasonal bird traffic

## Regional Significance

Hok-Si-La Park has been given a “high” rating as a Natural Resource Based Regional Park in District 6 by the Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission (GMRPTC) through the Step 1 Scoring System. This master plan will allow further evaluation for inclusion into the Greater Minnesota Regional Park and Trail System through the Step 2 Scoring System.

Hok-Si-La Park fits with the GMRPTC definition as a Natural Resource Based Regional Park by “providing high quality outdoor recreational opportunities in a natural and scenic setting.”

This Master Plan describes the ways Hok-Si-La meets the GMRPTC criteria by:

- » Providing a High-Quality Outdoor Recreation Experience
- » Preserving a Regionally-Significant and Diverse Natural or Historic Landscape
- » Serving a Regional Population and as a Tourist Destination
- » Filling a Gap in Recreational Opportunity within the Region

Hok-Si-La Park Drive off of Highway 61. The north and east sides of the park are bounded by Lake Pepin and the Mississippi River.

Hok-Si-La Park is mostly floodplain, approximately 186-acres of the 252-acre park, and is the first notable feature as you approach the park from Highway 61. Several vantage points from within the upland portions of the park offer great views across Lake Pepin and the Mississippi River Valley.

Hok-Si-La Park also serves as a riverfront park for Lake City and a rest stop for bicyclists traveling the Mississippi River Trail, stretching from Lake Itasca to the Gulf of Mexico. It will soon be a resting stop for even more bicyclists and pedestrians using the Mississippi Blufflands Trail. The new trail will connect Red Wing to Lake City, a 17-mile stretch paralleling Highway 61 and the western shore of the Mississippi River. A Lake City trailhead location has been identified near the Hok-Si-La Park entrance. The land for the trailhead is across Highway 61 from the park and is not owned by the City. The trail segment construction is planned to start in 2020.

	Location	Lake Pepin Campgrounds & Trailer	Lake Pepin Campground (WI)	Roschen Park	Ohuta Park	Gold Star Mothers Park	Lake City Concourse	Lewis McChail Memorial Park	Hok-Si-La Park	Barn Bluff	Byllesby Park	Maiden Rock Bluff (WI)	Rush River Delta (WI)	Frontenac State Park
	<b>Type</b>	Private	Private	Local	Local	Local	Local	Local	Regional	Regional	Regional	State DNR	State DNR	State
	<b>Acres</b>	N/A	N/A	~4.5	~2.5	~1	~1.5	~1.5	~256	~58	~620	~263	~400	~2,300
	<b>Distance to Hok-Si-La (miles)</b>	.75	27	3	2	1.5	2.5	2.5	0	14	41	35		6
Trails	Hiking/Walking			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	Cross-country Skiing								X			X	X	X
Lodging	Tent Camping	X	X						X		X			X
	RV Camping	X	X								X			X
	Camper Cabins								X					
Active	Beach/Swimming				X				X		X			
	Boat Access			X					X		X			
	Event Space								X		X			X
Natural	Lake / River			X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X
	Wetlands								X		X		X	X
	Upland Forest								X	X	X	X		X

# 03. PARK HISTORY



## Reference Sources:

### Geological Sources:

- » Formation and early history of Lakes Pepin and St. Croix of the upper Mississippi River, Dylan J. Blumentritt, Herbert E. Wright, Vania Stefanova
- » Educational Series 7. Geologic History of Minnesota Rivers H.E. Wright, Jr., University of Minnesota, Saint Paul, 1990

### Settlement History Sources:

- » "History." Pepin County, WI, 2018, [www.visitpepincounty.com/history/](http://www.visitpepincounty.com/history/)
- » The Ghost Towns and Discontinued Post Offices of Goodhue County, Roy Willard Meyer, 2003
- » Hok-Si-La has Come a Long Way to Get Back Where It Was, Central Point News Paper, 1981
- » "Hok-Si-La Municipal Park" Informational Map, Lake City

## Formation of Lake Pepin and Hok-Si-La Park Area

The upper Mississippi River, Lake Pepin, and the Hok-Si-La Park area first began to take form as Ice Age glaciers retreated. Streams forming from melting glacial water spread gravel and sand into outwash plains and valley deposits. Large quantities of outwash sediment along the Mississippi River south of St. Paul caused back flooding in surrounding tributaries. This flooding produced flat floors and low drainage divides, leaving upland islands and forming the Frontenac bluffs along the edge of Lake Pepin.

## Native American Settlement

Indigenous people were living here for thousands of years before the first European explorers ventured into the region. While there is no written record of pre-contact inhabitation, artifacts, oral history, and the records of the first European explorers and settlers make it known that tribes inhabited the Frontenac bluffs along Lake Pepin and the Hok-Si-La Park area. Evidence has been found of Native Americans living within what is now Hok-Si-La Park.

**540-240 Million Years Ago**

Seas form the sandstone and other rock formations that shape the Mississippi River Valley

**~10,000 Years Ago**

Glacial rivers are flowing and shaping the Upper Mississippi River Valley

Native American Tribes make use of the area's resources and at different times settle along Lake Pepin

**1680**

Father Hennepin  
Camps on the  
banks of Lake Pepin

## 1800s and 1900s

The land currently known as Hok-Si-La Park has undergone several transitions since the mid-1800's. In the early 1890's the residents of Central Point township worked to establish a live-in site for alcoholics along Lake Pepin. John G. Woolley, with the help of Mrs. E. A. Russell and Etta Thompson, acquired the land in 1891 and established Rest Island, a temperance rehabilitation center. In its prime Rest Island included a Hotel, an inn, a post office, a pavilion, several cottages, and a small farm.

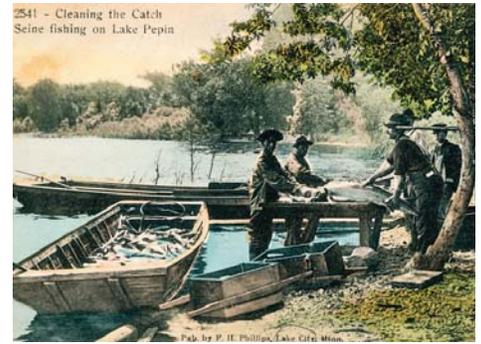
After 3 years of operation the temperance colony had collapsed due to economic hardships. Rest Island continued to operate as a summer resort under the ownership of Etta Thompson and was used to host interdenominational religious conventions for several years. Thompson reinvested into the now commercial resort, laying out parks, lawns, drives, and boulevards. In order to help pay for the improvements she charged a 10 cents admission fee as well as a free-will offering.

In 1910 Lake Pepin Country Club was established on the site of Rest Island, serving wealthy residents of the Red Wing and Lake City area, along with members from places like the Twin Cities, Rochester, Chicago – and two from Muskogee, Okla.

The next tenant of Rest Island (Hok-Si-La Park) was the headquarters for the Nihart's Fish Company, a commercial fishing and clamming company in 1918. However, the low-lying land in Hok-Si-La Park and torrential rain caused substantial flooding in the following year causing the land to change uses again. A Silver Fox Farm, a business incorporating local investors, operated on Rest Island from 1919 to 1947. Within this same time period there may well have been other farming operations on Rest Island.

Between 1948 and 1952, the Boy Scouts purchased the lakeshore farm land. After holding a contest to name their new camp, the name Hok-Si-La, a Native American word meaning "boy," rose to the top. In 1973 the Boy Scouts moved the location of their camp to another site allowing the land to be acquired by Lake City.

Hok-Si-La Park began formally with the transition from the Game Haven Area Boy Scout Foundation in June of 1973. The park was purchased by Lake City for \$385,000 using a combination of 50% federal funds, 25% state funds, and 25% City funds. The park was, and still is, considered to be "some of the most beautiful land located in the Mississippi River Valley" (Environmental Impact Statement, Resolution for Acquisition of Camp Hok-Si-La).



A postcard shows the fish and mussel harvest in Lake City along Lake Pepin  
Source: Lake City Historical Society



While no longer a Boy Scout camp, Hok-Si-La still hosts some Boy Scout ceremonies and has been the site of Eagle Scout projects





## General Operations

Lake City funds and operates Hok-Si-La Park through park revenues and the City's General Fund. The General Fund is responsible for general government, public safety, streets, parks, pool, and summer recreation. The primary source of the General Fund is property taxes with some support from local governmental aid. Over the past 5 years Hok-Si-La Park has operated with about 85% cost recovery through campsite and camper cabin rentals, firewood and concession sales, building and shelter rentals for events, and suggested donations for day use. (For comparison, the rest of the parks operate with approximately 7% cost recovery and the Swimming Pool is around 53%.)

It is also worth noting that the general policy of the park is to provide references for businesses in town for catering or for campers looking for dining options, rather than providing a more robust concessions program.

