

Parks, Recreation and Open Space

The City of Rice Lake prides itself on providing a healthy variety of recreational amenities and opportunities for its residents and visitors. A key component of the vision for the community and park system is to maintain the character and feel of the community, provide sustained moderate growth, and meet the needs of a changing population, all while maintaining the existing quality of life. Currently, the City is home to several open and natural space lands that provide both active and passive recreational opportunities and amenities. In addition to the facilities offered within the City of Rice Lake, several regionally significant recreational facilities in close proximity of the City draw visitors from around the state and reinforce the recreational offerings of the city.

This section summarizes survey results related to the City's parks and trails compiled as part of the comprehensive planning process, identify and summarize recreational facilities and the amenities offered at each location, and provide recommendations and funding opportunities for the growth of the parks and trails system in Rice Lake.

Goals and Objectives

The City of Rice Lake has established goals and objectives specific to the Parks and Trails element.

Goal: Provide multi-generational recreational opportunities to accommodate the various age groups represented in the community.

Objectives:

- Provide activities and opportunities for each of the age groups represented in the community.
- Provide activities and experiences that can be enjoyed together with people of multiple ages.
- Allow people of multiple generations and backgrounds to enjoy the park system.

Goal: Retain all existing park lands for the use and enjoyment of residents.

Objectives:

- Retain existing park lands for recreational use.
- Maintain park facilities at a level consistent to the desires of the community
- Make improvements and expansions on existing park facilities based on future park planning efforts.
- Manage platting and development activity in close proximity to areas dedicated and improved for outdoor recreation.

Goal: Encourage the incorporation of outdoor recreational amenities into the design of new subdivisions.

Objectives:

- Review opportunities for nature/interpretive trails, lake access points, or unique viewpoints, where allowed, as part of new subdivisions.
- Require green space and recreational opportunities are available to newly developed neighborhoods

Goal: Continue the development of Non-Motorized Trail System within the city for the purposes of recreational enjoyment, connectivity, and safety.

Objectives:

- Continue to make off road trail connections for the overall safety of residents and users of the city’s recreational amenities.
- Enhance the city’s desirability and reputation as a community that provides excellent connectivity and recreational opportunities at a local and regional level.

Goal: Work in cooperation with local and adjoining governmental agencies in providing parks, recreational facilities, and programming.

Objectives:

- Seek out new and maintain existing agreements with other local government agencies in the development and operation of park and recreation facilities in order to provide residents with otherwise unavailable opportunities.

Goal: Increase the public awareness of recreational opportunities that exist for residents.

Objectives:

- Develop materials (online and print) with information on the City’s park system and recreational opportunities.

Goal: Celebrate and promote recreational tourism within the city.

Objectives:

- Hold special events and activities within the city’s park system aimed at encouraging public use.
- Work with other local jurisdictions to encourage and promote bicycle and other trail uses in the region.

Survey Results

There were four questions included in the community survey conducted as part of the comprehensive planning process that focused on recreational facilities and opportunities in the city. These questions and their responses are summarized as follows:

Question 21: Please rank your priorities for the future growth in the City. Select the 3 most important to you.

The top answer to this question was commercial/retail/service development with nearly 50% of respondents indicating a desire for these facilities. Second, was walking and/or biking trail development. Tied for third, with 30% of respondents was residential growth and *park development*.

Question 22: What types of recreational programs or amenities would you like to see expanded or developed?

The top 3 responses to this question were Walking/hiking trails, Parks, Hockey/ice skating rinks and ATV trails. Other responses in order of popularity included: Playground equipment, swimming pool, snowmobile trail, fitness classes, tennis courts, baseball/softball fields, soccer fields, and skatepark.

Question 23: I would walk or bike more if:

The top answer to this question was if there were more sidewalks or trails, followed in order by: easier access to trails/parks, there was a map of walk/bike routes, and there were more bike lanes.

Question 24: What activities do you use a park for?

The top answer to this question was family events, followed in order by: playground equipment, personal exercise, and sporting events.

Local Parks & Trails

The following park and recreational facilities are located in the City of Rice Lake:

Figure P-1 identifies the locations of the various facilities discussed in this section, and Table P-1 at the end of this section summarizes the size of each facility and the amenities available at each location.

