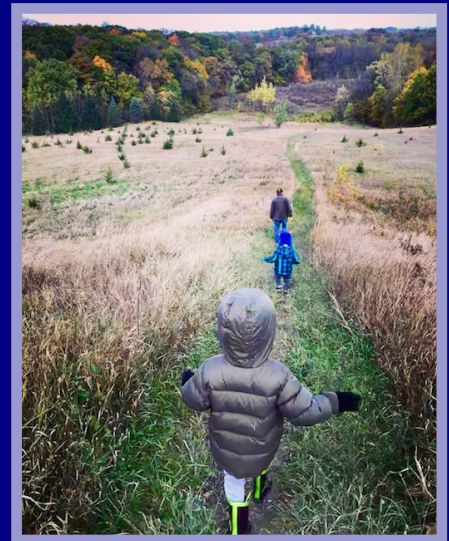
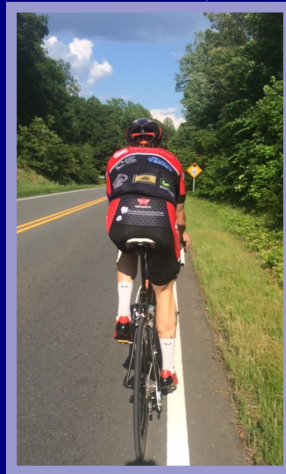


Meeker County Trails Plan



*A plan to guide future trail
and bicycle routes in Meeker County ...*

Adopted May 21, 2019

Prepared by the Mid-Minnesota Development Commission

The Meeker County Trails Plan was initiated by the Meeker County Board and paid for by Meeker County, the Mid-Minnesota Development Commission, Meeker Memorial Hospital and Clinics, and the Meeker, McLeod, Sibley (MMS) Healthy Communities Collaborative.



www.co.meeker.mn.us



www.mmshealthycommunities.org



www.mmrhc.org



www.meekermemorial.org

Meeker County

Trails Plan

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Meeker County Trails Plan

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Chapter One:

Introduction to the Meeker County Trails Plan

A. Chapter Highlights

Chapter One provides an introduction to the Meeker County Trails Plan, including a brief description of Meeker County and sections on the purpose of the plan, the benefits of having trails, and a description of the planning process. ***Overall, the Meeker County Trails Plan will help guide trail and bicycle route decisions in the County over the next 20 years.***

Chapter Two provides an overview of Meeker County, including information on demographics and the existing transportation network. The demographic information contained in Section B includes both current data and future population and household estimates. The area's existing transportation network is profiled in Section C.

Chapter Three provides an overview of Meeker County's existing parks and trails. The area's existing trails network is profiled in Section B and includes information on all types of trails (i.e., local, county and state) located in Meeker County and the nearby surrounding areas. Map 3A shows the location of the existing parks and trails in Meeker County.

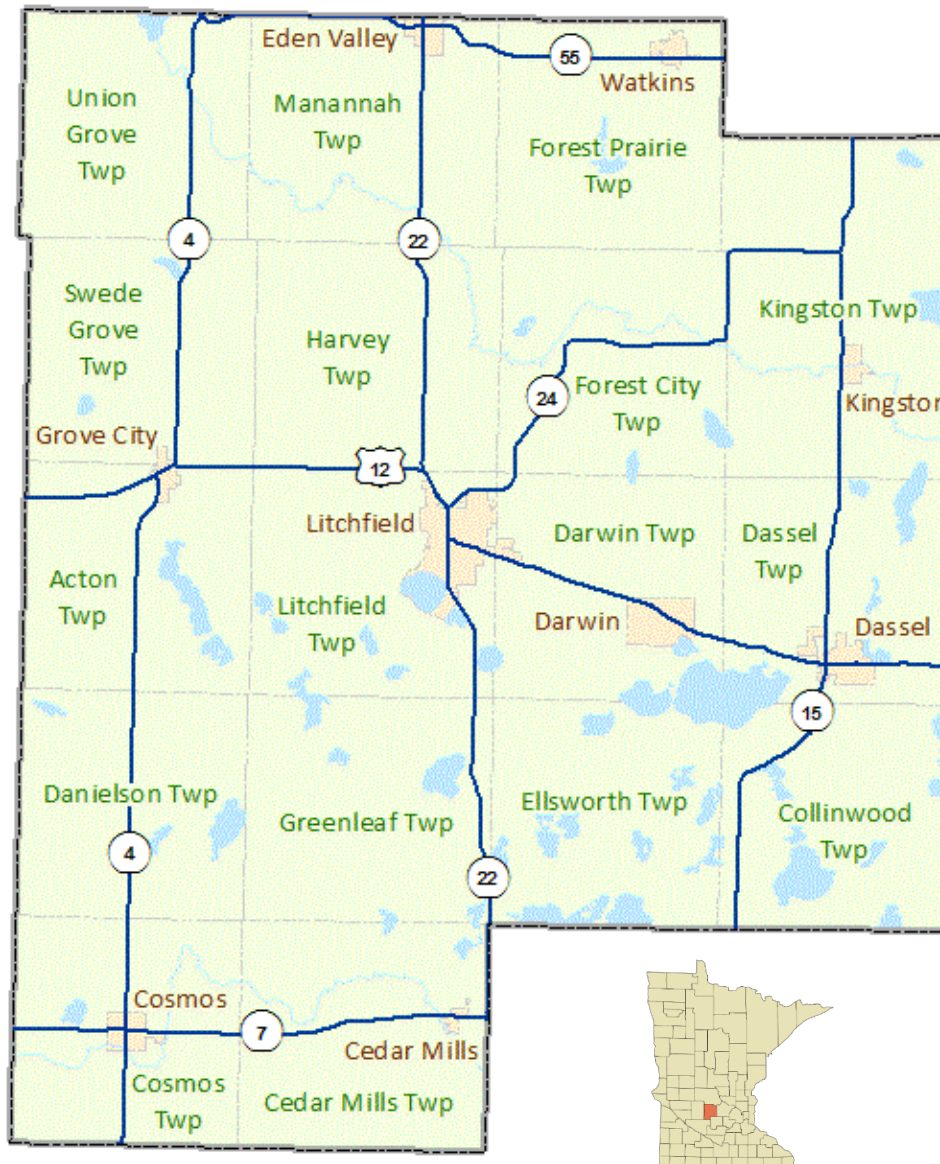
Chapter Four focuses on the online survey that was provided to residents of Meeker County and the surrounding areas. Links to the survey was provided through email, newspaper, social media, and radio. People who attended the Meeker County trails meetings were also encouraged to fill out the survey.

Chapter Five establishes an implementation section for the Meeker County Trails Plan. Section B outlines the potential trail projects that will be pursued by the County and the various trail stakeholders when the time is right. It should be noted that not all of the priority projects identified in Chapter Five are likely to be implemented over the next 10 to 20 years. It is the intent of this plan, however, to be ready to proceed when funding and maintenance agreements have been made. Section C identifies a few of the key non-infrastructure implementation steps that are needed. Section D identifies several potential funding sources. Finally, Section E profiles the key stakeholders who will be involved with implementing the Trails Plan.

B. Brief Description of Meeker County

Meeker County is situated in south-central Minnesota, approximately 40 miles west of the Minneapolis-St. Paul Metropolitan Area. The County shares borders with Renville and McLeod Counties to the south, Wright County to the east, Stearns County to the south, and Kandiyohi County to the west. The County has 9 cities and 17 townships. The City of Litchfield serves as the county seat. Other cities include Ceder Mills, Cosmos, Darwin, Dassel, Eden Valley, Grove City, Kingston, and Watkins. Figure 1A shows the location of Meeker County within Minnesota.

**Map 1A:
Meeker County, Minnesota**



C. Purpose of the Trails Plan

The Meeker County Trails Plan represents a commitment on behalf of the County and its various stakeholders to collectively develop and implement a plan to guide trail decisions. The plan has been written to over approximately 20 years (2019-2039), however, it has been designed so the implementation section (Chapter Five) can easily be updated when needed. This will become important as items are implemented and new priorities develop in the future.



Photo by UMN Extension

The primary purpose of the Meeker County Trails Plan is to guide development and maintenance of a county-wide network of trails to serve the needs of residents and visitors. In addition, this trails plan accomplishes the following:

1. Create a planning process that is open to all stakeholders to assist with identifying issues and ranking trail and bicycle route priorities.
2. Profile the existing network of trails in or near Meeker County.
3. Identify key destinations and points of interest.
4. Identify and discuss trail needs, safety features, trail amenities (i.e. parking, benches, etc.), maintenance, and future trail extensions.
5. Recognize the importance of promoting the use of trails through advertising, tourism, and economic development.
6. Understand potential funding sources, including grants, stakeholder agreements, and creative funding opportunities.
7. Facilitate a positive environment for Meeker County and all stakeholders to successfully work together to implement projects.

D. The Benefits of Trails

Trail development and use have become increasingly popular as communities embrace the multiple benefits of having a quality trail network. The following sections highlight some of the main benefits of having trails.

Recreational Opportunities and Healthy Lifestyles

Trails provide excellent opportunities for recreation and healthy lifestyles. Increased physical activity has long been associated with numerous health benefits, including preventing heart disease, diabetes, cancer and depression. Furthermore, overweight and obesity problems have infinite additional negative health impacts. A variety of sources indicate that approximately 35-40% of Americans are considered obese (*World Health Organization, Global Status Report, 2014*). Providing opportunities for individuals and families to use trails are cited as one part of the solution towards addressing this dilemma (*refer to the text-box below*).

***Walking, Biking...and National Security:
America's military needs healthier recruits from Minnesota***
www.missionreadiness.org

Mission: Readiness is a nonprofit, nonpartisan national security organization of more than 500 retired generals, admirals and other senior retired military leaders who work to ensure continued American security and prosperity into the 21st century by calling for smart investments in the upcoming generation of American children. They have authored a number of publications, including three in Minnesota, targeting the need for children to tackle obesity through routine exercise. Following are some of their concerns and recommendations:

- ***The problem?*** 69% of Minnesota's young adults are unable to join the military, with being overweight the #1 reason. Obesity rates among children have more than tripled within three decades.
- ***The Research?*** Sidewalks and safe street crossings, bike paths, traffic-calming devices, and similar infrastructure is linked to increased levels of walking and biking and greater overall physical activity.
- ***The Solution?*** Increased funding for safe routes to schools; support testing the effectiveness of different walking/biking programs; and, use long-term community planning to engineer safe options for walking/biking.

Transportation Options

Access to trails can be a viable option for many people to use as a mode of transportation. Although walking, biking, or riding a snowmobile to or from work or school are not viable options for many people, the ones who want to do this simply need access to trails. Developing a ‘safe trails network’ is usually the key component when commuters make the decision to use it rather than driving. In addition, having adequate trail access offers an economical option for some low-income families.

Tourism and Economic Benefits

A well-established trail network increases opportunity for residents and visitors to spend money locally while they are using trails. During Minnesota’s warm weather months, nearly 1.5 million cyclists, inline skaters, and walkers use the State’s nationally recognized city, county, and regional trails (*Parks & Trails Council of MN* www.parksandtrails.org).

According to *American Trails* (www.americantrails.org), 90% of trail users will be local, spending approximately \$17 per day per user on the local economy (i.e., gas, water, snacks, etc.). The remaining 10% of trail users will be non-local, spending up to \$104 a day. The additional expenditures can be accounted for with increased travel expenses (i.e., hotels, restaurants, etc.). Trails also feed the local economy by supporting the retail establishments who are targeted to trail users, such as those selling bicycles, snowmobiles, ATVs, and even hiking shoes. The rental of trail use equipment can also have a large economic impact to local retailers.

Minnesota’s Parks, Trails, and Economy

According to the Parks & Trails Council of Minnesota, Minnesota’s non-motorized trail users spent approximately \$2.7 billion annually on trips and equipment in 2014. This supported 37,000 jobs statewide.

Communities located along State trails are the primary beneficiaries of this economic activity. For example, the Paul Bunyan State Trail, Heartland State Trail, and Root River State Trail each generate between \$1.2 million and \$2.2 million for their local regions respectively. The majority of this spending – 90% or more – comes from trail users who reside outside the local economy, and thus are “new” dollars that would not otherwise be spent in the community. A similar study in Wisconsin found biking-related tourism and recreation contributes nearly a billion dollars to the state economy.

Community parks, trails, and open natural space are important factors that influencing people’s decision on where to live and work. According to the National Association of Home Builders’ most-recent data, walking trails, jogging trails, and park areas strongly influence the purchasing decision of a majority of home buyers. 80% of home buyers say walking trails are the top community characteristic when choosing a new home.

What are the Economic Benefits of Trails?

Research-Based findings...

The Pennsylvania Land Trust Association, a nonprofit organization, was created in 1991 by land trust volunteers and staff who recognized the need for an association that could focus on the broad needs of the conservation and take on activities that no one organization could effectively handle or wish to handle on its own. Today, the Association is made up of 75 organizations with 100,000 members and contributors.

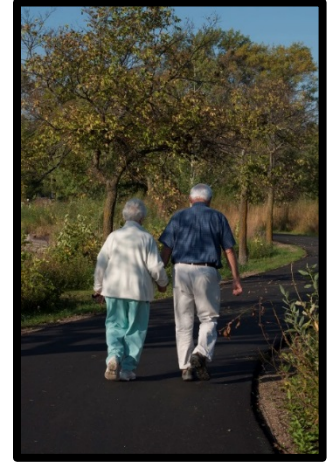
The Association helped fund the creation of the ConservationTool.org website, which has a large collection of conservation-related studies, reports and resources. The following economic benefits of trails have been documented through a variety of economic impact studies:



- Trails increase the value of nearby properties.
- Trails boost spending at local businesses. Communities along trails, often called trail towns, benefit from the influx of visitors going to restaurants, snack shops and other retail establishments. On longer trails, hotels, bed and breakfasts, and outdoor outfitters benefit.
- Trails make communities more attractive places to live. When considering where to move, homebuyers rank walking and biking paths as one of the most important features of a new community.
- Trails influence business location and relocation decisions. Companies often choose to locate in communities that offer a high level of amenities to employees as a means of attracting and retaining top-level workers. Trails can make communities attractive to businesses looking to expand or relocate both because of the amenities they offer to employees and the opportunities they offer to cater to trail visitors.
- Trails reduce medical costs by encouraging exercise and other healthy outdoor activities.
- Trails revitalize depressed areas, creating a demand for space in what were once vacant buildings.
- Trails provide transportation options and cut fuel expenses, offering reliable means of transportation for short distance trips. Nearly half of all car trips are less than 3 miles and more than a quarter are one mile or less.
- Trails provide low or no-cost recreation to families with low costs relative to other recreational services that could be provided by government.
- Trails increase tax revenues in the communities in which they are located.
- These benefits represent a huge economic return on the money invested into trail projects. The costs of land acquisition for trails, trail construction and maintenance are far outweighed by the economic benefits generated by trails.