## Park Staff & Maintenance

The Hok-Si-La Park's manager is a unique position. The manager is required to live in a house located within the park and takes on a large number of responsibilities including security, guest host and information, maintenance, promotion, cleaning and management of the other staff. With seasonal changes in park use, the manager may work three times as much during the summer compared with the winter.

The park has one full-time maintenance employee. The maintenance position, receiving help from the park manager and part-time seasonal staff, is responsible for mowing, beach grooming, facility cleaning (bathroom, dining hall, camper cabins), wood cutting, trash collection, tree trimming, and trail repair.

Seasonal staff work at Hok-Si-La Park during the summer months when camping and other use is much higher. They provide support to the park manager and maintenance work.

The Park also benefits from volunteer efforts by groups such as the Lion's Club and the Kiwanis Club, which help get the park ready at the start of the season, or the occasional scouting project.

## Enforcement and Security

Overnight camping visitors are informed of park and beach rules and regulations by the park manager upon check-in. Park rules are listed on the City's website, and signs and informational brochures located within the park visitor center provide visitors with specific information about hours, trails, permitted and prohibited activities, and directions. Guests are also informed of park rules at check-in. Locking gates at the roads to the camping areas allows the park manager to open and close the park during operating hours and keep the park and visitors secure.

The park manager is the first responder for complaints, concerns, and emergency within the park. Working with campers at the time of booking to outline expectations, and developing relationships with repeat park users has helped staff prevent many problems before they arise.

When necessary, local law enforcement and public safety agencies are responsible for emergency and criminal complaints within the park. Hok-Si-La coordinates with the Goodhue County Mounted Sheriff's Posse and the Lake City Police Department.



*Left: Staff clears the beach for the 4th of July*

*Top Right: Kiwanis Club and Lion's Club volunteers help get the dining hall ready at the start of the season.*

*Bottom Right: Lake City Streets and Parks employees preparing the campsites*



# 05. EXISTING CONDITIONS & INVENTORY

## Physical Development Assessment

### Structures

#### *Visitor Center*

The visitor center is the first point for overnight guest check in, as well as the location where staff can usually be found. The center includes the staff desk, a small interpretive area, and a spot to buy basics such as ice and sunscreen. The building also houses the maintenance rooms for the park on the north side.

#### *Dining Hall*

The Dining Hall overlooks Lake Pepin and serves as the reception hall for many of the events that take place at Hok-Si-La. Recently renovated, the building contains a spacious kitchen, a fireplace, restrooms, and can accommodate 200 guests.

#### *Host's House*

The host's house is the home for the park's caretaker. It is in generally good condition and is the only winterized building on the site.

#### *Showerhouses*

The showerhouses and restrooms serve both campers as well as day users. Centrally located, they are amenities that add to the convenience and comfort of park users.

#### *Chapel*

The Chapel was built during the park's time as a boyscout camp. It currently serves as the site for weddings and other ceremonies, and also serves as an outdoor classroom.

#### *Picnic Shelters*

There are three screened-in picnic shelters in the main activity area. They are serviced with electricity and are available for rental. They can be reserved a year in advance, and because they are in high demand are often claimed that far in advance for the summer months.



*The interpretive area at the visitor center*



*The Chapel is aging, but remains a well-used facility for ceremonies*



Existing Conditions Hok Si La Park



One of six camper cabins

### Camping

*Sleeping Cabins*

Six recently built sleeping cabins have been very popular. Cabins have two twin over queen beds and air conditioning, heat and electricity. There are no restrooms or kitchens in the cabins, which helps park staff turn over the cabins.

### *Campgrounds*

The park has a variety of 37 group and individual campsites, which are located along the park drives, north and south of the main activity area. There are fire rings, picnic tables, and places to pitch tents at each site. Campers are allowed to access the sites by vehicle to drop off supplies, but are not allowed to keep their automobiles at the campsites.

### Play

#### *Playground*

The current playground is a popular feature at the park. It is a larger playground with standard features.



The Beach

#### *Beach*

The beach is a well used, loved part of Hok-Si-La Park. Because Lake Pepin's water levels vary greatly, the beach is not available when flooding occurs and may be smaller or bigger depending on the time of the year. The City maintains and grooms the beach to manage sticks, logs, rocks, and trash that may be left by the river as the water recedes. There is a concrete pad at the beach that is currently unused. The beach is accessed via a steep bituminous path in poor condition.

#### *Courts*

There is a sand volleyball court and a concrete basketball court, both located in the main activity area, and both of which are used regularly by both day users as well as overnight guests.

### Roads/Parking

#### *Entry Road*

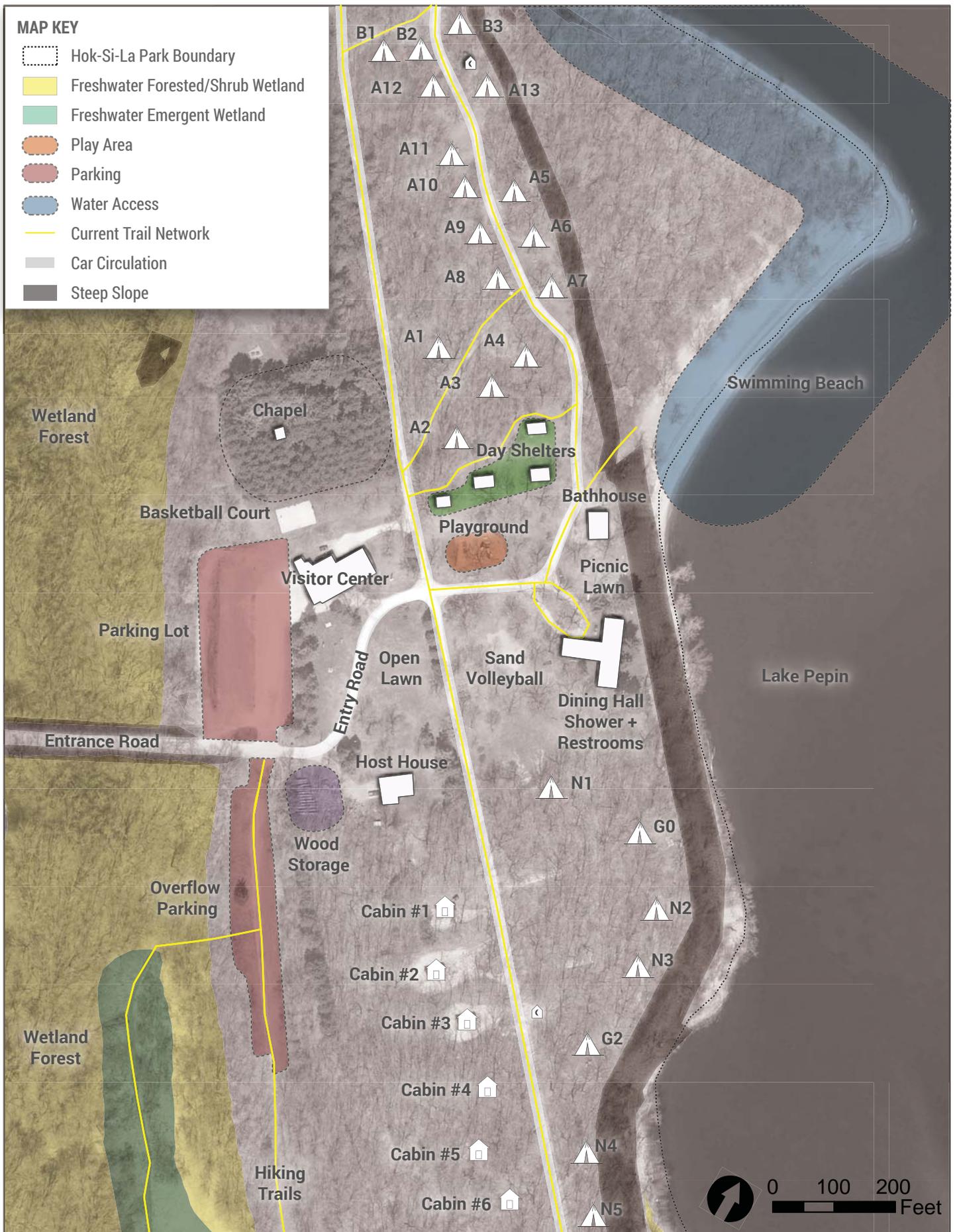
The entry road creates a unique and beautiful entry experience for anyone entering the park. Trees overhang the bituminous road and a bridge crosses over a wetland. Having one access point helps the park staff keep tabs on who all is at the park.



Entry Road

#### *Campground Roads*

Gravel roads provide access to the campsites, but vehicles are not allowed to remain at the campsites and must be moved to the campground parking lot. These roads handle a low volume of traffic and thus function as safe walking trails for visitors as well.



Existing Conditions Hok Si La Park



While the park has approximately 250 acres, the actual programmable land is approximately 1/4 of that. The areas in blue are wet at least part of the year (and very buggy at other parts of the year) and not suitable for physical development. The areas in red are generally dedicated camping areas and do not see high levels of use outside of campers, runners, walkers, and skiers. The two areas in yellow are the main activity areas of the park. These include the boat ramp on the north, and the central campus area in the middle. These areas represent about 10% of the park.