Town Park

Town Park is centrally located in the City of Rice Lake city limits and offers users both active and passive recreational opportunities. Established in 1963, the park covers approximately 20 acres. Recreational offerings at the park include walking trails, ballfields and volleyball and basketball courts. Other amenities include a playground, fishing pond, picnic shelter and restroom.

Rice Lake Reservoir & Public Boat Access

The Rice Lake Reservoir, sitting at the western city limits of Rice Lake, provides active and passive recreational opportunities for users throughout the year. Fishing and boating draw many visitors to the reservoir, and in the winter, ice fishing and snowmobiling are popular activities. Visitors to Rice Lake can access the reservoir from the Rice Lake Public Boat Access on the north side of the reservoir. The access includes a concrete boat ramp and dock. Parking is available for approximately 5 vehicles and trailers, and there is also a portable toilet on site. The boat access is administered by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources.

Homecroft Elementary School

Homecroft Elementary School provides residents with another recreational opportunity within the city. Facilities at the school include a playground, athletic fields, basketball court, and four-square courts.

Local Trails

Local trail and sidewalk connectivity are limited within Rice Lake. A designated snowmobile trail runs through the city, but most of it is unusable during the summer due to extensive wetlands. Several roads have adequate shoulder width to accommodate safe walking or biking, but these roads are limited.

Regional Parks & Trails

The following regionally significant recreational amenities are within close proximity to the City of Rice Lake.

Regional Parks

Lake Park Athletic Complex

Lake Park Athletic Complex, situated at the intersection of Riley Road and Jean Duluth Road, is approximately 100 acres in size. Built in 1972 on land donated by the University of Minnesota Duluth, the complex houses 5 soccer fields, and 6 baseball/softball fields, as well as a concession/picnic facility.

Canosia State Wildlife Management Area

The Canosia State Wildlife Management Area (WMA) covers an area of nearly 2,500 acres and is made up of diverse deciduous/coniferous forest and wetland/bog complex with scattered upland openings, waterfowl impoundments and wild rice. Forested areas are actively managed by the DNR for wildlife, and waterfowl impoundments are managed for waterfowl, making it a popular area for trapping, hunting and hiking. Canosia WMA also offers extensive trail systems including cross country ski and snowmobile trails. Carry-in canoe access is available as well.

Hartley Nature Center

Hartley Nature Center, situated southeast of Rice Lake, is a 660 acre recreational and educational facility that aims to inspire lifelong connections to nature through education, play and exploration. The facility includes playgrounds, and other recreational opportunities including bird watching, cross country skiing, hiking, snowshoeing and fishing. The center serves more than 30,000 visitors per year.