Quality of Life

Combining all of the benefits together, trail plans can help residents build a strong *sense of community*. Having a quality trail network helps people take pride in their community, which often leads to people wanting to help take part in ensuring its success. Regular trail users are often the people who are trying to resolve local issues. They also are the ones who help to form user-groups, not only for social reasons, but also to establish a stronger collective voice.



Business leaders have admitted that quality-of-life indicators have become increasingly important where businesses are located. The eBay Company “is very concerned with retention of its employees and wants them to have the quality of life that they want in terms of housing costs, educational opportunity, access to the environment - a space where they can live, work, and play” (*Marty Weil, Area Development*). The traditional model of locating businesses primarily examined access to transportation, skilled labor, and adequate housing. Although these considerations are still very important, increasingly businesses are examining quality-of-life indicators, such as having nice trail amenities, prior to making important business decisions.

Stakeholder Cooperation

Trails plans are great opportunities for stakeholders to cooperate on identifying local trail needs and issues. Most importantly, trail plans help establish a framework for how stakeholders can get involved in properly implementing the plan. These activities can include grant writing, raising funds, finding sponsors for trail amenities, and assisting with trail maintenance. Stakeholders can also play a large role in organizing and providing education on trail safety.

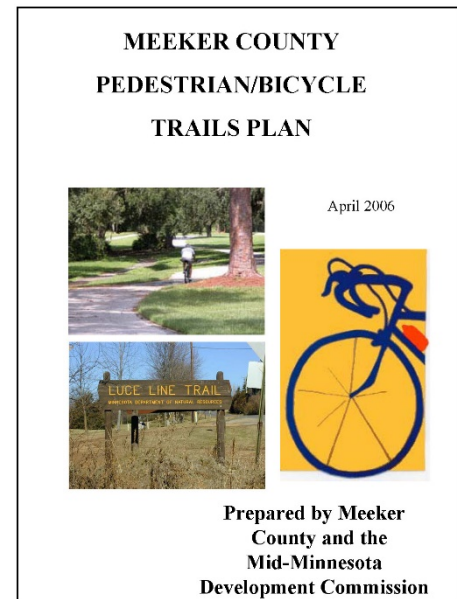


Individuals, couples, families, businesses, civic groups, and a variety of other stakeholders have been increasingly donating time and money to assist with trail maintenance and paying for needed trail amenities.

E. The Planning Process

The Meeker County Board made the decision in April 2018 to update the existing Meeker County Trails Plan, which was adopted in 2006. One month later, a contract was signed to hire the Mid-Minnesota Development Commission to facilitate the planning process and develop the plan.

MMDC hosted a Meeker County Trails Plan kickoff meeting on August 1, 2018 (refer to the flyer below). The meeting was well attended by approximately 25 citizens and numerous stakeholder groups. Participants included representatives from some of the municipalities located in Meeker County, two Meeker County Commissioners, the Meeker County Highway Engineer, the Meeker County Administrator, and the Meeker County Parks Superintendent. MMDC collected the participant's contact information and created an email group.



**Meeker County
Trails Plan Kickoff
Meeting... You're Invited!**

When? August 1, 2018, 10:30 a.m. - noon

Where? Meeker County Courthouse,
Community Room A (lower level)

Why?

Meeker County is beginning the process of updating its Trails Plan. The purpose of the plan will be to identify trail priorities over the next 10-20 years. Your input is welcomed!

For more information on the meeting or the trails plan, please contact
Matthew Johnson, Community Development
Director at the Mid-Minnesota Development
Commission
Email: communityplanning@mmrdc.org
Phone: (320) 235-8304 Ext. 231

Meeker County Primary Trail Corridors

Primary Trail Corridors as identified in 2006 Meeker Trails Plan

The email group was referred to as 'The Meeker County Trails Stakeholder Group' throughout the planning process. Individuals were encouraged to forward emails to other interested people and stakeholders to help grow the group. The trails stakeholder group eventually doubled in size by the end of the planning process.

In addition to gathering information and feedback from the various planning meetings, a Meeker County Trails Survey was administered online. The survey was designed to measure the public's interest in trail projects in Meeker County. One hundred eighty people participated in the online survey. The survey results are summarized in Chapter Four of this Plan.

Chapter One: Introduction

Flyers were created (shown below) and emailed to the Meeker County Trails Stakeholder Group throughout the planning process. The flyers were created to encourage people to get involved and to communicate their preferences on potential trail projects. The meetings were well attended and the initial stages of collaboration on future trail projects was established.

**Meeker County
Trails Plan Meeting #2
You're Invited!**

When? September 19, 2018, 10:30 a.m. - noon

Where? Meeker County Courthouse,
Community Room A (lower level)

Why?
Meeker County is in the early stages of updating its Trails Plan. The purpose of the plan will be to identify trail priorities over the next 10-20 years. Your input is welcomed!

For more information on the meeting or the trails plan, please contact
Matthew Johnson, Community Development
Director at the Mid-Minnesota Development Commission
Email: communityplanning@mnrkc.org
Phone: (520) 233-8504 Ext. 231



Lake Karolis Recreational Trail

**Meeker County
Trails Plan Meeting
You're Invited!**



When? Monday, October 15, 2018, 10:30 a.m.

Where? Meeker County Courthouse,
Community Room A (lower level)

Why? Meeker County is currently updating its Trails Plan. The purpose of the plan will be to identify trail priorities over the next 10-20 years. Your input is welcomed!

**The Meeker County Trails Survey
is available online until November 15, 2018, at:**
www.surveymonkey.com/r/MeekerTrailsSurvey

For more information on the meeting or the trails plan, please contact
Matthew Johnson, Community Development
Director at the Mid-Minnesota Development Commission
Email: communityplanning@mnrkc.org
Phone: (520) 233-8504 Ext. 231

**Meeker County
Trails Plan Meeting
And Online Trails Survey**



When? Wednesday,
December 5, 2018,
10:00 a.m.

Where? Meeker County
Courthouse,
Community Room A (lower level)

Why? Meeker County is currently updating its Trails Plan. The purpose of the plan will be to identify trail priorities over the next 10-20 years. Your input is welcomed!

Survey! The Meeker County Trails Survey is available online until November 30, 2018, at:
www.surveymonkey.com/r/MeekerTrailsSurvey

For more information on the meeting, survey, or trails plan, please contact
Matthew Johnson, Community Development
Director at the Mid-Minnesota Development Commission
Email: communityplanning@mnrkc.org

During the second planning meeting (September 19, 2018), the stakeholder group helped to create the following Meeker County Trails Plan Vision Statement:

“Meeker County will help facilitate the development of quality trails and bicycle routes that are safe, accessible, and have wide citizen and stakeholder support.”

Chapter One: Introduction

A Public Open House was held on Wednesday, April 17, 2019, to review the draft Meeker County Trails Plan. Changes to the plan were discussed and incorporated into the final version of the Meeker County Draft Trails Plan (2019).

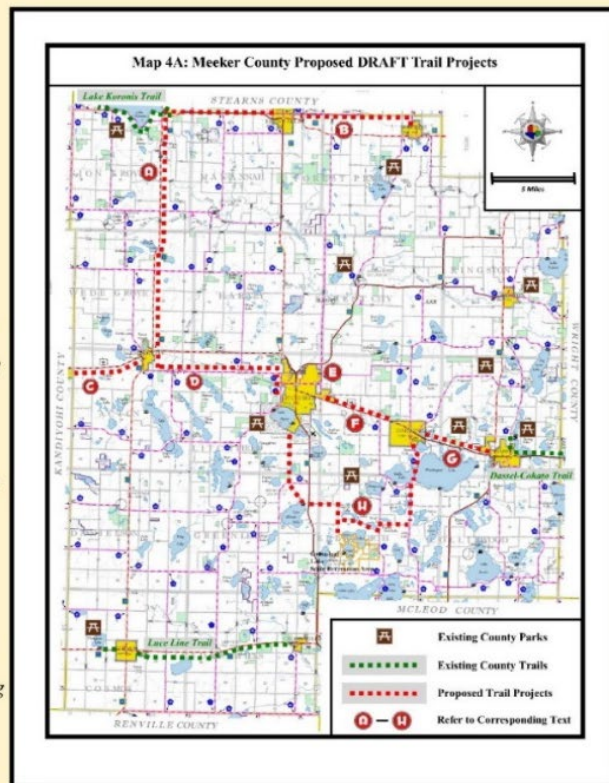
Meeker County Trails Plan Task Force Meeting & Public Open House

When? Wednesday, April 17, 2019
 2:30 - 3:30 Plan Task Force
 4:00 - 6:00 Public Open House

Location?

Meeker County
Courthouse,
Community
Room A
(lower level)

*For more information on
the meeting or draft trails
plan, please contact
Matthew Johnson,
Community Development
Director at the
Mid-Minnesota
Development
Commission by email at
communityplanning@mmrdc.org
or by phone at
(320) 235-8504 Ext. 231*



Chapter Two: Meeker County Profile

A. Chapter Highlights

Chapter Two provides an overview of Meeker County, including information on demographics and the existing transportation network. The demographic information contained in Section B includes both current and anticipated future population data. The area's existing transportation network is profiled in Section C and includes information on local roads.

B. Demographics

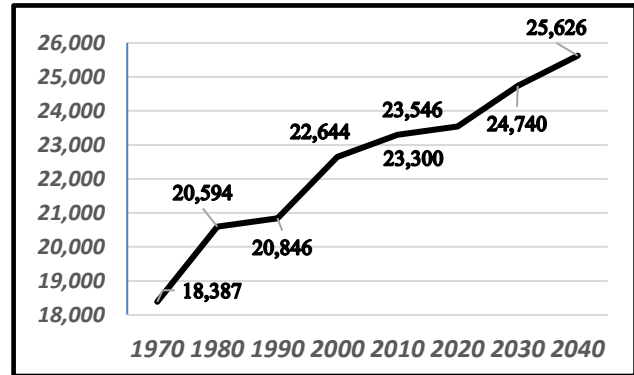
Meeker County population is estimated annually by the Minnesota State Demographer's Office (www.mn.gov/admin/demography). For 2017, the State Demographer estimated that Meeker County's population was 23,131 people. Table 2A shows the County's official population numbers as provided by the U.S. Census. Notice that overall Meeker County has grown at a steady pace, increasing its population by 12 % since 1980.

**Table 2A: Meeker County's
Population since 1970 (U.S. Census)**

Area	U.S. Census Year					Change since 1980	
	1980	1990	2000	2010	2017*	Number	Percent
Cedar Mills	73	80	53	45	43	-30	-41%
Cosmos	571	601	582	473	456	-115	-20%
Darwin	282	252	276	350	358	76	27%
Dassel	1,066	1,082	1,233	1,469	1,459	393	37%
Eden Valley	763	732	866	1,042	1,034	271	36%
Grove City	596	547	608	635	623	27	5%
Kingston	141	131	120	161	159	18	13%
Litchfield	5,904	6,041	6,562	6,574	6,736	832	14%
Watkins	757	849	880	962	961	204	27%
<i>Meeker Townships</i>	10,441	10,531	11,464	11,589	11,302	861	8%
Meeker County	20,594	20,846	22,644	23,300	23,131	2,537	12%
State of Minnesota	4.1 M	4.4 M	4.9 M	5.3 M	5.6 M	1.5M	36%

Meeker County's historic growth rates are used to help estimate the county's future population. Table 2B provides population growth estimates for the years 2020, 2030, and 2040 (also shown in Figure 2A). The results indicate the County's population should reach 25,626 by the year 2040. The table also shows how the majority of the communities would gain population, along with all of the townships collectively. Any one of the communities could experience rapid population growth due to a variety of unpredictable circumstances.

Figure 2A:
Meeker County's Historic Population and Future Growth Estimates



Note: population projections are estimates of an area's potential growth based on historical growth levels. A number of variables could accelerate or impede the actual growth experienced.

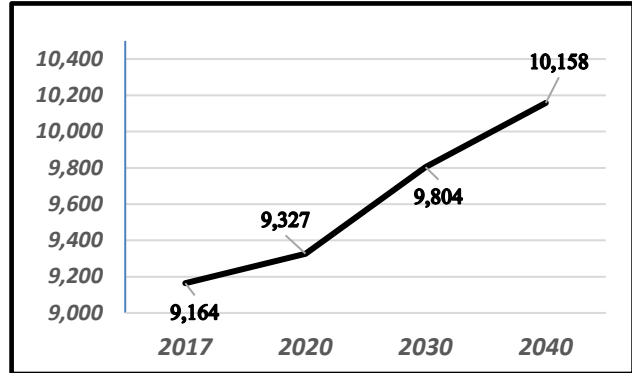
**Table 2B: Meeker County's 2020, 2030, and 2040
Population Projections (based upon growth since 1980)**

Area	U.S. Census Year				Projected Change	
	2017	2020	2030	2040	Number	Percent
Cedar Mills	43	43	41	43	0	0%
Cosmos	456	460	468	472	16	4%
Darwin	358	360	380	406	48	13%
Dassel	1,459	1,482	1,632	1,754	295	20%
Eden Valley	1,034	1,058	1,162	1,252	218	21%
Grove City	623	638	656	674	51	8%
Kingston	159	159	162	169	10	6%
Litchfield	6,736	6,786	7,063	7,292	556	8%
Watkins	961	966	1,042	1,095	134	14%
<i>Meeker Townships</i>	11,302	11,594	12,133	12,469	1,167	10%
Meeker County	23,131	23,546	24,740	25,626	2,495	11%

Households

Meeker County's historic growth rates are used to help estimate the county's future household growth. Table 2B provides household growth estimates for the years 2020, 2030, and 2040 (also shown in Figure 2B). The results indicate the County's household quantity should grow to approximately 10,158 by the year 2040. The Table also shows how most of the communities would gain households, along with all of the townships collectively. Any one of the communities or townships could experience rapid population and household growth due to a variety of unpredictable circumstances.