### Parking

The main parking lot is easy to see immediately upon entry to the main part of the park. The lot is gravel and holds approximately 125 cars. Because it is unstriped, it is not used as efficiently as it could be.

An overflow parking area south of the main road can accommodate up to 90 additional vehicles. During the weekends in the summer both parking lots are filled.

### Boat Ramp

The City and the MN DNR maintain a cooperative agreement to operate a boat ramp at Hok-Si-La. The boat ramp area is generally separated from the main park. It has its own entrance and only connects by water via an informal back road that connects near Highway 61. The ramp area has a boat ramp, a vault toilet, a picnic shelter, and parking for 29 cars and 52 trailered vehicles.

## Programming Assessment

### Organized User Groups

Several user groups are recurring users of Hok-Si-La Park. Many have cultivated relationships with the park over the years. These groups are an asset to the park as they have generally taken care of the park as their own and are consistent customers for the camping program.

### Overnight Campers

In addition to organized groups, many users come to the park to camp as individuals or smaller groups. Some of these campers are long time users of the park, while others are camping here for the first time.

### Day Visit Users

Hok-Si-La Park is also remarkably popular with residents of Lake City and the surrounding area. Most of the day use is from visitors using the beach and the playground. There is also a high demand for the enclosed picnic shelters for events such as family reunions, graduation parties, etc. During the winter, snowshoers and skiers utilize the trails.

### Boaters

The boat ramp on the north end of the park attracts a different set of day users who may not interact with the larger park. The ramp is a popular spot to put in/take out boats for the Mississippi River and Lake Pepin.

### Hok-Si-La Park Program Use Rates by Season

Park Feature or Program	Winter	Spring	Summer	Fall
Educational Programming	Minimal/No Use	Minimal/No Use	Some Use	Minimal/No Use
Birding	Minimal/No Use	Minimal/No Use	Some Use	Some Use
Boating/Jet Skis	Minimal/No Use	Minimal/No Use	Some Use	Minimal/No Use
Camping	Minimal/No Use	Minimal/No Use	Some Use	Minimal/No Use
Playground	Minimal/No Use	Minimal/No Use	Some Use	Minimal/No Use
Beach	Minimal/No Use	Minimal/No Use	Some Use	Minimal/No Use
Weddings	Minimal/No Use	Minimal/No Use	Some Use	Minimal/No Use
Hiking	Some Use	Some Use	Some Use	Some Use
Skiing	Peak Use	Peak Use	Minimal/No Use	Minimal/No Use
Snowshoeing	Peak Use	Peak Use	Minimal/No Use	Minimal/No Use

Peak Use	
Some Use	
Minimal/No Use	

### Events

The Park hosts a number of events, ranging from Weddings to cross country running races. These events bring people to the park in larger numbers for a fixed period of time. They also increase awareness of the park but have different staffing requirements than other typical uses in the park..

### Seasonal Programming

Much of the park's use comes between Memorial Day and Labor Day. During the summer the park is highly used and there is not much additional capacity for new programming. Both day and overnight uses are typically full on summer weekends.

Staffing is reduced during the winter and consists of the caretaker on a part-time basis. Currently all buildings are not available for use during the winter.

### Revenue Generating Programming

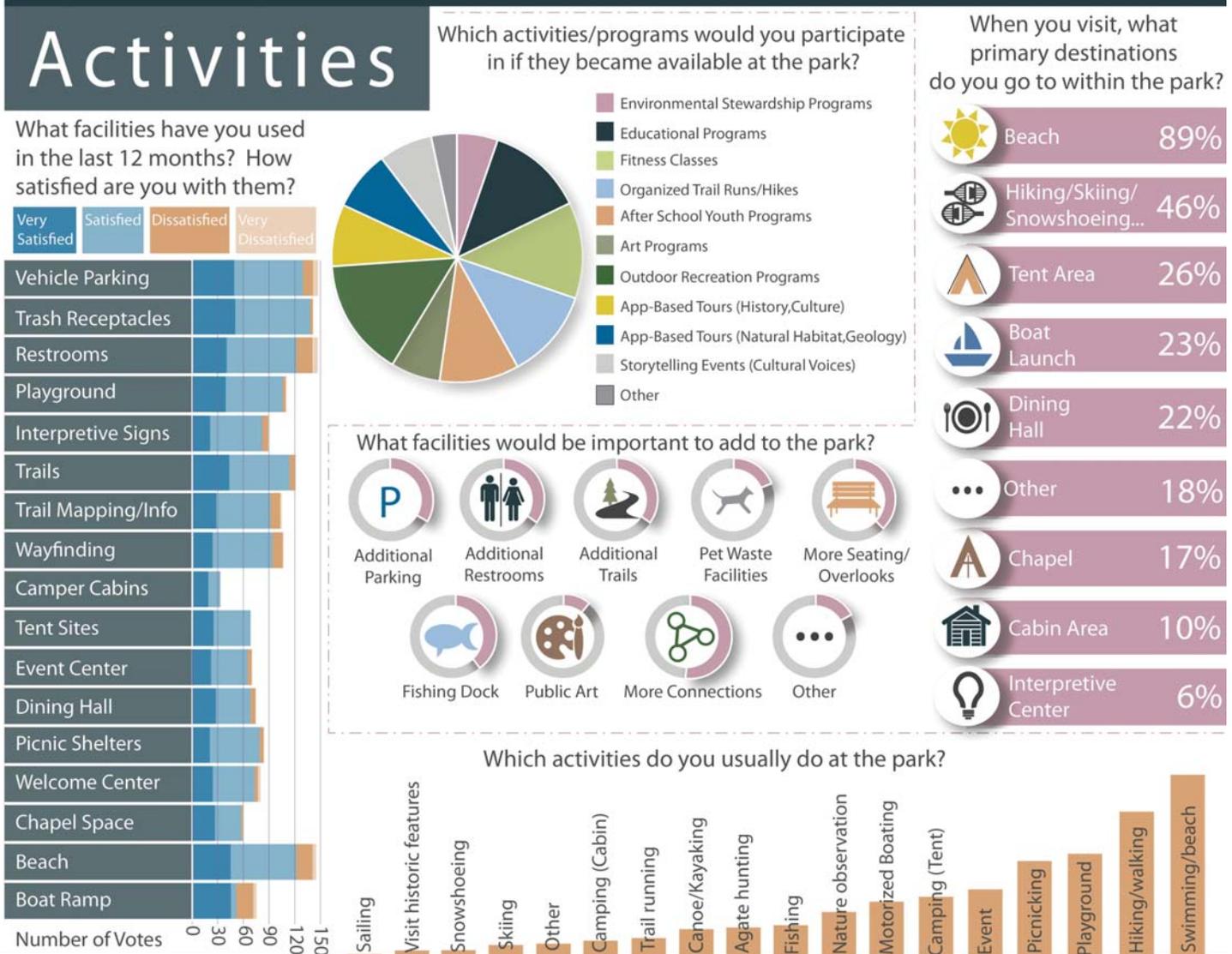
The park includes a mix of free and paid activities. This is appropriate given its role as a park for residents as well as a regional draw. Generally, fees are charged for those activities that either require additional staff time and/or restrict the ability of others to use a part of the park. For example, camper cabins are exclusively reserved for use by the camper that reserved the facility. No one else can use that cabin for the duration of the camper's stay, and the cabins require additional staff time for cleaning after a camper's visit is complete. On the other hand, the beach does not have a fee for use as it is maintained to a certain standard whether people use it or not, and one person using the beach does not preclude others from enjoying it as well.

#### Revenue Generating and Rental Programming in Hok-Si-La

- » Tent Camping
- » Sleeping Cabins
- » Screened Shelters
- » Chapel
- » Dining Hall
- » Shower Usage

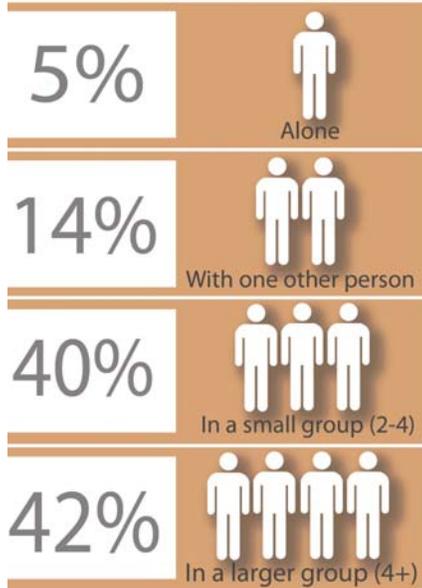
# What We Heard About How People Use Hok-Si-La Park

The Summer/Fall survey completed in 2018 helped the planning team identify how people were using the park. 166 people responded to the survey and the findings are summarized below:

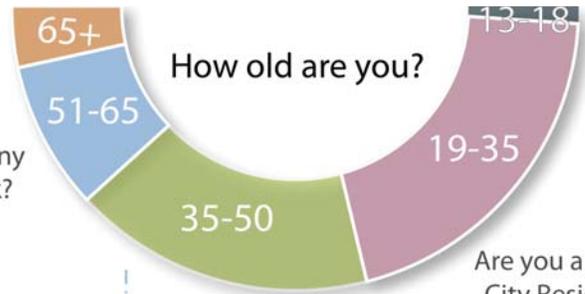


# Demographics

Do you usually visit...