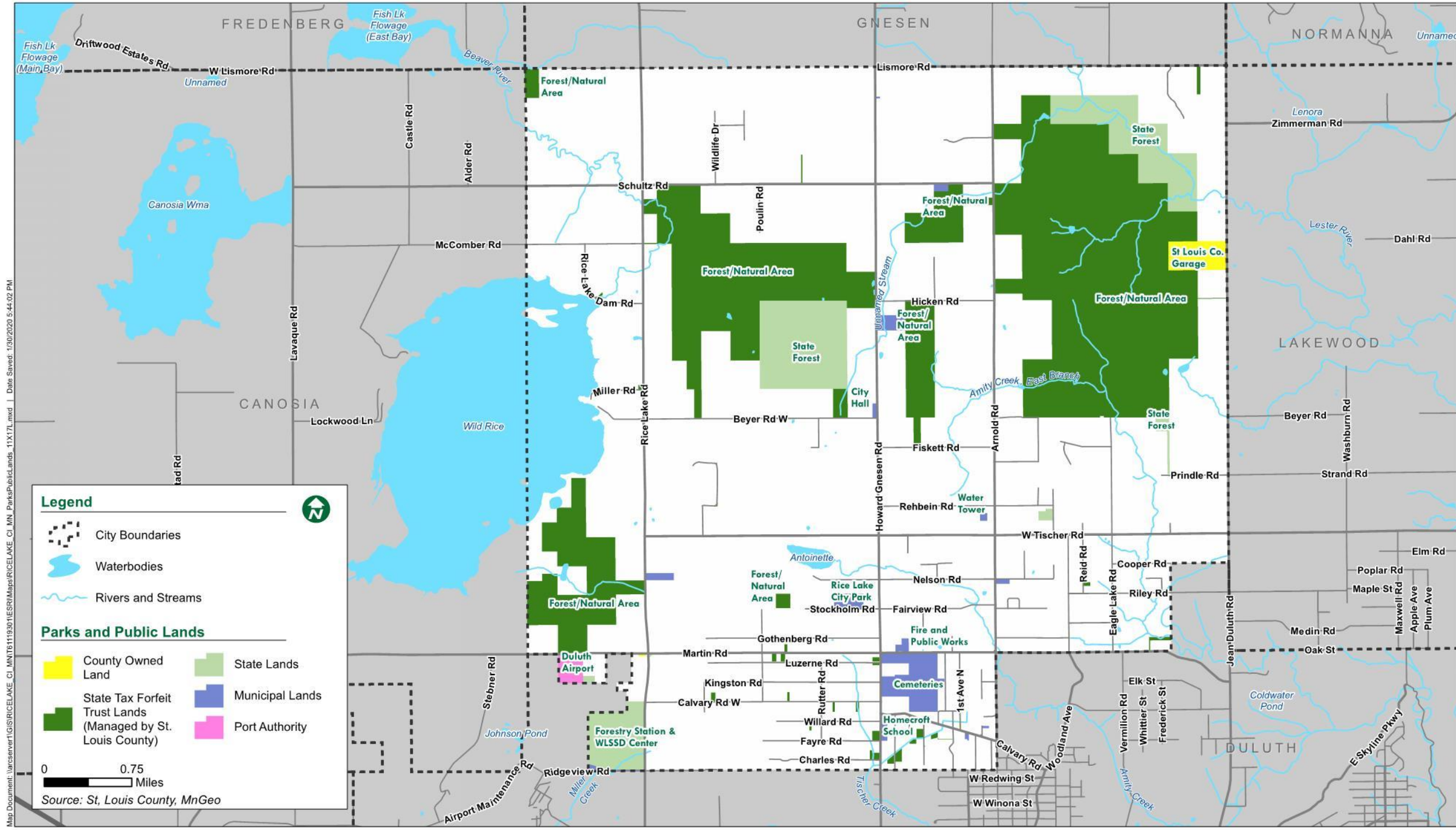
Regional Trails

C.J. Ramstad/North Shore State Trail

The C. J. Ramstad/North Shore State Trail is an approximately 150 mile long multipurpose trail that traverses St. Louis, Lake and Cook Counties of northeastern Minnesota. The trail winds its way through the forests behind the bluffs that overlook Lake Superior and provides access to some of the most beautiful and rugged scenery in Minnesota. Within the City of Rice Lake, the trail runs North-South just west of Jean Duluth Road and includes 2 formal campsites for trail users; Bald Eagle Camp, and White Pine Camp.

Table P-1 – Park Amenities by Location

Parks	Park Size (Acres)	Walking/Hiking Trails	Picnic Facilities	Shelter/Building	Boat Launch	Restroom	Skating Rink	Playground	Ballfields	Courts	Boat/Fishing/Water	Mowed Open Space	Nature Preserve	Dog Park
Public Parks														
Town Park	20	X	X	X		X		X	X	X	X	X		
Homecroft Elementary								X	X	X		X		
Rice Lake Public Boat Access	1				X	X					X		X	



Recommendations & Funding Opportunities

Recommendation:

To meet the stated goals and objectives, Rice Lake should consider undertaking a detailed recreation planning process. The process would identify facilities and amenities desired by the community, and overall needs, costs and benefits of their implementation. The plan would provide recommendations for types and locations of recreational facilities and give estimated costs and timelines for construction based on available funding sources. Maintenance costs and practices would also be identified through this process.

Funding Opportunities

Potential funding opportunities for the development of the parks and trail system include the *Regional Transportation Advisory Council* administered by the Arrowhead Regional Development Commission (ARDC), the *Safe Routes to School* Program administered by the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT), or the *Active Living* grant administered by Blue Cross/Blue Shield. Additionally, funding to facilitate a trail planning effort are available through the *Safe Routes to School* program and the *Transportation Enhancements* program administered by ARDC.

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