Figure 2B:
Meeker County's Household
Growth Estimates



Note: household projections are estimates of an area's potential growth based on historical growth levels. Several variables could accelerate or impede the estimated growth.

Table 2B: Meeker County's 2020, 2030, and 2040
Household Projections (based upon growth since 1980)

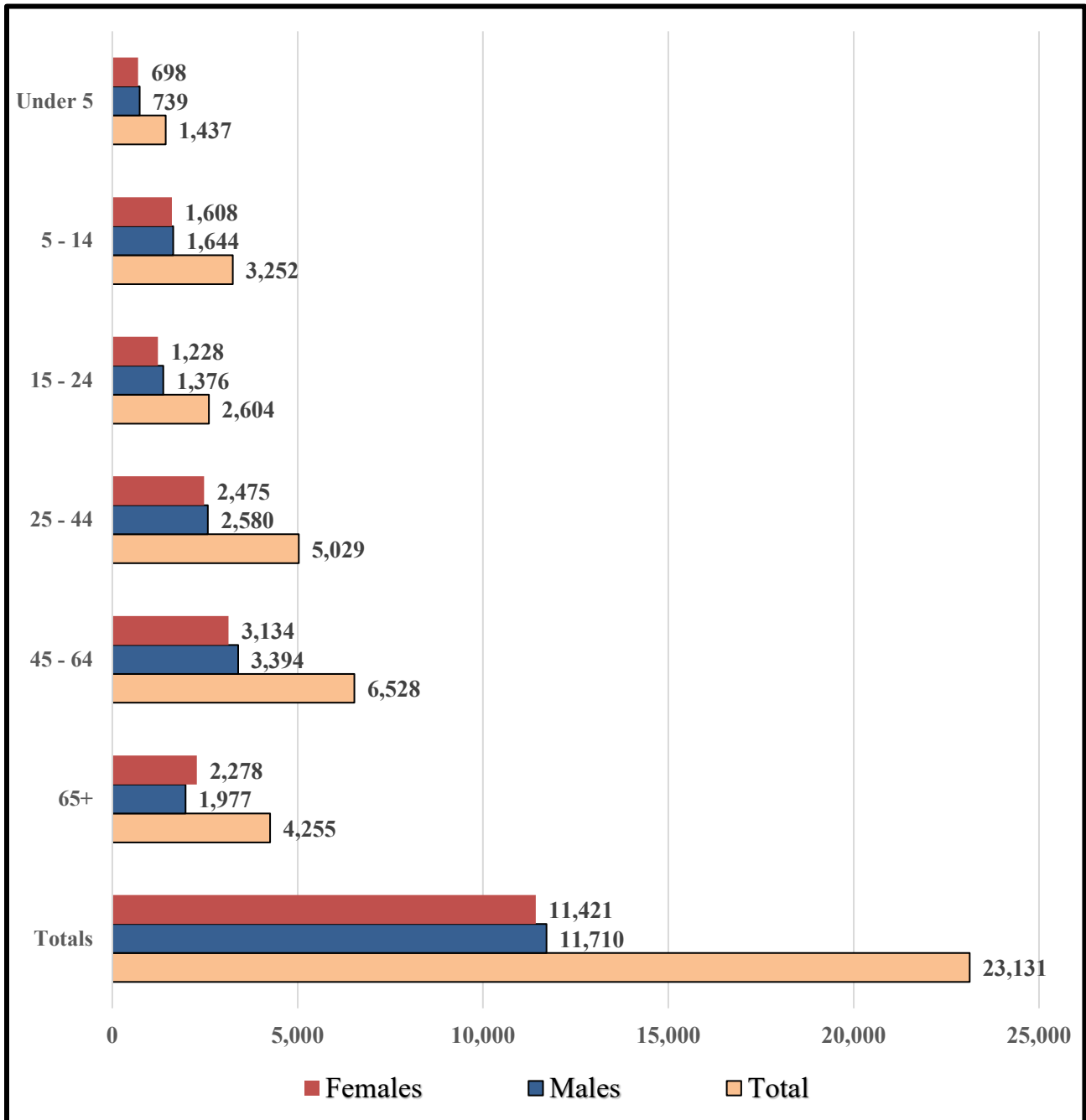
Area	U.S. Census Year				Projected Change	
	2017	2020	2030	2040	Number	Percent
Cedar Mills	24	24	24	24	0	0.0%
Cosmos	256	258	262	264	8	3.1%
Darwin	117	118	124	132	15	12.8%
Dassel	567	576	636	685	118	20.8%
Eden Valley	451	461	506	545	94	20.8%
Grove City	236	242	249	256	20	8.5%
Kingston	60	60	61	64	4	6.7%
Litchfield	2,752	2,773	2,888	2,983	231	8.4%
Watkins	397	399	431	453	56	14.1%
<i>Meeker Townships</i>	4,304	4,416	4,623	4,752	448	10.4%
Meeker County	9,164	9,327	9,804	10,158	994	10.8%

Age Categories

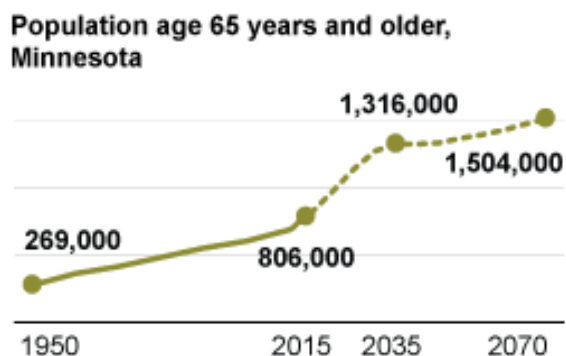
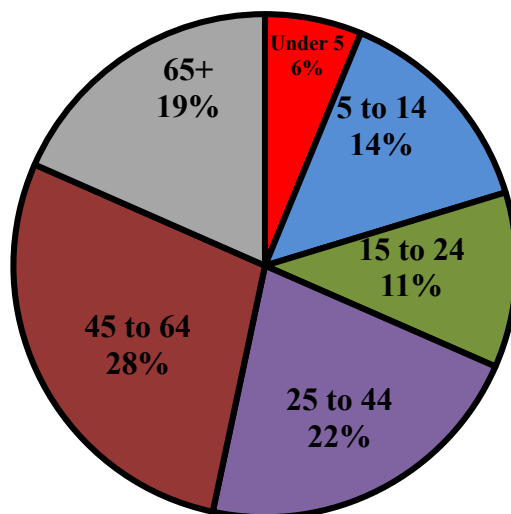
Meeker County's population by age category for the year 2017 is shown in Table 2C (data provided by the Minnesota State Demographer's Office) and Figure 2B.

Notice the County's largest age category is people ages 45 to 64, followed by ages 25 to 44. These age groups typically contain people who are working and raising families.

Table 2C: Meeker County's Population by Age Category in 2017



**Figure 2B: Meeker County's
2017 Population by Age Category**



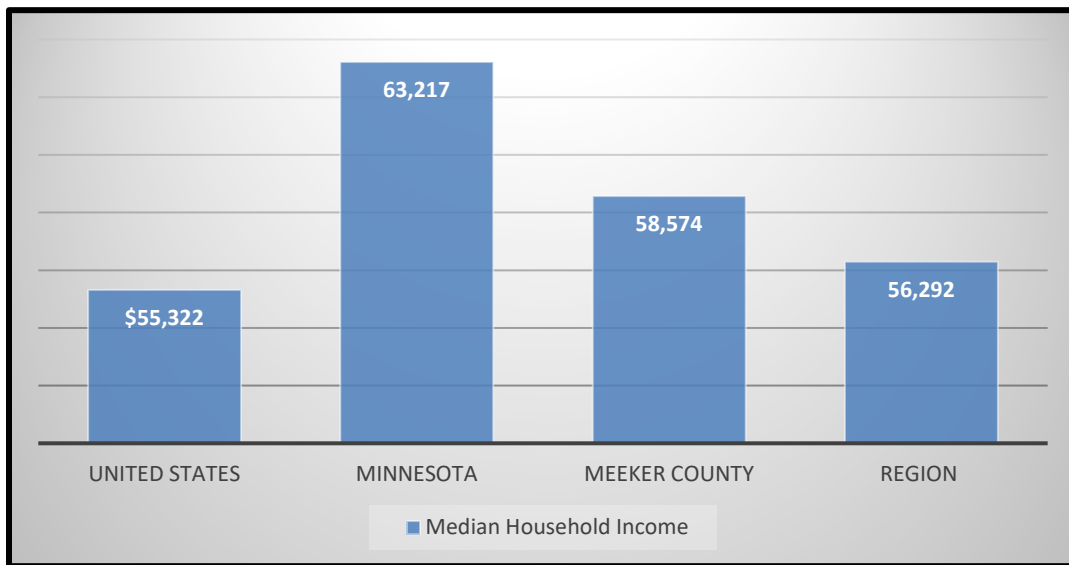
There are currently about 806,000 adults age 65 and older in Minnesota, making up about 15 percent of the population. Two decades from now, that population is projected to top 1.3 million, and more than one out of every five Minnesotans will be an older adult. Twenty years from now is also when Minnesota is expected to hit the peak “retirement- to working-age ratio,” with nearly two retirement-age adults for every five working-age Minnesotans, compared to the current 1-to-5. This huge demographic shift will have widespread impact on Minnesota’s economy, health care system, and social services.

Source: www.mncompass.org

Median Household Income

Households in Meeker County, MN have a median annual income of \$58,574, which is more than the median annual income in the United States. Table 2D shows how the median household income in Meeker County compares to Minnesota, the Region, and the U.S.

**Table 2D:
Meeker County Median Household Income**



C. Transportation Infrastructure

Section C profiles Meeker County's existing transportation network, including County Roads, Minnesota State Highways, and U.S. Highways. Meeker County's roadway network is displayed in Map 2A.

Roadway Functional Classification

Functional classification is the grouping of streets and highways into classes or systems according to the character of service they are intended to provide. Basic to this process is the recognition that most travel involves movement through a network of roads. Functional classification defines the role that any particular road or street plays in serving the flow of trips through an entire network. Table 2E shows the different types of road classification and how they are classified based on rural or urban settings.

Map 2B shows that Meeker county contains two principle arterials, which are U.S. Highway 12 and State Highway 15. As for the minor arterials, Meeker County has four, including State Highways 4, 7, 22, and 15. Other than principle and minor arterials, the remaining roads are a mixture of major collectors, minor collectors, and local roads. The classification of Meeker County roads should be considered when choosing on or off-road routes.

Chapter Two: Meeker County Profile

Map 2A;
Meeker County's Highway Map
~ To view online, visit: <https://www.co.meeker.mn.us/538/Maps>