Are you associated with any groups that use the Park?

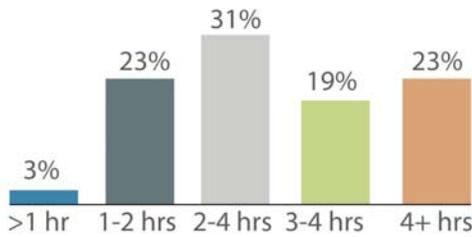


Are you a Lake City Resident?

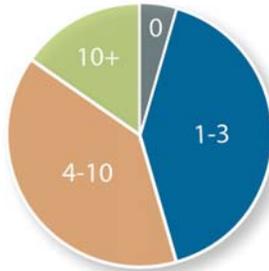


# Visits

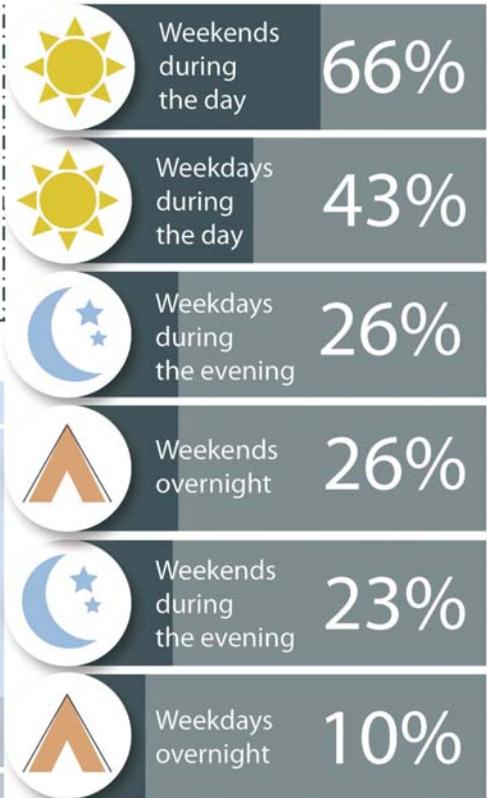
How long are your visits?



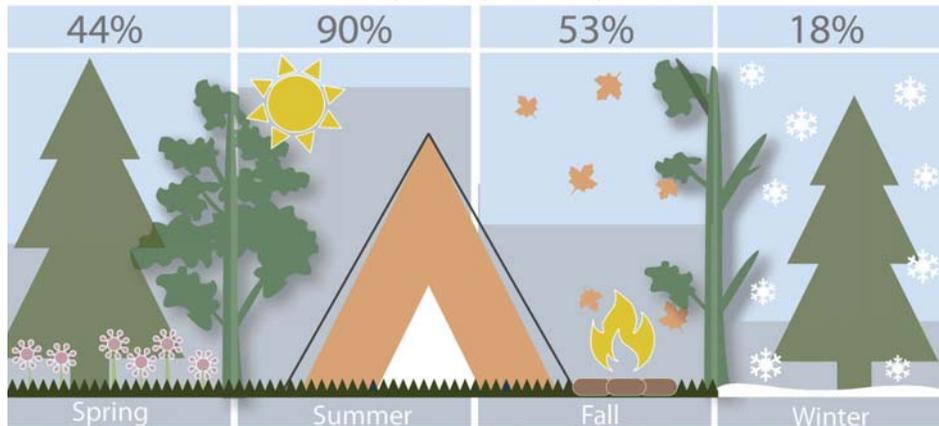
How many times have you visited Hok Si La Park in the last 12 months?



When do you usually visit?



What time(s) of year do you usually visit?



# Ecological Assessment

## Location

Hok-Si-La Park is located in Lake City, Goodhue County, Minnesota. According to the MN DNR's Ecological Classification System, the park is located in the Blufflands Subsection, of the Paleozoic Plateau Section, within the Eastern Broadleaf Forest Province.

Frontenac State Park is located a few miles north of the Park and several MN DNR Sites of Below, Moderate, and High Biodiversity Significance are found in the surrounding area.

A row of privately-owned single-family homes are located adjacent to the southern edge of the park, Highway 61 abuts the western edge, and Lake Pepin forms the eastern park boundary. Commercial development and agriculture are found to the west, and Lake City is located to the south of the park.

In general, the park is located in a landscape context characterized by a mosaic of developed, agricultural, and natural areas.

## Geology

The park is underlain by Mt. Simon Sandstone and Eau Claire Formation Bedrock associations.

Surficial geology consists of Alluvium (Holocene) deposits comprised of sand and gravel overlain primarily by silt and clay. Organic deposits may be found in some places.

The majority (central portion) of the park is identified as an area of high groundwater sensitivity; whereas the northern, eastern, and southern edges of the park (immediate floodplain of Lake Pepin) are identified as very sensitive. Factors contributing to sensitivity likely include high infiltration rates due to predominately sandy soils and a high surface to groundwater connection.

## Topography

Topography within the park is variable. In the eastern two-thirds of the park topography is relatively flat and low in elevation, ranging from 670 to 674 feet above mean sea level. The topography rises toward the western third of the park, reaching a highest elevation of 702 feet above mean sea level. Near the western edge of the park the topography slopes steeply downward toward Lake Pepin; this dramatic topography change is associated with bluffs. The far west edge of the park is again characterized by low lying, flat topography and is associated with beaches and floodplain forest adjacent to Lake Pepin.

## Soils

According to NRCS data, six soils units are encompassed by the park.

Soils associated with wetland areas of the park are identified as all or partially hydric, whereas upland areas are classified as not hydric.

Floodplain forest areas are associated with Kalmarville-Radford complex (frequently flooded) soil units.

Upland woods area associated with Coloma loamy sand soil units.

Bluffs area associated with Hawick sandy loam soil units.

Beaches and the northeast point of the park are associated with Abscota loamy sand (occasionally flooded) soil units.

The wetland/lake inlet is associated with Houghton muck (ponded) soil units.

Gilbert Creek is associated with Kennebec-Lawson, Channeled, complex (flooded) soil units

## Water Resources

Hok-Si-La Park is located in the Mississippi River – Lake Pepin Major watershed (HUC 8). The southern half of the park is located in the Gilbert Creek Minor Watershed, and the northern half is located within the Mississippi River Minor Watershed.

Gilbert Creek transects the southwest corner of the park, meanders along the southern park edge, and then turns north, following along the western park boundary before outletting into Lake Pepin. Field observations revealed a heavily sedimented stream channel and high turbidity. According to the MPCA, Gilbert Creek is impaired for both aquatic recreation (high E. coli) and aquatic life (low fish-IBI). Bedded sediments and lack of habitat were identified as primary stressors causing impairments for aquatic life.

The park consists of substantial wetland area including wet prairie, emergent shallow marsh, hardwood floodplain forest, and shrub wetland communities.

The entirety of the park is located within the 100-year FEMA floodplain and the designated Public Waters shoreland of Lake Pepin.

Lake Pepin is approximately 21 miles long and 29,295 acres. It is the largest lake on the entire Mississippi River and is identified as impaired for aquatic life (ammonium) by the MPCA. Invasive species known to occur in the lake include bighead carp, grass carp, zebra mussels, *Daphnia lumholtzi*, curly-leaf pondweed, Eurasian watermilfoil, and purple loosestrife.

## Vegetation

Historic vegetation within the park likely included communities similar to those currently occupying the park. Public land survey data (1848 - 1907) of the park suggests upland areas were comprised of Big Woods – Hardwoods (oak, maple, basswood, & hickory) and Oak Barrens and low-lying areas of the park consisted of open water.

MN DNR has mapped four native plant communities within the park including: Red-Oak-White Oak Forest, Silver maple – (Virginia creeper) floodplain Forest, Silver Maple – Green Ash – Cottonwood Terrace Forest, and Sand Beach/Sandbar (River) Permanent Stream Subtype.

EOR also identified several other communities within the park including Willow Sandbar Shrubland (River), Cattail Marsh (Northern), and Wet Prairie (Southern).

Trees observed in upland Red-Oak-White Oak Forest and developed park space included green ash, white cedar, black walnut, American elm, Northern red oak, northern pin oak, Jack pine, white pine, white oak, basswood, hackberry, northern catalpa, black cherry, boxelder, white mulberry, trembling aspen, and bur oak. Pine trees were primarily isolated to an old pine stand surrounding an existing chapel. Shrubs and other woody vegetation observed included, common buckthorn, oriental bittersweet, enchanter's nightshade, native honeysuckle, columbine, Siberian pea shrub, riverbank grape, Virginia creeper, poison ivy, and prickly gooseberry.

Herbaceous vegetation observed within the park upland areas included prickly lettuce, giant ragweed, wild bergamot, Canada goldenrod, Helianthus spp., wild cucumber, common plantain, white sweet clover, Kentucky bluegrass, hog peanut, wood nettle, wild geranium, bloodroot, Dutchman's breeches, Jack-in-the-pulpit, wild ginger, Canada anemone, nodding trillium, large-flowered trillium, yellow downy violet, blue downy violet, Virginia waterleaf, early meadow rue, tall meadow rue, winter cress, blue phlox, Maryland black snakeroot, hoary asylum, daisy fleabane, common yarrow, small-flowered crow's foot, smooth Solomon's seal, wild strawberry, four-o'clocks, hedge nettle, creeping Charlie, and baneberry.

Trees, shrubs, and vines observed in floodplain forests, terrace forest, and sandbar shrubland areas include silver maple, sandbar willow, black willow, riverbank grape, boxelder, common buckthorn, cottonwood, green ash, and American elm.

Cattail, garlic mustard, reed canary grass, wood nettle, stinging nettle, northern bugleweed, blue lobelia, spiderwort, creeping jenny, creeping Charlie, common ragweed, spotted touch-me-not, obedient plant, and cardinal flower were common in wetland and floodplain areas.

Invasive and weedy vegetation was very prominent along the bluffs but was more limited throughout the floodplain and upland forest areas. Invasive and weedy plants found along the bluffs included Siberian pea shrub, perennial clovers, enchanter's nightshade, and giant ragweed. Common buckthorn and oriental bittersweet were primary invasive species found in upland forests. Predominant invasive species observed in the floodplain forests included buckthorn and garlic mustard. Reed canary grass dominated the wet prairie community found in the center of the park.

## **Wildlife & Rare Resources**

The park is located within the Mississippi River – Lake Pepin Audubon Important Bird Area which is considered one of the most significant bird habitats in the state, especially for migratory birds. Hok-Si-La Park is also noted as an important migratory stopover for songbirds in both spring and fall and contains the largest northerly (outside Alaska) concentration of wintering Bald Eagles in the United States.

According to the MN DNR, many fish species are known to occur in Lake Pepin, making it a very attractive place for fishing and a major draw to the park. Black bullhead, black crappie, bluegill, brown bullhead, brown trout,

burbot, channel catfish, crappie, flathead catfish, green sunfish, hybrid sunfish, lake sturgeon, largemouth bass, northern pike, orange-spotted sunfish, paddlefish, pumpkinseed, rock bass, sauger, shovelnose sturgeon, smallmouth bass, walleye, white bass, white crappie, yellow bullhead, yellow perch, bigmouth buffalo, blue sucker, bowfin (dogfish), carpsucker, chestnut lamprey, common carp, freshwater drum, golden redhorse, goldeye, greater redhorse, highfin carpsucker, longnose gar, mooneye, northern hog sucker, quillback, river carpsucker, river redhorse, shorthead redhorse, shortnose gar, silver lamprey, silver redhorse, smallmouth buffalo, spotted sucker, white sucker, bigmouth shiner, bluntnose minnow, brassy minnow, brook silverside, brook stickleback, bullhead minnow, central mudminnow, emerald shiner, fathead minnow, gizzard shad, golden shiner, goldfish, hornyhead chub, Iowa darter, Johnny darter, logperch, mimic shiner, mud darter, river darter, river shiner, and sand shiner are all known to occur in Lake Pepin.

Eastern grey squirrel, white-tailed deer, and woodchuck were observed by EOR at the park. It is likely that a variety of other mammals including fox, coyote, raccoon, weasel, muskrat, beaver, eastern chipmunk, short-tailed shrew, weasels, mink, river otter, striped skunk, eastern cottontail, meadow jumping mouse, house mouse, deer mouse, meadow vole, and various bat species occupy and utilize the park.

The park is identified by the MN DNR biological Survey as a Site of High Biodiversity Significance, which means it contains high quality native plant communities, provides important landscape functions, and/or has occurrences of rare species.

Based on NHIS data, the park is known to support occurrences of bald eagles (delisted) and ovate-leaved skullcap (threatened). Skipjack herring (endangered), and spike (threatened) and washboard (endangered) mussels have also been documented in Lake Pepin, adjacent to the park.



## 06. ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

### Hok-Si-La Park Issues and Opportunities

The following lists of issues and opportunities were assembled from a variety of sources, including Lake City staff, elected officials, key stakeholders, and the general public.

#### Issues:

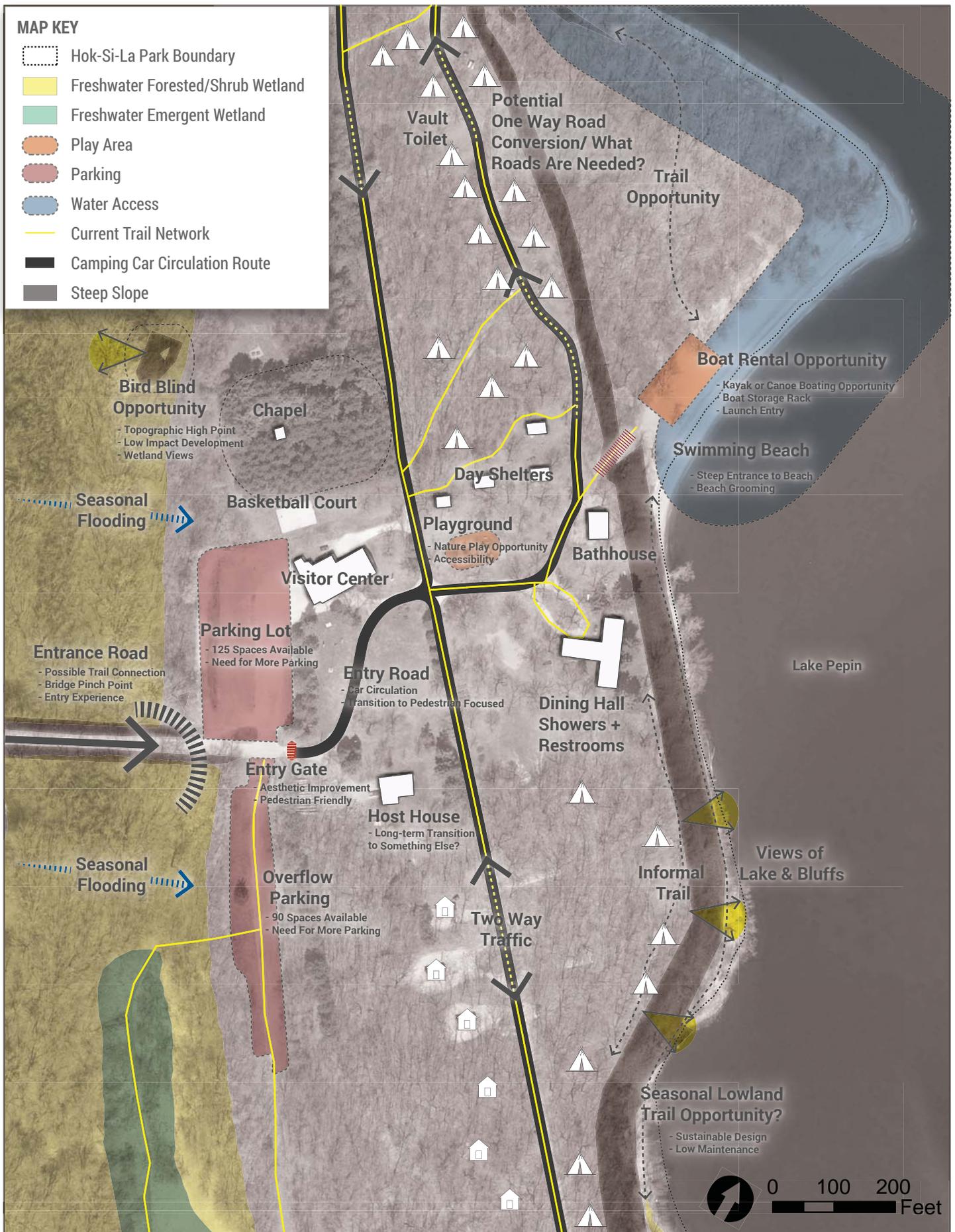
- » Lake City's sidewalk ends just before the south boundary of Hok-Si-La Park. Currently there are no public trails that connect downtown Lake City with Hok-Si-La Park, but a trail into the park is a current City project.
- » There is one entrance into Hok-Si-La Park.
- » A majority of Hok-Si-La Park is located within a wetland and is inundated by water for a portion of the year.
- » The current Hok-Si-La Park sanitary septic system is at capacity (10,000 gallons per day), which limits the number of campsites (tent/cabin) and buildings that can be built within the park.
- » Parking at Hok-Si-La Park becomes limited during summer months, especially on weekends and holidays.
- » Balance the public/private relationship on south end of Hok-Si-La Park
- » Cars and pedestrians use the same road/trail network.
- » Lack of parking space during peak park season
- » Steep slopes (bluffs) that create access barriers to beach on west side of the park
- » Coordinating between user groups (campers, group campers, day visitors, educational groups, wedding/event groups)
- » Invasive Species
- » Lake Pepin is an impaired waterway
- » High Groundwater Sensitivity
- » Endangered and threatened species present