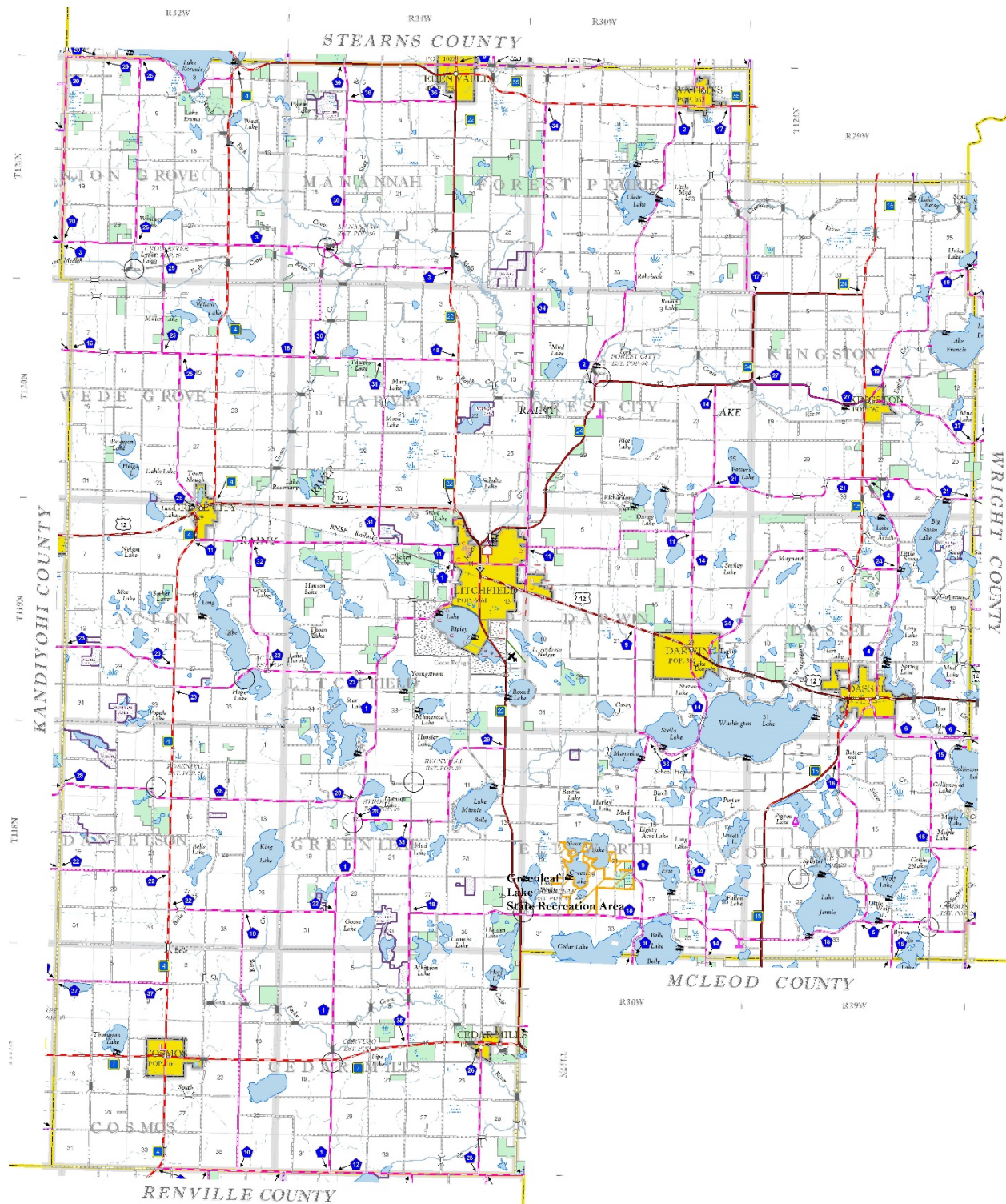
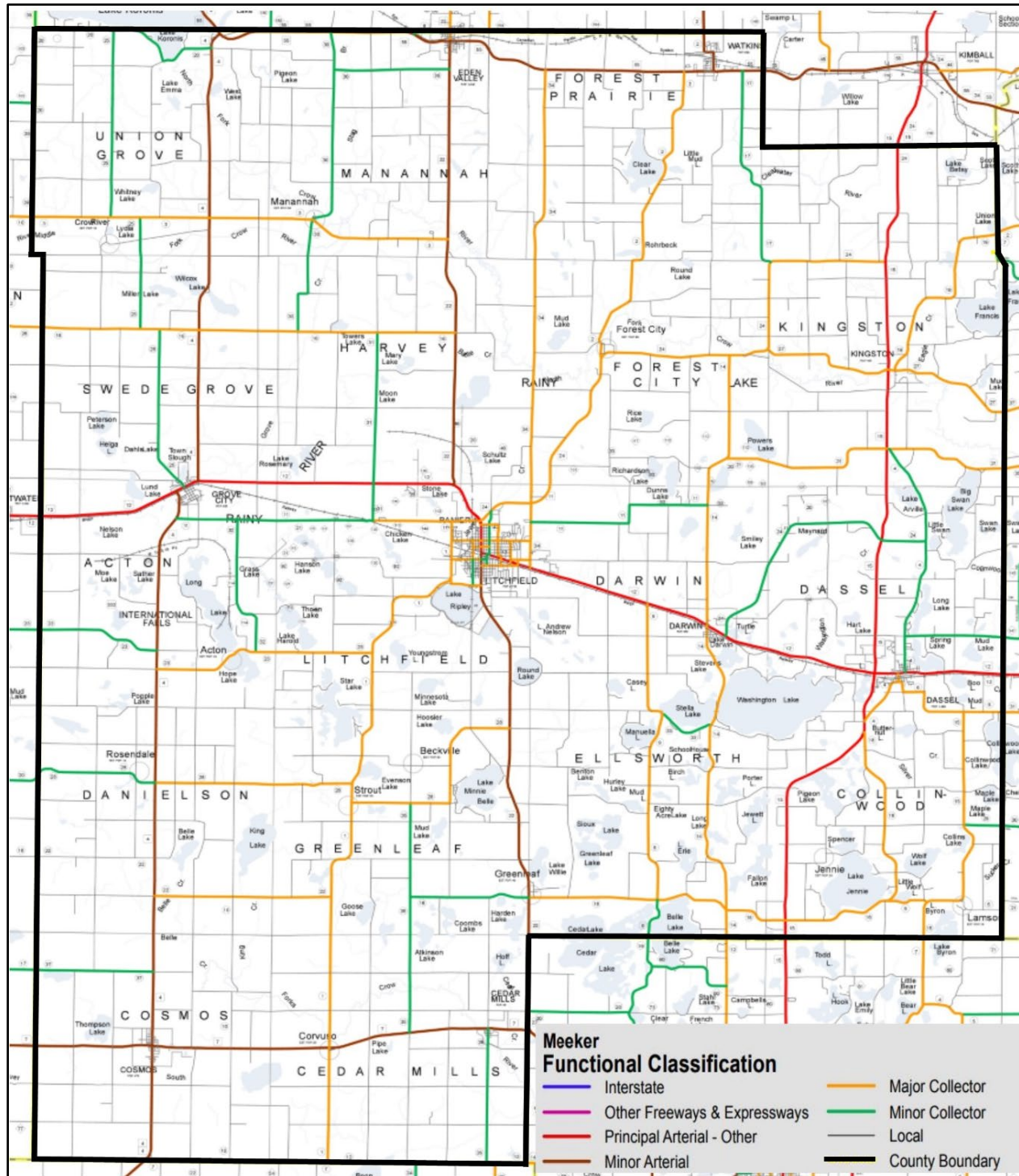


Table 2E:
Meeker County Roadway Functional Classification

Classification	Location	Characteristics
Principle Arterial	<i>Rural</i>	Trip lengths for statewide or interstate travel. Integrated movement generally without stub connections. Accommodates movement between (virtually) all urban areas. Two design types: freeways and other principal arterials.
	<i>Urban</i>	Serves major centers of activity with the highest traffic volumes and longest trip lengths. Integrated internally and between major rural connections. Service to abutting lands is subordinate to travel service to major traffic movements. Design types are interstate, other freeways and other principal arterials.
Minor Arterial	<i>Rural</i>	Links cities, large towns and other traffic generators attracting traffic over long distances. Integrated interstate and intercounty service. Designs should be expected to provide for relatively high speeds and minimum interference to through movements.
	<i>Urban</i>	Trips of moderate length at a lower level of mobility than principal arterials. Some emphasis on land access. May carry local bus routes and provide intracommunity continuity but does not penetrate neighborhoods.
Collector	<i>Rural</i>	Serve intracounty travel with travel distances shorter than on arterial system. More moderate speeds. Divided into major and minor system.
	<i>Urban</i>	Provides both land access and traffic circulation within all areas. Penetrates neighborhoods and communities collecting and distributing traffic between neighborhoods and the arterial streets.
Local	<i>Rural</i>	Local roads primarily provide access to adjacent land and the collector network. Travel is over short distances.
	<i>Urban</i>	Primarily permits direct land access and connections to the higher order streets. Lowest level of mobility. Through traffic is usually deliberately discouraged.

Map 2B:
Meeker County's Roadway Functional Classification



Chapter Three:

Existing Parks & Trails

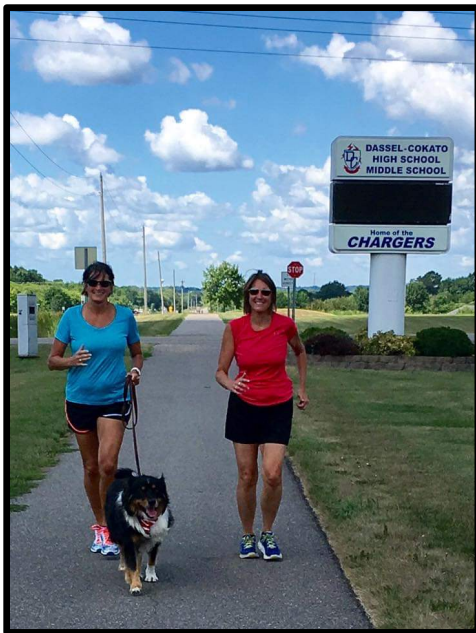
A. Chapter Highlights

Chapter Three provides an overview of Meeker County's existing parks and trails. The area's existing trails network is profiled in Section B and includes information on all types of trails (i.e., local, county and state) located in Meeker County and the nearby surrounding areas. Map 3A shows the location of the existing parks and trails in Meeker County.

B. Existing Trails

Section B profiles the existing bicycle and pedestrian trails located throughout Meeker County. Although the focus of the county's Bicycle & Pedestrian Plan is to help identify future county bicycle and pedestrian priorities, being familiar with the entire 'trail network' is an important step in helping to define the County's priorities.

Dassel-Cokato Trail

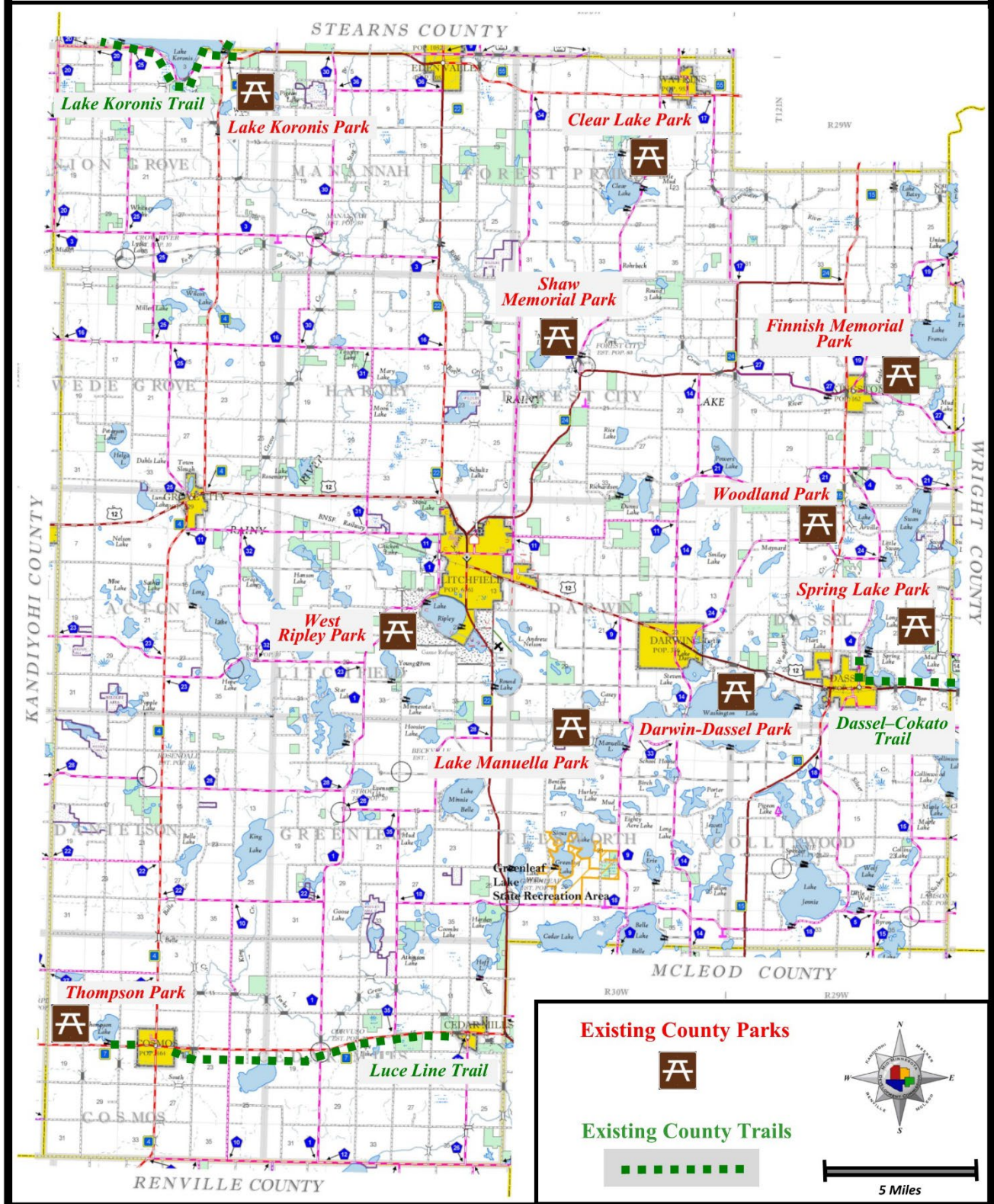


The Dassel-Cokato trail, which runs between Dassel and Cokato adjacent to Highway 12, has been a successful addition to the area since it was installed in 1994. This trail was designed for multipurpose uses including walking and biking. In recent years, the City of Dassel, the City of Cokato, Dassel Township, and the Dassel-Cokato School District have each committed funding for trail maintenance. Fundraisers and donations from local organizations have also supported maintenance needs of the trail. For more information on the Dassel-Cokato Trail, visit the following Facebook link:



<https://www.facebook.com/PaveTheWayDCTrail>

Map 3A: Meeker County Parks and Trails



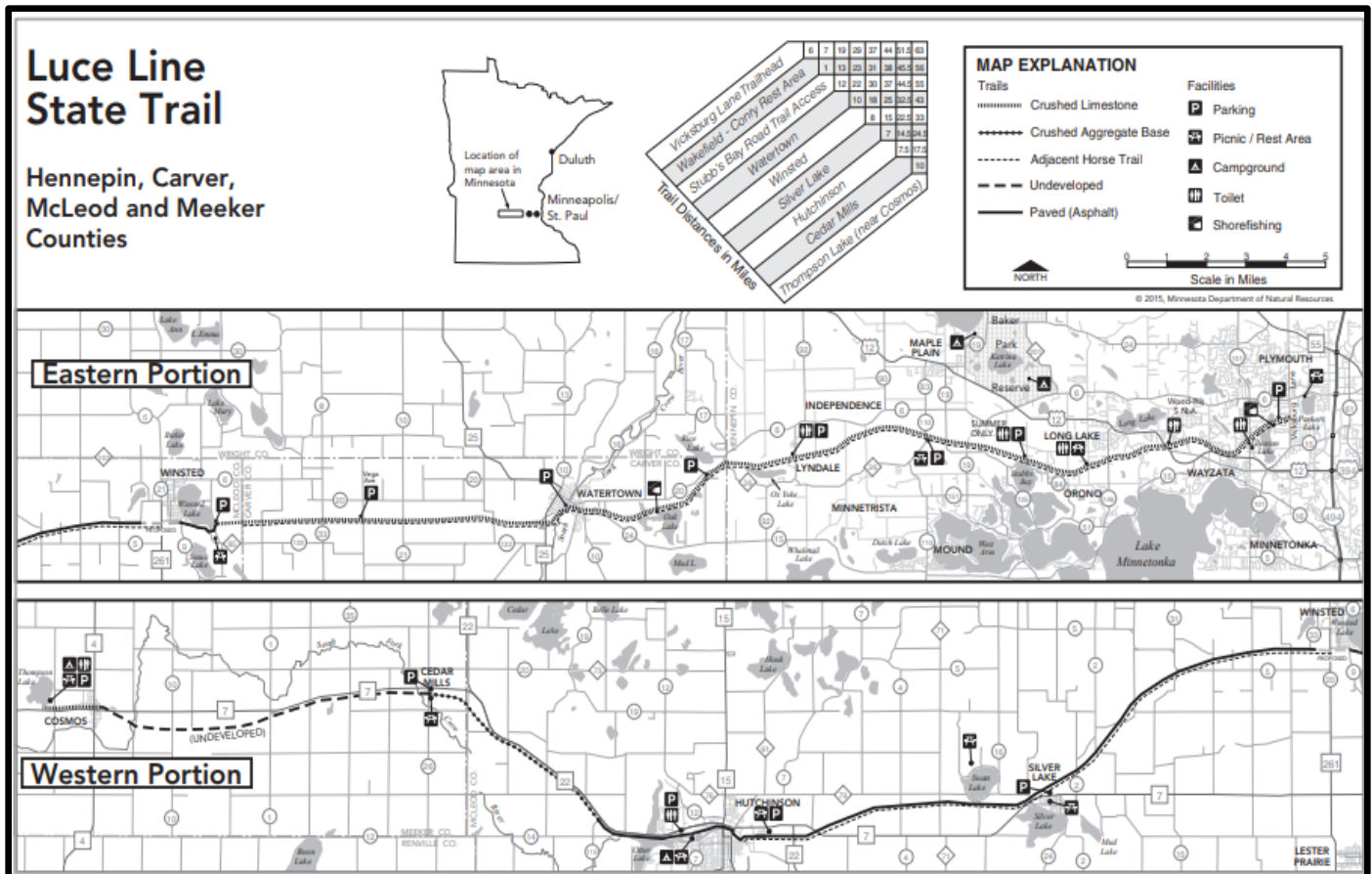
Luce Line Trail

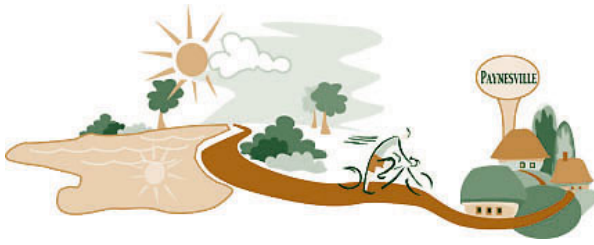
The Luce Line State Trail is a 63-mile-long former railroad grade which is developed for biking, hiking, horseback riding, mountain biking, snowmobiling, and cross-country skiing. The limestone surfaced trail runs from Plymouth 30 miles west to Winsted, with a parallel treadway for horseback riding (refer to Map 3B).

The trail from Winsted to Hutchinson was developed as a paved trail with a parallel, natural surface treadway for horseback riding. The aggregate base is of a larger size than the crushed granite but is bikeable. The trail from Hutchinson to Cedar Mills was developed with a base of crushed granite, which is of a larger size than the crushed limestone but is bikeable.

Stretching across the varied landscapes of metropolitan and rural Minnesota, the Luce Line is a preserved strip of countryside alive with many varieties of plants and animals. In the east the influence is woodland, a carry-over from the Big Woods that once occupied the area.

Map 3B:
Luce Line State Trail





Lake Koronis Trail

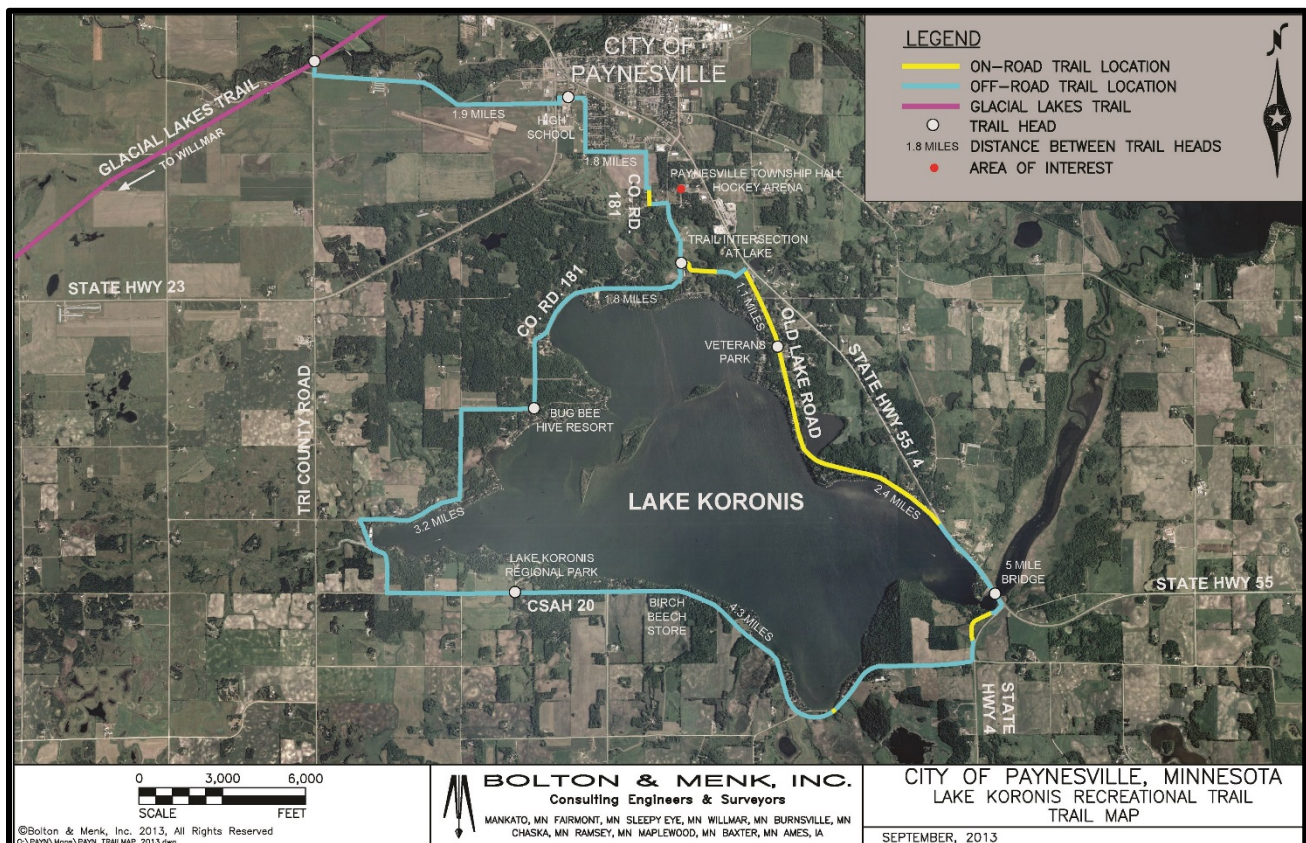
One of the more popular trails located adjacent to Meeker County is the 25-mile Lake Koronis Recreational Trail. Completing the trail was divided into eight phases, which began with developing an on-road trail along Old Lake Road in 2002 (refer to Map 3C). The final leg was completed in 2012. Map 3C shows how the trail can be accessed off the Glacial Lake State Trail.

Lake Koronis Trail consists of both on and off-road trail segments around Lake Koronis in Paynesville, Minnesota, just north of Meeker County.

www.paynesvillearea.com/lktrail/koronistrail.htm

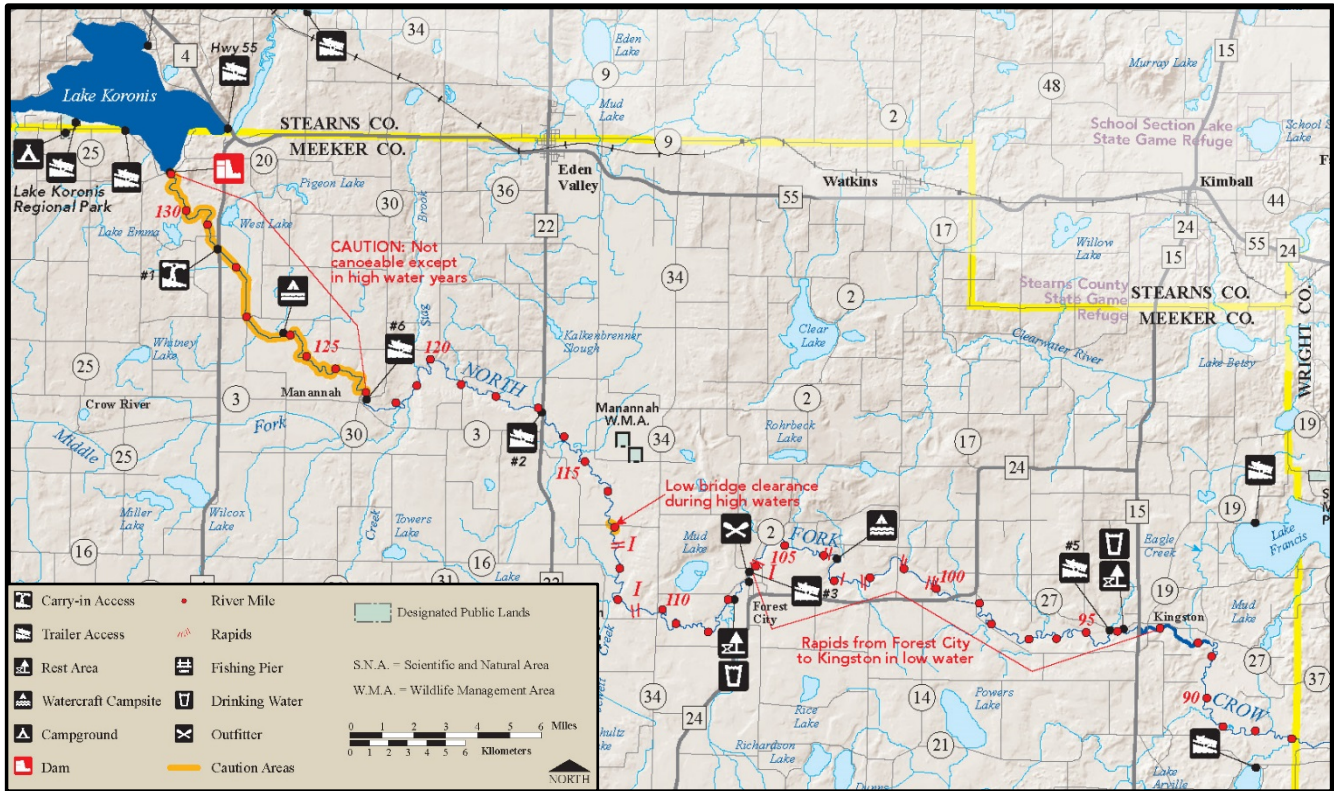


Map 3C: Lake Koronis Recreational Trail



Crow River Water Trail

Map 3D: Crow River Water Trail Map



The North Fork Crow River, 157.5 miles (253.4 km) long, flows from Grove Lake in eastern Pope County and follows a generally east-southeastward course through southwestern Stearns, northeastern Kandiyohi, northern Meeker and central Wright counties, through Rice Lake and Lake Koronis and past the towns of Regal, Paynesville and Kingston. Residents of the area use the river south of Manannah for kayak/canoeing and continue to Forest City and Kingston.



Meeker County Snowmobile Trails

The Meeker County Snowmobile Trails system was established in the 1970's as a volunteer organization intent upon managing the county snowmobile trails. There are currently more than 125 miles of groomed trails. These trails are groomed and managed by the two existing Meeker County snowmobile clubs: the Darwin Drifters and the Manannah Sno-Blazers.

- Easements for trails are from December 1st to March 31st when there is adequate snow.
- Trail easements are for snowmobiling only. (No ATVs)
- Snowmobile trails were made possible with the generosity of landowners.

Please follow the links below for more information on Meeker county snowmobile trails:

https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/snowmobiling/interactive_map/index.html

<https://www.facebook.com/darwindrifters>

C. Meeker County Parks

Section C profiles each of the 10 Meeker County Parks. Meeker County is proud of its parks and encourages all citizens and visitors to enjoy the wide range of facilities offered by them. Each park is beautifully maintained and offers a variety of amenities for the public to enjoy. All are somewhat unique in character.