Issues & Opportunities Hok Si La Park

## Opportunities:

- » Avoid wet areas, steep slopes, and other delicate landscape sites with new construction
- » Construct new facilities using low impact development methods and techniques
- » Interpret and educate park visitors about the importance and functionality of the landscape history and habitat value
- » Evaluate pedestrian/bike trail access
- » Improvements to the parking lot to enhance entry experience
- » Potential new trail head (additional parking) connecting to the Hok-Si-La Park along Gilbert Creek
- » Potential Boardwalk trail network (low wetland impact) to connect the Regional Trail along Highway 61, Hok-Si-La Park, and Downtown Lake City
- » Add signage and wayfinding
- » Fishing Pier (increase water access)
- » Boat Dock (increase water access)
- » Boat (kayak/canoe) Rental
- » Bird Blind (wildlife viewing)
- » Aesthetic improvement to entry gate
- » Additional grills in picnic areas
- » Additional nature play area
- » Additional trails (sustainable trail design) to create loops within park
- » "Get Ready" rooms for visitors to the beach area
- » Enhanced parking lot and entry experience



Issues & Opportunities (Hok Si La Park Core Activity Area)



## Hok-Si-La Park Trends

The role of parks continues to change at both a local and regional level. Different recreation trends, funding options, and consumer expectations are shifting the demands put on parks. Some of the following trends are particularly relevant to Hok-Si-La Park.

### Nature Play

Nature play areas encourage kids to get dirty, imagine, and learn with nature. They often include play elements such as wood, stone, water, plants, soil, or sand and help to facilitate the experience in a playful manner. Kids can experience how natural elements interact with each other, with them, and even observe insects or other animals in their natural habitats. Nature play can help promote confidence, independence, and ecological and environmental stewardship.

### Sleeping Cabins

The sleeping cabin program at Hok-Si-La has been very successful in the past few years. Some longtime campers have appreciated the opportunity to keep coming to the park, even when they are no longer able to sleep in a tent. Other visitors with limited mobility find the sleeping cabins more conducive to a comfortable stay.

### Parks and Economic Development

Regional parks and open spaces have the potential to be a major draw for outside visitors. Nationally, many cities, counties, and states are recognizing parks as a driver of tourism and tourism spending. A survey of users found that half of respondents were coming to the park from over 10 miles away, and nearly 30% were coming from over 50 miles. Park visitors also spend money on gas, food, and other services while they are in Lake City.

### Public Health

Updated research confirms that opportunities for exposure and connection to nature is essential for the mental and physical health of both children and adults. As national health outcomes decline and demands on time increase, offering accessible opportunities for recreation with amenities such as trails, playgrounds, and water sports can help reconnect visitors with their natural environment and promote a healthy lifestyle.

## Interactions with Nature

As opportunities for nature access disappear and we become more and more connected to our technology and devices, people are recognizing the importance of connecting with the natural world. At the same time, informal play is decreasing and the likelihood of children connecting with nature on their own is less likely. Fortunately, organizations such as schools and the Lake City Environmental Learning Program are creating programs to get kids outside to interact and learn about the natural world. Hok-Si-La is striving to reconnect visitors to their natural surroundings while maintaining the balance between offering recreational opportunities and preserving the natural environment.

## Events

In recent years, communities have begun building parks and facilities with placemaking opportunities - such as events, gathering spaces, festivals, and entertainment - in mind. The opportunity to become a place where families, teams, or classes make memories and enjoy programs helps encourage use, can provide a potential source of revenue, and contributes to the area's cultural and social identity. Lake City is fortunate to have a variety of medium to large parks throughout the community.

## Unique Experiences

With the rise of social media, parks are experiencing more pressure than ever to deliver unique and 'shareable' experiences for visitors. By offering distinctive programming or events, features like overlooks that highlight incredible views and photo opportunities, integrating learning, and embracing activities that people may not get elsewhere, Hok-Si-La can draw and keep users that may not otherwise know about the park.



*Left: Children learn about the Lake Pepin ecosystem*



*Top Right: Tour de Pepin is a bike event that draws many people to the area*



*Bottom Right: Camper cabins have become very popular and allowed people to continue using the park as they age*



## 08. MASTER PLAN

Moving forward, the master plan will be the guiding document for deciding where the City will invest resources when improving the park. Some of these ideas can be implemented immediately, others may take some time, effort, and outside funding to implement. It is also possible that new ideas will arise and should be evaluated for adherence to the plan's spirit and fit for the vision of Hok-Si-La Park.

The Master Plan provides direction at four levels:

- » Key Policy Directions
- » Physical Improvements
- » Programming
- » Environmental Management

### Key Policy Directions

As the planning process proceeded, it became evident that there were some key directions that staff, residents, and other stakeholders wanted to take for the park's future. Some of these ideas were already in place, others were themes that many identified as a way to make the park better.

**KEEP DOING WHAT WE'RE GOOD AT, HELP PEOPLE FIND WHAT THEY ARE LOOKING FOR - EVEN IF IT IS ELSEWHERE.** Hok-Si-La has many advantages that have helped it develop a niche in the recreation offerings of Southeast Minnesota. At the same time constraints make it difficult to develop other amenities. Rather than trying to be everything to everyone and getting overextended, commit to being exceptional at the things that work at Hok-Si-La, and direct people to the appropriate options if they are looking for something else.

**MAINTAIN THE PARK'S ROLE AS AN OUTDOOR EDUCATION HUB.** Already the home of the Lake City Environmental Learning Program, and a destination for other outdoor education entities, the park should continue to support the missions of these groups to make sure children and adults are learning about and connecting more with the natural world.

**FOCUS ON SHOULDER SEASONS.** The park is well used especially during the summer months. Where possible, consider how the park can be used for more of the year.

### Research Initiatives

Currently, there are no research efforts underway outside of the analysis undertaken for development of this master plan. Some records are available for specific uses such as campsites rentals and program enrollments.

The City of Lake City will partner to participate in research initiatives requested by the GMRPTC as these are developed and implemented over time. Such initiatives may address visitation counts, visitor profiles, and recreation trends and demands.

Information gathered may inform further development of the regional park system in Greater Minnesota.

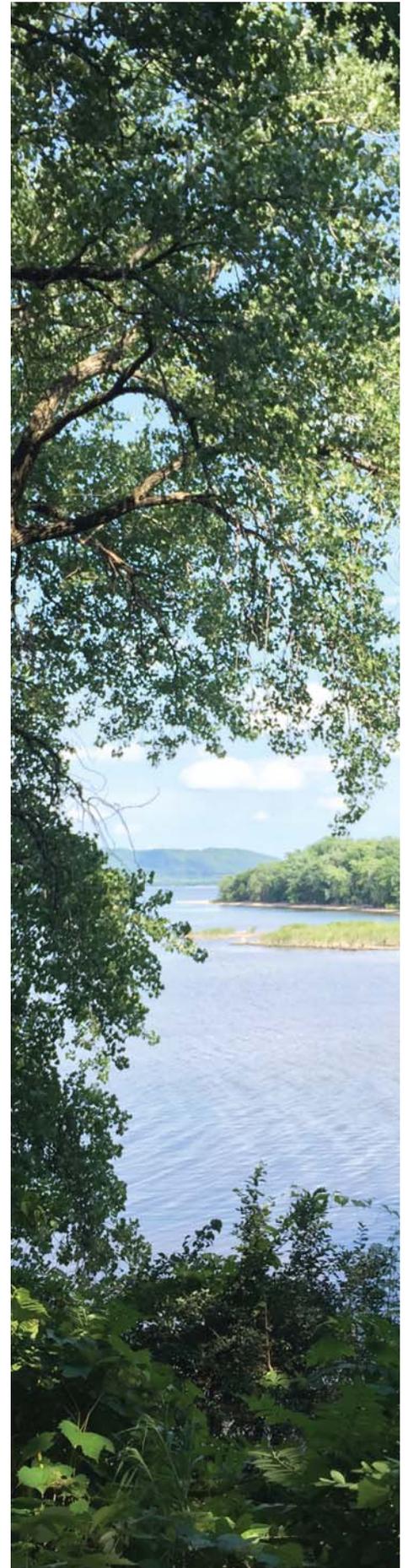
**DON'T OVERFILL THE PARK.** While the park contains a lot of acreage, much of it is constrained by natural events such as flooding. Currently, development in the park is also constrained by the sewer system and what is allowable to maintain acceptable flows for septic. When sewer is extended to the park, it may open new opportunities, but it is important to remember that this should not lead to overdeveloping the park. The rustic and secluded nature of the campsites is a valued, unique part of the park's character and should be preserved

**KEEP PARKED VEHICLES IN THE PARKING LOTS.** There are multiple options for RV camping in the area. Many park users cited the gates/the absence of vehicles as one of the reasons they like Hok-Si-La, particularly for safety and character.