The County Park Department is responsible for maintaining the 10 county parks. Any questions, requests for special uses, or reservations for events such as weddings, reunions, class picnics, etc., can be arranged by contacting the Meeker County Parks Superintendent at:

Meeker County Parks Department

114 North Holcombe Avenue, Suite 260

Litchfield, MN 55355

Phone: (320) 693-5450

Darwin-Dassel Park

Location

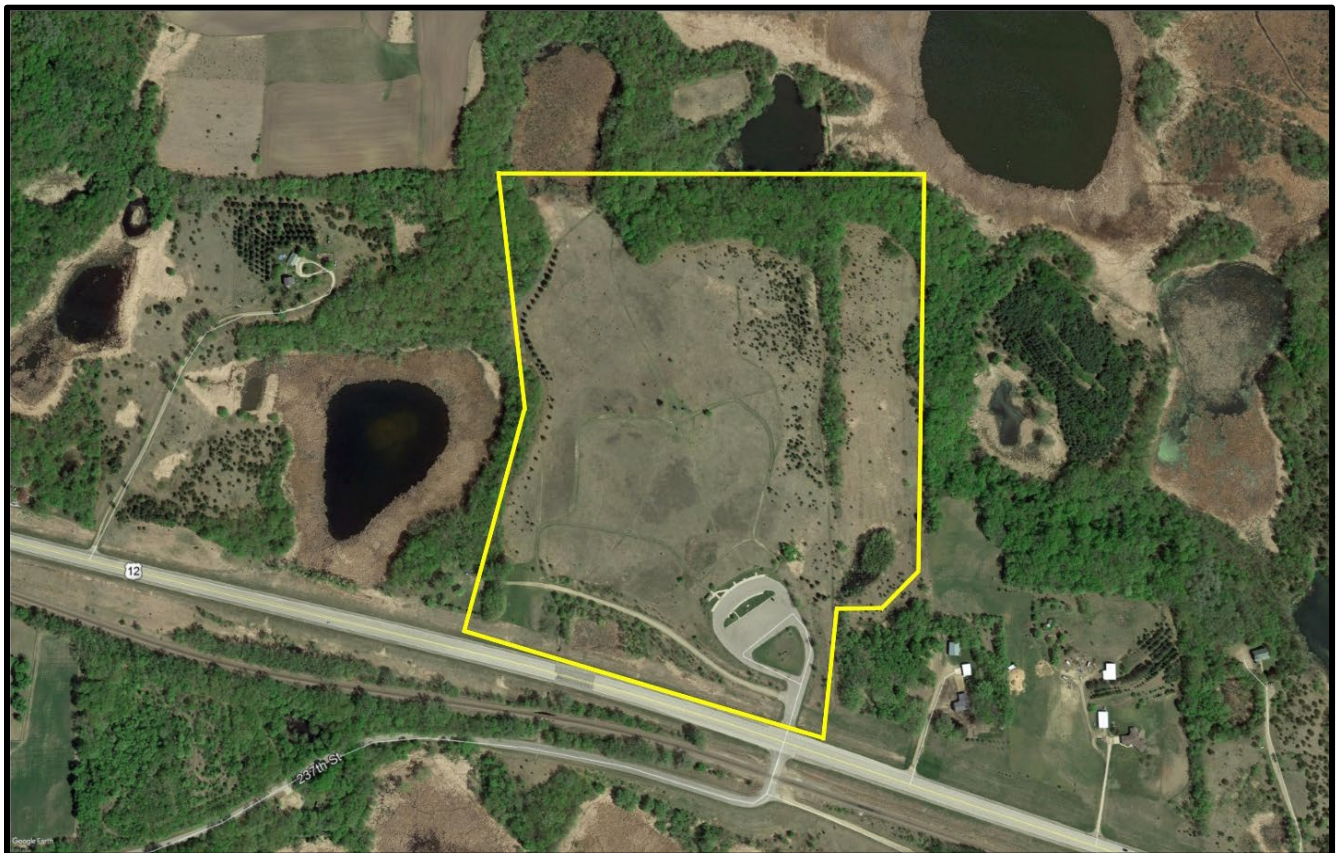
North Side: 69002 US Highway 12, Darwin

South Side: 68825 237th Street, Darwin

This is the largest park in Meeker County, located 2 ½ miles west of Dassel on Highway 12. The park has a sliding hill which provides a beautiful lookout over the area, restrooms, 6 ½ miles of trails for hiking, cross country skiing, and horseback riding.

Shelters: One open air shelter.

Park Size: 160 acres.



Clear Lake Park

Location

35775 CSAH 2, Watkins

The park is located three miles south of Watkins on County Road 2. The park includes a fishing pier, boat landing, hiking trails, restroom, and water.

Shelters: One open air shelter and one semi-enclosed shelter.

Park Size: 34.4 acres.



Finnish Memorial Park

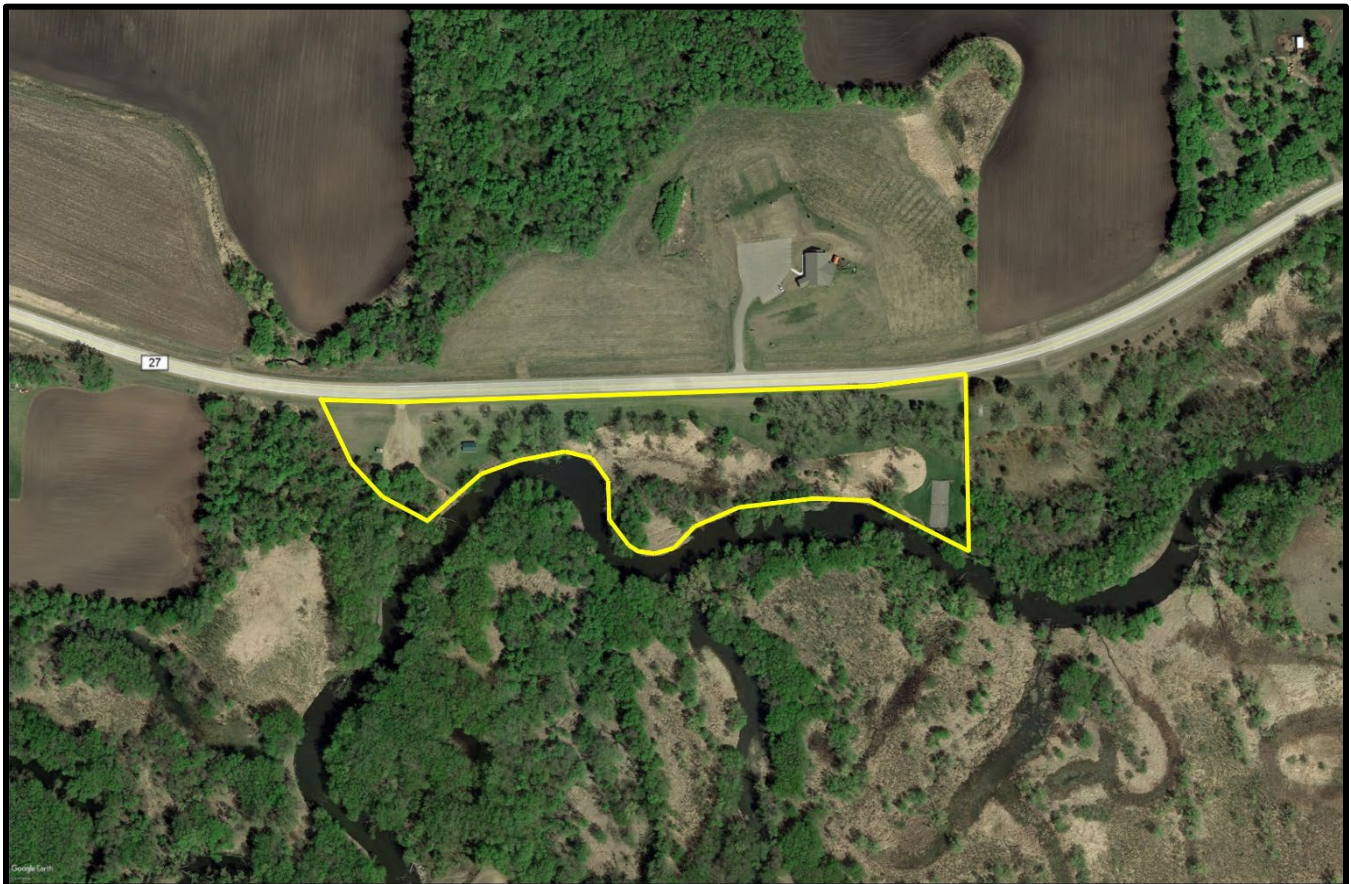
Location

71501 CASH 27, Kingston

The park is located west of Kingston on County Road 27 along the Crow River. This park has a tennis court, water, playground equipment, restrooms, and a canoe landing.

Shelters: One open air shelter.

Park Size: 17 acres



Shaw Memorial Park

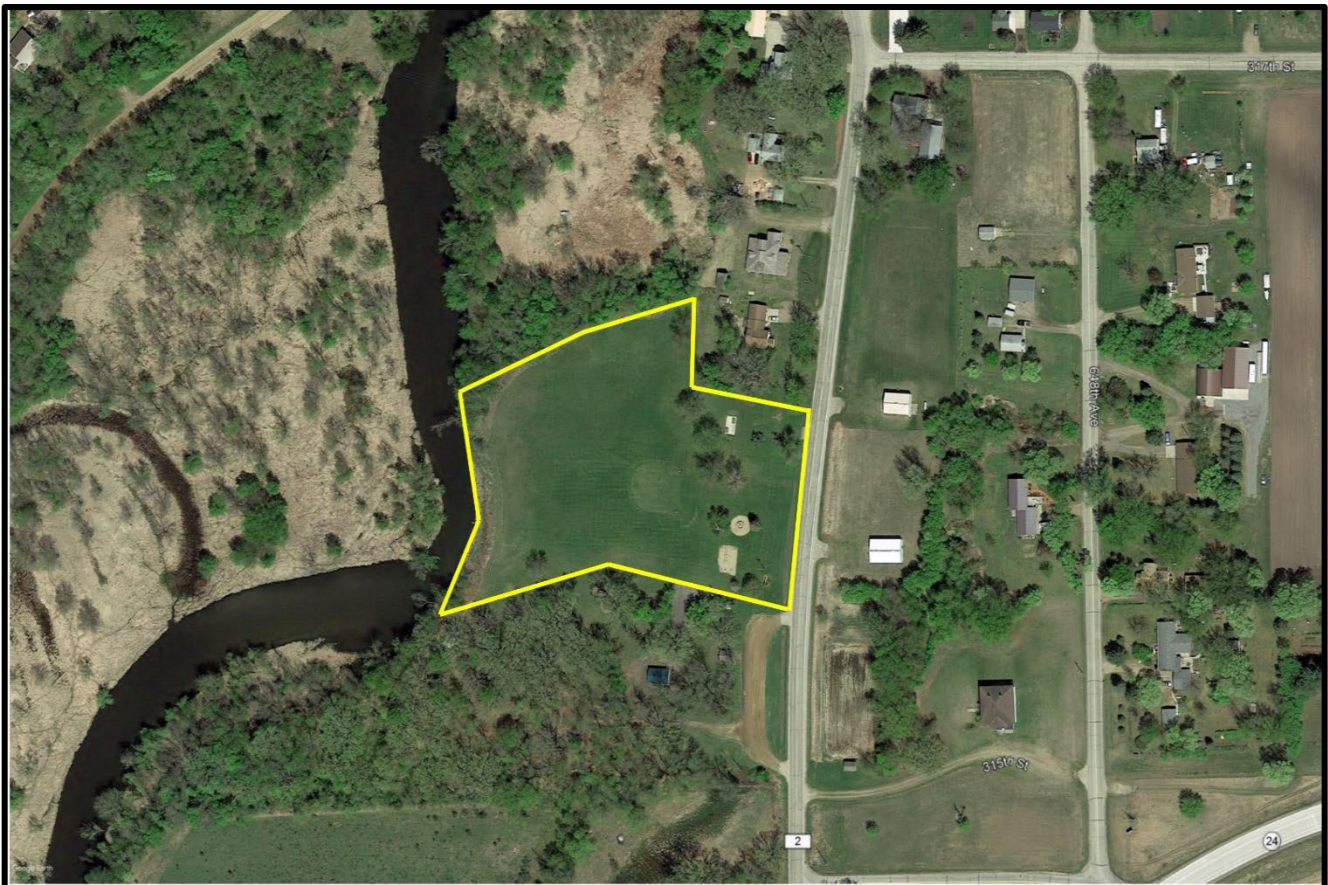
Location

31577 CSAH 2, Forest City

The park is located in Forest City along the Crow River near the Old Mill Dam. The park has playground equipment, softball field, basketball court, water, and restrooms.

Shelters: One open air shelter.

Park Size: 10 acres.



Koronis Regional Park

Location

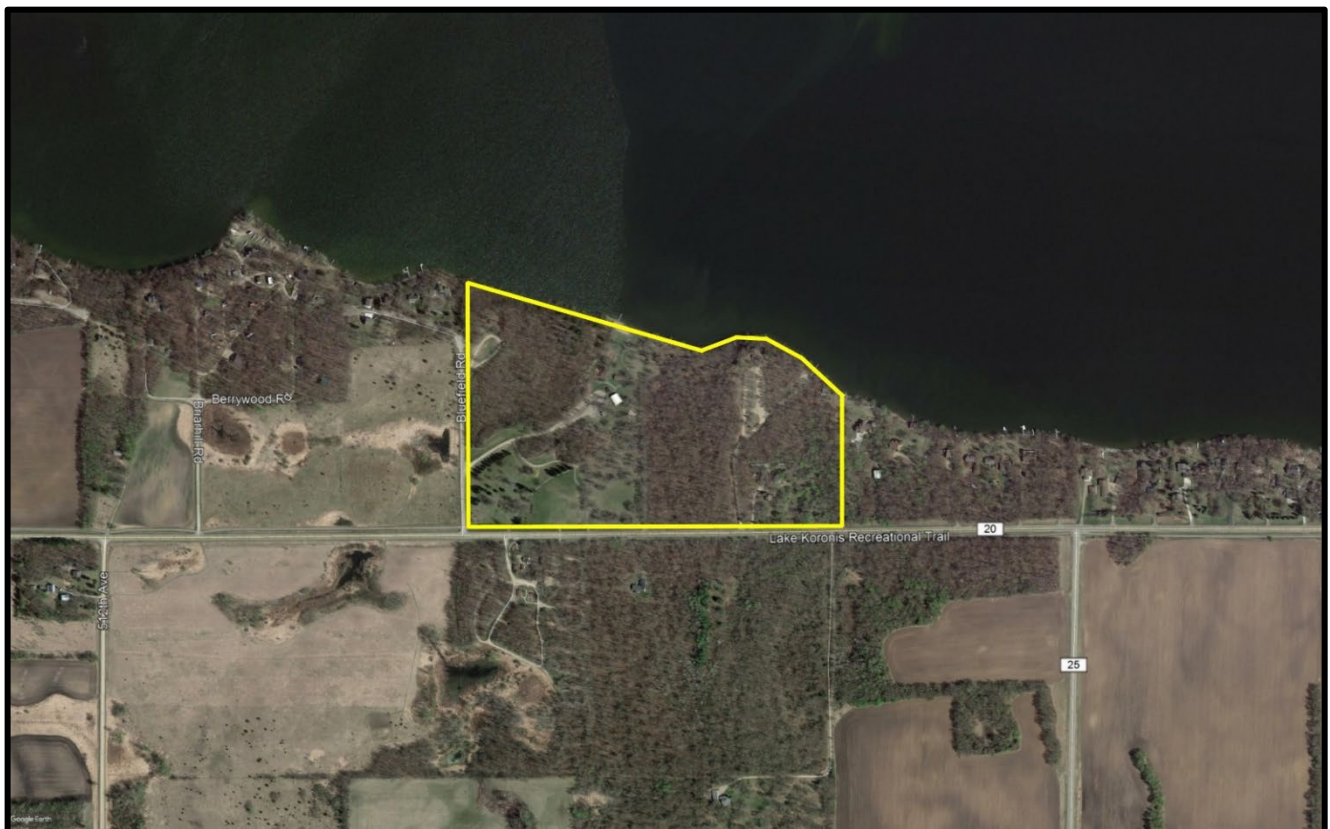
51625 CSAH 20, Paynesville

The park is located on the southwest shore of Lake Koronis, this park provides overnight camping with electricity and water, camper cabins available for rental, and restroom facilities with showers. The park has playground equipment, swimming beach, boat landing, lookout tower, baseball field, volleyball, shuffleboard, horseshoe court, marked hiking trails, and paved bike path.