**SUPPORT, DON'T COMPETE WITH LOCAL BUSINESSES.** Visitors spend money in the community. Businesses here are good at what they do, and the City is proud to have them in the community. To the extent the park can steer visitors to local businesses or otherwise support them, that is the goal. When local businesses can supplement the offerings at the park (paddle rentals, etc.), the City will evaluate them for fit and appropriateness at the park.

**CONNECT TO DOWNTOWN LAKE CITY.** The park already works to connect visitors with the rest of Lake City, directing campers looking for gas, grocery, or a dinner out to any number of local businesses. From a physical connection standpoint, things could be improved, and trail connections to the park are planned. This could be by bike, foot, or water. Strengthening the park's connection to recreation options outside of the park boundaries will benefit the park, the city, and the visitor experience.

**PRESERVE A REGIONALLY SIGNIFICANT NATURAL LANDSCAPE.** The park's location sets it apart as a key natural resource. It provides habitat for plants, aquatic animals, land animals, and migratory and local birds. It's ecosystem helps reduce the impacts of seasonal flooding. Hok-Si-La is also an important interface for human and natural interactions and learning.



# Physical Improvements

Precedent photos are used to convey the ideas and concepts included in the plan and will vary from what is built.

## Structures



1 - Renovated, Winterized Visitor Center



2 - New Maintenance Building



3 - New Open Air Picnic Shelters



4 - Deck/Patio Additions to Dining Hall & Visitor Center

## Play



5 - Nature Play with features for varying ages



6 - Council Ring



7 - Star Gazing Ring

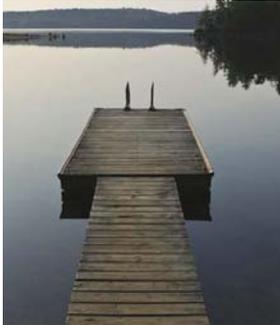
## Beach



8 - Small Building for Canoe/ Kayak/SUP Rentals



9 - Removable Shade Structures



10 - Roll In/Out dock



11 - Floating Dock



12 - Fix trail/road to beach

## Circulation and Parking



13 - Remove Road through Lawn



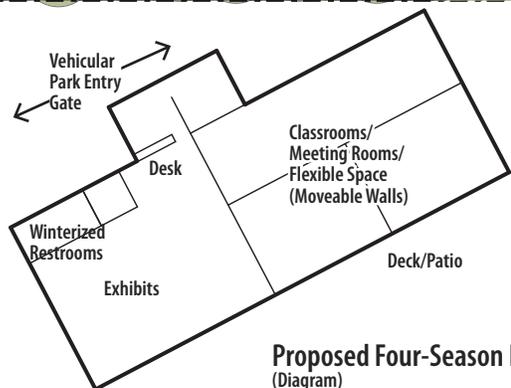
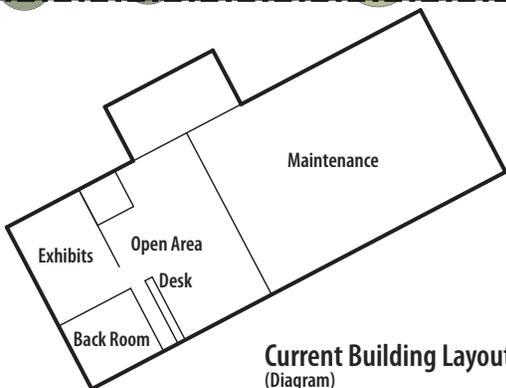
14 - Expand Parking Lot with 1 paved bay and dropoff



15 - Relocate Entry Road and add attractive gate



16 - Pathway Network with interpretation





17 - Expand Camper Cabin program by 3 cabins



18 - Connect Trail to Downtown



19 - Connect Trail to Frontenac/Red Wing



20 - Incorporate Aquatic Invasive Species BMPs



21 - Repair/Replace Shelter



22 - Fishing Pier



23 - Dredge



24 - Enhance Natural Resource Management (See page 35)

## Programming

### Strengthen Environmental Learning Programming and Partnerships

Partnerships with groups like the Lake City ELP, Red Wing ELC, and schools are already in place. Build on, and expand programming related to education and nature. Improvements in interpretation and supporting curriculum could make it easier to teach. With the addition of 3 more camper cabins, the park could accommodate a full class of students, and be able to program more during the fall and spring. Camps, outdoor education, and citizen science were some of the highest rated programming options presented to the public in the planning process.

### Continue to Facilitate Community Based Events

Hok-Si-La already supports many events such as school races, Winterfest, and Tour de Pepin. Developing more formal and informal reasons to get together strengthens community bonds and raises awareness of the park. These could be as low key as finding someone to coordinate snowshoeing meetups, or as involved as music in the park.

### Conference/Corporate Retreat/Meeting Space

With changes to the event center and the visitor center building, the park will be better equipped to handle events, especially during the spring and fall when the park is largely underutilized. Catering through local businesses also supports the community.

### Partner to host Canoe/Kayak/Stand Up Paddleboard Rentals

Developing a program that allows visitors to get on the water without needing to have their own watercraft will further improve the user experience and allow a different perspective on Lake Pepin and Hok-Si-La Park. Models vary from unstaffed kiosks accessible by smartphone to staffed buildings offering rentals, lessons, and tours.



## Environmental Management

Based on conversations with park staff and officials involved in park management, the primary interest regarding natural resources at Hok-Si-La Park is to focus on water and connecting visitors to the water. There is also significant interest in preserving and restoring natural resources within the park to capitalize on the park's unique ecosystems. Furthermore, staff would like to maintain the majority of the park as green space, indicating little desire to increase development in currently undeveloped areas of the park. In addition, staff aspires to connect groups and visitors with the quiet and natural areas of the park through outreach and education. The following natural resource management recommendations focus on the aforementioned goals.

### Lake Pepin & Beaches

- » Currently, the City dredges up to 400 cubic yards of sediment as needed. Due to the very shallow nature of the water near and continuous sedimentation of Lake Pepin, there is interest in dredging additional areas near the boat landing and by the south end of the beach to provide better access and experience for visitors. Increased dredging volumes and additional locations should be assessed thoroughly and a dredging plan should be developed for the park. Review and modeling by ecologists, hydrologists, and engineers would be valuable to identify sediment loading rates and to understand the costs and effectiveness of suggested dredging efforts. Furthermore, it would be important to identify where dredged material would be best deposited on site and/or whether it would be best to try and sell it or remove it from the park completely. Permitting through the USACE and MN DNR would likely be required.
- » Staff indicated a desire to create ADA-approved beach access. Doing so may require trail improvements as the current trail to the beach is very steep. Trail siting should involve stormwater and natural resource impact analysis in order to limit potential adverse effects to the lake and adjacent resources.
- » Lake Pepin is an impaired water and dog waste can be a significant contributor of E. coli and nutrients to aquatic systems. A doggy bag station is in the main area of the park and is being considered for the boat landing. It is recommended that signage is installed to educate patrons about the importance of pet waste cleanup. Providing a trash can with free biodegradable doggie bags in this area could also help alleviate the issue.
- » Due to wave action and high water, trash can build up in the forested floodplain area. Trash was observed along the shoreline south of the main beach, washed up in shrub and forested floodplain areas. Community volunteer clean-up events or coordination with sentence-to-serve crews could be helpful in maintaining a cleaner shoreline throughout the park.
- » Lake Pepin is home to several aquatic invasive species (AIS) including zebra mussels, an invasive daphnia, curly-leaf pondweed, and Eurasian water milfoil; all of which are easily transported via watercraft to other locations. Due to heavy boat traffic at the beach and potential plans to

provide access to canoes and paddleboards through outside vendors, AIS inspections and signage and coordination with vendors is crucial to prevent movement of existing AIS species to other waterbodies. Installation of a boat washing station at the launch could also be an effective action to reduce AIS movement.

- » Consider results and nutrient reduction goals from the forthcoming Lake Pepin TMDL study and Cannon River 1WIP efforts to identify future activities and efforts related to lake and shoreline management. For instance, the draft TMDL plan calls for a 20% reduction in total phosphorus loading to Lake Pepin.