Shelters: Large main shelter with serving area and 2 additional open-air shelters.

Park Size: 62 acres.



West Ripley Park

Location

Main Park: 25288 CSAH 1, Litchfield

Boat Landing: 25020 608th Avenue,
Litchfield

The park is located on the west shore of Lake Ripley and the south side of the City of Litchfield, this park has a boat landing, playground equipment, sand volleyball court, horseshoe courts, fishing pier, bike path, water, and restrooms.



Shelters: Main large open-air shelter and one small open-air shelter.

Park Size: 5.6 acres.



Lake Manuella Park

Location

21239 CSAH 9, Darwin

The park is located five miles south of Highway 12 on County Road 9 on the east side of Lake Manuella. This park has a swimming beach, restrooms, and changing house.

Shelters: Small open-air picnic shelter.

Park Size: 2 acres.



Spring Lake Park

Location

Main Park: 72599 240th Street,
Dassel

North Side: 72738 240th Street,
Dassel

The park is located one mile north of Dassel, just east of County Road 4. Includes a baseball/softball field, playground equipment, a paved bike trail, restrooms, and water. There are also boat landings and docks for Spring Lake and Long Lake.



Shelters: Four open air shelters, one near the playground and water access.

Park Size: 13 acres.



Woodland Park

Location

27299 MN Hwy 15, Dassel

Located 4.3 miles north of Dassel, most of the park is wooded, with rolling terrain, and two ponds. It has three miles of trails for hiking and horseback riding and 1 ½ mile of cross-country ski trails.

Shelters: N/A

Park Size: 80 acres.



Thompson Park

Main Park: 13099 525th Avenue,
Cosmos

North Parking: 13105 525th Avenue,
Cosmos

The park is located one mile west of Cosmos on Lake Thompson. Park includes a 9-hole disc golf course, playground equipment, sand volleyball court, fishing dock, water, and restrooms.



Shelters: Two open air shelters and one semi enclosed shelter.

Park Size: 22 acres.



Chapter Four:

Public Outreach & Trails Survey Results

A. Chapter Highlights

Chapter Four provides a summary of the public input received throughout the planning process. Section B highlights the information collected from the Meeker County Trails Survey, which was administered online and had 180 participants. Section C summarizes the comments received during the Public Open House held on April 17, 2019, to review the draft Meeker County Trails Plan.

Based upon the information gathered in the Meeker County Trails Survey and feedback from the stakeholders who attended the various planning meetings, the list of potential trail projects identified in this Chapter were narrowed down to the priority trail projects identified in Chapter Five.

The image shows a screenshot of an online survey titled "Meeker County Trails Survey". At the top is the Meeker County Minnesota logo. Below the title, the section is labeled "Trail Use". The survey text states: "Meeker County is currently updating its Trails Plan and would like your input! Please answer the following questions regarding trails in Meeker County. The survey should only take a few minutes and your answers will remain confidential. Thank you for your participation!". Question 1 asks: "1. Which types of trails would you or someone in your household use in Meeker County? Please check all that apply ...". The options are: Walking or Hiking Trails, Biking Trails, Mountain Biking/Fat Tire Bikes (off-road paths), Snowmobile Trails, Horseback Riding Trails, Cross-Country Skiing/Snowshoeing Trails, Canoeing/Kayaking Water Trails, and ATV/OHV Trails. There is also a field for "Other (please specify)".

Refer to Appendix A for a full copy of the Meeker County Trails Survey.

B. Meeker County Trails Survey

The Meeker County Trails Stakeholder Group decided early in the planning process that it would be a good idea to generate feedback from the public through the use of a trails survey. As a result, an online survey was designed and administered through Survey Monkey. The survey included nine questions that were designed to take approximately five minutes in total. All of the responses were anonymous and only one survey response was allowed per Internet Protocol (IP) address.

The survey was officially called the “Meeker County Trails Survey.” A press release was used in the local media, including newspapers and radio stations in Meeker County and surrounding areas. The survey was available online from October 25 through November 23, 2018, at the following link:

www.surveymonkey.com/r/MeekerTrailsSurvey

180 people completed the online survey. The highlights of the survey results are summarized on the following pages.

SURVEY QUESTION 1

*Which types of trails would you or someone in your household use in Meeker County?
Please check all that apply ...*

176 people provided an answer to Question 1 on the survey. The aggregate responses are shown in Figure 3A, while Table 3A shows each category's response rate (percentage of the total) and actual number of responses (count).

Figure 3A: Which types of trails would you or someone in your household use in Meeker County?

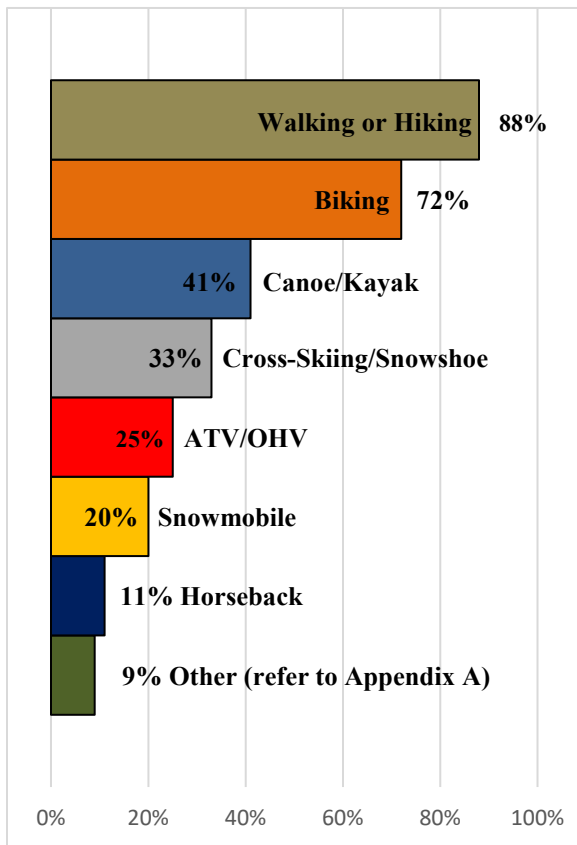


Table 3A: Which types of trails would you or someone in your household use in Meeker County?

<i>Response</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Count</i>
Walking or Hiking Trails	88%	154
Biking Trails	72%	127
Canoeing/Kayaking Water Trails	41%	73
Cross-Country Skiing/Snowshoeing Trails	33%	58
ATV/OHV Trails	25%	44
Snowmobile Trails	20%	36
Mountain Biking/Fat Tire Bikes (off-road paths)	11%	20
Horseback Riding Trails	9%	16
Other (please specify)	4%	7
Total Responses		176

The survey results revealed that Walking or Hiking Trails (88%), Biking Trails (72%), and Canoe/Kayak Water Trails were the three most popular responses. It should be noted that many of the responses overlapped into two or more of the categories since participants could check multiple categories. It should also be noted that many of the people who would've voted for the lowest categories may have not participated in the survey if they thought it only pertained to walking or biking. All of the written responses to the 'other' category can be found in Appendix A.

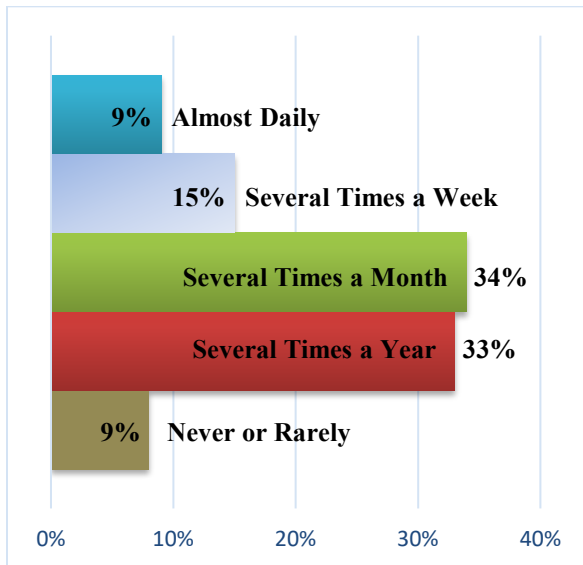
SURVEY QUESTION 2

*On average, how often do people in your household use trails?
Please select the best answer ...*

177 people provided an answer to Question 2 on the survey. The aggregate responses are shown in Figure 3A, while Table 3A shows each category's response rate (percentage of the total) and actual number of responses (count).

Figure 3B:

On average, how often do people in your household use trails?

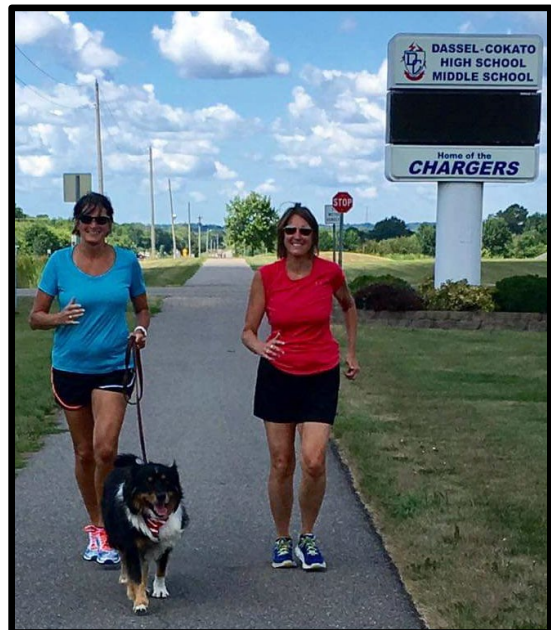


The survey results revealed that approximately 39% of the respondents use trails either several times a week (15%) or several times a month (34%). Nine percent of the respondents use trails daily (9% also indicated they never or rarely use trails).

Table 3B:

*On average, how often do people in your household use trails?
Please select the best answer ...*

Response	Percent	Count
Almost Daily (weather permitting)	9%	16
Several Times a Week	15%	27
Several Times a Month	34%	61
Several Times a Year	33%	58
Never or Rarely	9%	15
Other (refer to Appendix A)	9%	16
Total Responses		177



The Dassel-Cokato Trail is heavily used by pedestrians, cyclists, and rollerbladers in Meeker County.



SURVEY QUESTION 3

When developing trails in Meeker County, how important are the following considerations?

175 people provided an answer to Question 3 on the survey. Table 3C shows the results. According to the participants, the three most important considerations in developing trails is Respect for Landowners (89%), Safety (87%), and Maintenance (82%).

Table 3C:
When developing trails in Meeker County, how important are the following considerations?

<i>Category</i>	<i>Very Important</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Not Important</i>
Stakeholder/Partner Cooperation	49%	39%	13%
Respect for Landowners	89%	11%	0%
Safety	87%	11%	2%
Accessibility	80%	19%	1%
Health & Wellness	71%	25%	4%
Environmental Impact	0%	0%	0%
Tourism & Economic Development	53%	38%	9%
Trails should be multi-use if possible	60%	36%	3%
Maintenance	82%	17%	1%
Overall Cost	47%	47%	6%
Proper Amenities (parking, toilets, benches, signage, garbage, etc.)	64%	32%	4%

SURVEY QUESTION 4

*In general, who should help pay for trail costs?
Please check all that apply ...*

174 people provided an answer to Question 4 on the survey. The aggregate responses are shown in Figure 3C, while Table 3D shows each category's response rate (percentage of the total) and actual number of responses (count).

Figure 3C:
In general, who should help pay for trail costs?

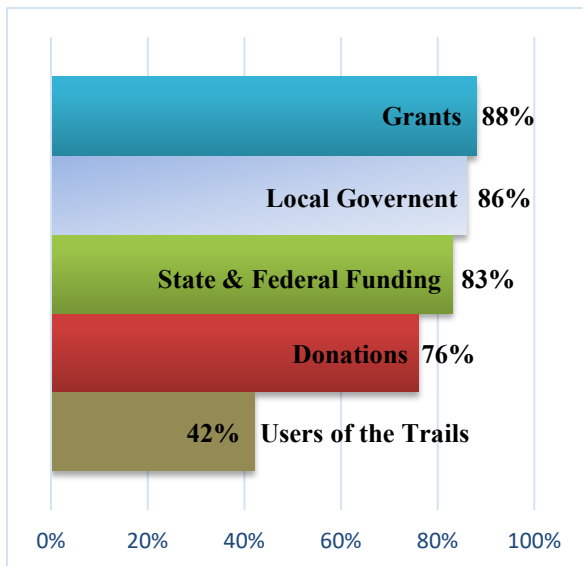


Table 3D:
*In general, who should help pay for trail costs?
Please check all that apply ...*

<i>Response</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Count</i>
Grants	88%	153
Local Government (cities and counties)	86%	149
State and Federal Funding	83%	144
Donations (families, groups, businesses, etc.)	76%	132
Users of the Trails	42%	73
Other (refer to Appendix A)	4%	7
Total Responses		174

The survey results revealed that most participants would like to see the use of Grants (88%), Local Government (86%), and State/Federal Funding (83%) to pay for trail costs (note: these categories are interconnected). 76% of the respondents thought that Donations should help pay for trail costs. Only 42% of the survey respondents thought that trail users should help pay for trail costs.