## Bluffs

- » It is recommended the park takes action to reduce erosion on bluffs resulting from unofficial footpaths to the shoreline. This objective could be accomplished through the addition of official access stairs to the lake from campsites and/or signage and educational materials that discourage creation of such paths. Staff indicated concern regarding the safety and maintenance of stairs down to the lake. It may be valuable to do a cost/benefit analysis of which method would be most effective at reducing erosion and require least effort from staff.
- » Views of the lake from campsites are of high importance to park patrons and to staff. Currently, invasive plants dominate much of the vegetation on the bluffs and obstruct views. Management of invasive plants along bluffs will simultaneously help improve views of Lake Pepin and restore more native plant community composition. Restoration of native communities may also help better protect bluffs from erosion, ultimately helping protect water quality.
- » Effort to seed the bluffs with native vegetation and burn the slopes was done in the past. However, due to lack of ongoing maintenance and absence of a burn plan, the treated and seeded areas have reverted to weedy and invasive vegetation. It is recommended that an invasive management program is developed for the bluffs. This would likely include a combination of prescribed burning, herbicide treatment, native seeding, and identification of appropriate native shrubs and small trees for planting.
- » Goats were mentioned as a potential method for invasive management within the park.

## Upland Forest

- » Invasive species management across the upland forest is recommended for invasive buckthorn and oriental bittersweet. Areas of shrub management should be delineated and, in order to protect native shrubs and tree saplings, it is recommended they are tagged prior to invasive shrub removal. Buckthorn should be considered a high management priority. The populations within the park are currently manageable and delay in addressing the infestation will ultimately result in higher effort and cost.
- » Oak wilt is known to occur in nearby areas. Consequently, developing a plan to regularly survey for diseased trees, execute tree removal, and identify suitable replacement trees would be an important preventative management effort for the park.

- » Similarly, there are many ash trees within the park and emerald ash borer (EAB) has recently been observed. Ash were removed from the park two years ago and milled to replace paneling in the dining hall. Regular surveys for EAB infested trees could also help prevent significant tree loss. Ultimately, it is recommended that ash trees are removed as they are observed to be infected with EAB and replaced with other appropriate native species. Due to the high groundwater sensitivity of the area and nearness to impaired surface waters, it is not recommended EAB infected trees are treated with neonicotinoids.

### **Wet Forest Communities**

- » Invasive species management of buckthorn and garlic mustard is recommended in floodplain forests. Management efforts in floodplains must consider soil conditions to avoid rutting and compaction. It is recommended any efforts requiring heavy equipment is conducted when soils are dry or frozen.

### **Wet Prairie**

- » The wet prairie within the central portion of the park is a prime opportunity for restoration. The area is currently invaded by reed canary grass but many native sedges and forbs were observed as well. In addition, this area was heavily utilized by frogs and would provide an excellent place for visitors to view birds, pollinators and other wildlife. Management efforts could involve herbicide treatment, mowing, and/or prescribed burning to control the reed canary grass invasion. Reseeding of native wetland forbs and sedges may also be necessary.

### **Gilbert Creek**

- » Gilbert Creek is listed as an impaired water and has issues with low habitat complexity and bedded sediments. There are also areas of the reach within the park that have been significantly modified. Restoration of natural stream morphology should be considered as restoration of the stream could result in improvements to water and habitat quality. Specifically, the berm near the creek could be regraded to allow the creek to naturally meander. Doing a stream study and restoration design would be valuable prior to any restoration activity. Furthermore, such efforts may qualify for grant funding due to the impaired water status.

### **Ecological Inventory, Assessment, & Monitoring**

- » Development of a Natural Resource Management Plan to outline natural resource visions and goals for the park, document species diversity & uniqueness, identify management priorities and strategies, estimate costs and timelines, and provide tools for monitoring and maintenance would be highly valuable given desires to maintain and improve the natural space within the park.
- » Very little data has been collected within the park in regard to wildlife and habitats. One exception is the plant inventory available through the photo log kept in the visitor center.

- » Future efforts to document wildlife and plants could be beneficial for promoting the park as a place to view and experience nature and wildlife – a “Natural mecca”. Potential survey efforts could involve documenting trees, conducting plant releve surveys, birds surveys, bat acoustic monitoring, and amphibian (especially frogs) and reptile (especially turtles) surveys.
- » Partnering with non-profit groups (i.e. Native Plant society, Audubon Society, Master naturalists, Master Water Stewards) to conduct surveys and document plant communities could help reduce costs.

### **Amenities and Infrastructure Recommendations**

- » Currently, the park visitor center offers some natural resource context through the display of old park maps, taxidermy examples of common critters, and several binders with photos of plants found in the park. An effort to expand educational materials in the visitor’s center could improve patrons’ connection to the park and further promote the park’s natural resources and ecological importance. Transferring the plant photo binders to a mobile device would be a way to increase ability for people to view and identify plants in the park. In addition, providing more information about Lake Pepin and the floodplain communities is another way to connect visitors with the lake and water resources within the park.
- » Educational signage updates and additions along existing trails and near campsites could also provide more natural resource context for visitors.
- » A trail through the floodplain was suggested as a potential park improvement. A boardwalk could provide an interesting experience through a unique habitat. Trail design and installation would require permitting from the DNR and local regulatory authorities.
- » Fogging is currently implemented in upland areas of the park but is not conducted in the floodplain forests within the east half of the park. Current populations of mosquitos are very robust in these areas, creating almost unbearable conditions for walking and hiking in spring and summer. Patrons are unlikely to utilize future floodplain trails unless mosquito control is extended to those areas.
- » A small rise in topography, located the northcentral portion of the park, could be a great location for a bird blind as it would offer views to the lake inlet to the west.
- » Because the park operates on a septic system it will be important to continue regular inspections and maintenance on the system to avoid contaminating the sensitive groundwater area.
- » Any addition of new impervious surface should be designed with proper best management practices to manage runoff.



Task	Timing	Level of Investment	Possible Funding Sources					
			City	Regional	Grants	Fees	Donations	PPP
<i>Structures</i>								
Renovated, Winterized Visitor Center	Mid	\$\$\$	✓	✓	✓		✓	
New Maintenance Building	Mid	\$\$\$	✓	✓	✓		✓	
New Open Air Picnic Shelters	Short	\$\$	✓	✓			✓	
Deck/Patio Additions to Dining Hall & Visitor Center	Short	\$\$	✓	✓			✓	
Expand Camper Cabin program by 3 cabins	Mid	\$\$	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Repair/Replace Boat Ramp Shelter	Mid	\$\$	✓		✓			
<i>Play</i>								
Nature Play with features for varying ages	Mid	\$\$	✓	✓	✓		✓	
Council Ring	Short	\$	✓				✓	
Star Gazing Ring	Short	\$	✓				✓	
<i>Beach/Boat Ramp</i>								
Small building for Canoe/Kayak/SUP Rental	Short	\$	✓			✓		✓
Removeable Shade Structures	Short	\$	✓				✓	
Roll In/Out Dock	Short	\$	✓					
Floating Dock	Short	\$	✓					
Fix Trailhead to Beach	Mid	\$\$	✓		✓			
Fishing Pier	Short	\$	✓		✓		✓	
Incorporate Aquatic Invasive Species BMPs	Short	\$-\$\$	✓	✓	✓			

Task	Timing	Level of Investment	Possible Funding Sources					
			City	Regional	Grants	Fees	Donations	PPP
<i>Circulation and Parking</i>								
Remove Road through Lawn	Short	\$	✓					
Expand Parking Lot with 1 paved bay and dropoff	Mid	\$\$\$	✓	✓	✓			
Relocate Entry Road and add attractive gate	Mid	\$	✓	✓				
Pathway Network with interpretation	Short	\$	✓		✓		✓	
Connect Trail to Downtown	Mid	\$\$\$	✓		✓			
Connect Trail to Frontenac/Red Wing	Long	\$\$\$	✓	✓	✓			
<i>Natural Resources</i>								
Dredge East Bay	Mid	\$\$\$	✓		✓			
Doggy Bag Stations	Short	\$	✓		✓		✓	
Trash Clean Ups	Short	\$	✓				✓	
Reduce Erosion	Ongoing	\$\$	✓		✓		✓	
Invasive Species Management	Ongoing	\$\$	✓	✓	✓		✓	
Prairie Restoration	Mid	\$\$	✓	✓	✓		✓	
Gilbert Creek Stream Restoration	Mid	\$\$\$	✓		✓			
Natural Resources Management Plan	Short	\$\$	✓	✓	✓			
Citizen Science	Ongoing	\$	✓		✓		✓	✓
Environmental Education Materials (signage, exhibits, etc)	Short	\$	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
<i>Programming</i>								
Strengthen Environmental Learning Programming and Partnerships	Short	\$	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Continue to Facilitate Community Based Events	Short	\$	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Conference/Corporate Retreat/ Meeting Space	Mid	\$\$	✓			✓	✓	✓
Partner to host Canoe/Kayak/SUP Rentals	Short	\$	✓			✓		✓