SURVEY QUESTION 5

*What trail projects would you like to see developed in Meeker County?
For example, new trails, new types of trails, parking areas, toilets, etc.?
Please provide a brief answer ...*

119 people provided a written response to Question 5 on the survey. **The following answers are unedited and placed in alphabetical order:**

- A 4-Wheel drive park
- A designated walking/biking trail around Lake Ripley....a bike trail to Youngstrom Park. Groomed CC skiing trails are Darwin hill.
- A north/south trail and an east/west trail that intersect.
- A paved multi-use trail in Litchfield connecting to the current trail on Lake Ripley a trail connecting the city of Litchfield to the Litchfield Nature Center (Youngstrom Woods) groomed cross country ski trails anywhere! the golf course would be a great place to groom trails too
- A small project to begin with would be a trail out to Walmart. People are always walking or biking in the ditch and side of Hwy 12. I would like to see a connection of a bike/walking trail from Litchfield to Darwin Ski hill and then eventually hook into the Dassel trail. It would be nice to have miles of ATV trails that could run from park to park and possibly create a campground at one of the parks for that.
- A trail for rollerblading
- Additional hiking trails. We use woodland park, and it would be nice if the buckthorn and poison ivy was removed from the park.
- Additional hiking/snowshoeing trails. Better signage/maps of existing trails
- Advertising available trails in concise pamphlet or online.
- An adjacent trail along Highway 12 and around lakes. Something connecting to the Lake Koronis Trail.
- Anywhere that I can ride without being afraid of being hit by cars.
- ATV
- ATV
- ATV trails
- Atv trails
- Atv trails
- Bathrooms along the trails. When going on a long run / walk, these are very important, especially for women.
- Better trail around lake Ripley, longer trail system possibly to Grove City or Darwin. Paved would be ideal. Benches and garbages would be nice but necessity. Maps would be nice if trail system we're longer and connect to other signs...it's nice to have parking dedicated to trails...small trail heads are nice and appreciated, some have picnic table and a bathroom. Water is nice to have as well for water bottle filling. Some have air and tool stations for bike repair... I would love to see a paved trail that would loop or extend more than 10 miles.
- Bike and walking trails around the lakes!!it would be great if we could become well known for adequate bike and walking trails!

Chapter Four: Public Outreach & Trails Survey Results

- Bike and water trails.
- Bike path from Dassel to high school, trails that would allow horses
- Biking trails
- biking trails that connect and are safe to ride on
- biking trails to lakes and around lakes
- Connect the DC trail to Darwin Hill.
- Connect to major trails like Glacial Ridge system and Luce Line system, connect parks and safe passage through cities.
- Continuing the Dassel to Cokato trail to Litchfield
- Cross country trails and hiking paths that loop around. Similar to Collinwood park.
- DC Trail continued to Darwin
- Disc golf/hiking trails
- Extended walking/biking trail from Dassel. Garbage cans in areas along trail along with restrooms. More walking/bike trails
- hiking trails, cross country ski trails
- Hiking, biking, connecting trails to existing trails
- hiking, biking, snowmobile
- Horse back trails
- I think ATV and OHV trails would be a big hit and would bring people from out of town in and they would bring more money into our smaller communities
- I think the main priority for Meeker County needs to be connecting the City of Litchfield to one of the nearby systems (Dassel-Cokato or Hwy 7). This both brings people to the community and allows people in the community to have options. While these could obviously be used for walking, I think the primary user would be bicyclists.
- I would like to see a dog park like the city of Hutchinson has. Spring Lake park in Dassel has space and flat ground on the west side/top of hill.
- I would like to see a pedestrian bridge or tunnel to traverse Hwy 12 somewhere between Sibley and Davis Avenues in Litchfield.
- I would like to see restroom facilities near all trailheads (port-a-potties are fine!) and proper garbage disposal places along each trail. I can't STAND visiting a park and seeing that people carelessly disposed of trash because a can wasn't nearby.
- I would love to see more communities connected like between Dassel and Cokato
- I would love to see new trails! I would also love to see a trail map so people know where the trails are. I have lived here for many years and have no idea where I can find this information or even if it exists.
- I would love to see new walking/biking trails near me with parking areas available and toilets would be a plus.
- I would love to see paved trails around the perimeter of Litchfield. Along 260th for a walking/biking route out to Walmart, along county rd. 11, county rd. 1 for starters. Not just on the shoulder, but a separate path, similar to the one between Dassel and Cokato. At least then there would be a way to get from one area to another. I think for all communities in Meeker county, that would be a good place to start. Having longer connecting trails is a longer-term goal.
- I would welcome new trails in interesting natural settings.
- Increased connectivity to what we already have. New trail connecting the DC trail further west into Meeker County along north side of Hwy 12 (ideally, all the way

Chapter Four: Public Outreach & Trails Survey Results

- to Litchfield). Pave the trail further west along the Luce Line. Ideally, pave all the way to Cosmos, but possibly pave to Cedar Mills and then crushed granite to Cosmos.
- Maintained cross country ski trails in wooded areas that can be used for hiking and/or mountain biking in the summer.
 - More hiking trails similar to Darwin Hill. I wouldn't be picky but it would be really nice to have something closer to Litchfield.
 - More paved bike trails-town to town especially.
 - More safe biking trails. The roads are just plain dangerous
 - More single-track mountain bike trails. Inter-community paved trails such as a continuous trail from here to Dassel would be nice! Groomed X-country ski trails with skating lanes would also be nice to have.
 - More trails
 - More walking/biking trails
 - Multi use trails. I'd like to see trails for mtn bikes-fat tire bikes to enjoy
 - New trails
 - New trails
 - New trails
 - new trails
 - New Trails along the northern part of the county
 - new trails at the north end of the county, walking. biking.
 - New trails connected to existing ones near communities
 - New Trails connecting various cities
 - New trails Dassel to Litch!!
 - new trails for hiking/biking
 - New trails for walking/hiking, ATV, signage
 - New trails in areas of small towns and lakes
 - New trails in the Northern part of Meeker Co.. Multi use, walking and biking.
 - New trails sound like a great idea! Meeker County has so much to offer in this area.
 - New trails that connect to Eden Valley
 - New trails! I would love that! Toilet helpful, but not necessity.
 - New trails, toilets
 - New trails,parking and toilets.
 - New walk/bike trails. Ours are well used.
 - new walking trails that are pet friendly
 - New walking/biking trails
 - new walking/biking trails
 - no trails
 - None.
 - None. Disseminate information on what is currently available.
 - Overnight camping for horses at the Darwin Dassel Park and at Woodlands. Funds are available, check with Renville County, they have a really good working relationship with their horse trail users.
 - pave the luce line
 - Paved bike trails.
 - Paved walk/bike: Litchfield to Grove City along highway 11. Litchfield to Minnebelle boat landing. Litchfield to Eden valley. Eden Valley to Watkins and Koronis Trail. Litch to Dassel. Darwin to Washington/Stella. Stella to Manuella to Minnebelle. Minnebelle to Highway 7. We can use existing parking and bathrooms are not necessary at this time. We should enhance existing recreational areas by making horse, walking, biking, canoe trails in these areas.
 - Pedestrian path all around Lake Ripley
 - Projects that connect to existing trails to the east, south, northwest.
 - Routes connecting communities and parks

Chapter Four: Public Outreach & Trails Survey Results

- Rural trails with safety being #1. Example, Eden Valley has no trails I'm aware of. I just bike on the sidewalks in town with my son. We aren't comfortable on the road.
- Safe trails not having to share road/path with cars/trucks
- Side by side trails
- Snowmobile
- something done with Luce Line from Cedar Mills to Cosmos
- Something like Luce line. Youngstrom
- Something around the Watkins area
- Trail all the way around Lake Ripley in Litchfield
- Trail connecting Darwin and Dassel
- Trail from Dassel to Darwin hill. Unpaved for minimal upkeep and for hiking/mountain biking.
- Trails
- Trails beyond the Litchfield/Dassel area
- Trails closer to Eden Valley
- Trails linking towns such as Grove City to Litchfield and trails around lakes would be nice. Designated parking is nice, and mini-biffs!
- Trails that serve more than the Litchfield and Dassel area
- Trails through nature preserves are peaceful. Benches along the way to rest. Make sure recycle bins and garbage bins available.
- Trails through quality prairie land.
- Trails to all parks in counties, including paved shoulders on state and county roads with signage to warn vehicle drivers.
- Trails with interesting features like water, bridges, overlooks, etc.
- Try to connect parks and recreation areas to each other and with other trail systems
- walk & bike path along East Highway 12 in Litchfield more trails around the lakes
- Walking and biking trails from city to city or lake to lake
- Walking and biking trails with toilets and rest areas.
- Walking trails in the Eden Valley area
- Walking, Biking trail between cities of Watkins and Eden Valley
- water refill stations
- We are very fortunate for our access to nature!
- We have no walking trails in our area by Watkins. That would get used a ton and if it could be multi use with bikes somewhere close people would really enjoy and use that a lot. Maybe connected to Eden valley? More access along the Crow River for kayaks would be great also. The places to get in and out and park are very far between. Kayaking is becoming very popular.
- We live by Dassel and use the trail from Dassel to Cokato. Might be nice to extend to Woodland park trail. Not very long for biking - so need to bike on main road
- Would like to see trails from Litchfield to Eden Valley and Eden Valley to Watkins
- Year round restrooms that aren't locked during daylight and early evening hours.
- Youngstrom Woods cleanup Facilities added



SURVEY QUESTION 6

*Do you have any additional comments regarding trails in Meeker County?
Please provide a brief answer ...*

26 people provided a written response to Question 6. **The following answers are unedited and placed in alphabetical order:**

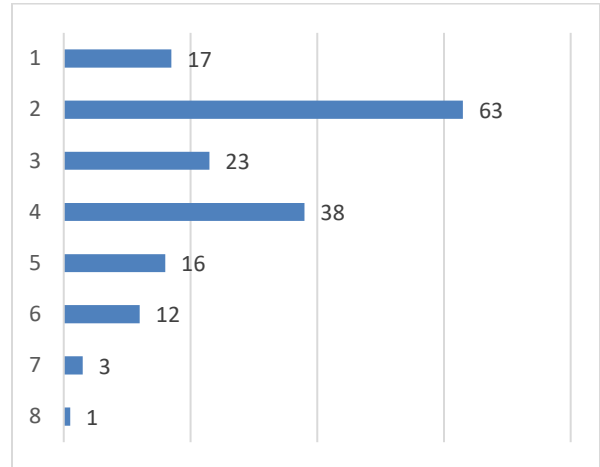
- Do not create trails where quality deer hunting occurs, as the stakeholders will conflict too much. Or make some only accessible for winter use after Jan. 1.
- Have some that are in or near towns.
- I think that trails are important for every community.
- If added to our already growing taxes we will consider moving out of Meeker county.
- It would be great if the Greenleaf rec area trail made a loop. At this point, after going in a half mile or more, one simply has to come back on the trail just traversed. / One of the most interesting Crow River canoe runs lies between Hwy 34 and Forest City. Much of it is quite wild. It's been some time since I've made that run because the last time I went through almost every bend had downed trees, etc., making for very hard going. It would be great if the worst of this could be cleared out.
- Litchfield needs safe trails
- Look at the whole county and not just the Litchfield, Darwin & Dassel area
- More trails need to be developed by ppl who actually use them for cross country skiing and horse back riding.
- More useful trails would help get people out and about and also provide more safety when walking or biking
- Need more trails
- need safe non-motorized way to get to East Highway 12 businesses in Litchfield
- no trails
- Pathway does not need to be paved. But if there is ample funds the hard surface is better for bicycling.
- Please start eradicating noxious weeds. IE buckthorn, and wild parsnip. It would be cool if the parks started implementing rotational grazing of goats or cattle to maintain forest and prairie health. I would love to help. Josh Pommier 320 292 5860
- Snowmobile trails are maintained very well, just need snow
- Stop looking at taking land from property owners for trails they do not want! Example: Greenleaf and Cedar Lake
- Thanks
- There's nothing around Litchfield for us oldersters. Only Luceline 10 miles South. Dassel, Cokato 10miles East and Spicer, Willmar, Paynesville 15 miles West and North. Have to haul bikes wherever you go. No wonder no one want to move to Lfd. Lots of people from Lfd moving to Hutchinson, better health care, more Drs., better choice of housing for retirees.
- They are great for everyone and provide economic development.
- They should be spread out through the entire county, not just localized in the larger towns.
- Water stations
- We have some great trails but it would be nice if there were some more.

- We love to use the county parks and trails when nice weather hits. The spring/summer trail maintenance seems to be on par, but when I've been snowshoeing in Darwin, particularly, the trails are almost inaccessible. My 60-year-old mother has been modifying her snowshoeing routine due to overgrowth of the trails she frequents, and that's such a shame! I'd love to be able to take our kids out, as well, without having to worry about them tripping in their snowshoes or having to fight their way through brambles and overgrowth.
- We NEED them.
- We travel 30 to 60 minutes away to bike on trails because we do not have much on a regular basis. Sometimes we go 200 miles or more to bike.
- We would love a trail system in our area instead of having to go the Wobegon Trail etc.



SURVEY QUESTION 7

*How many people
are in your household?*



SURVEY QUESTION 8

Please enter your zip code.

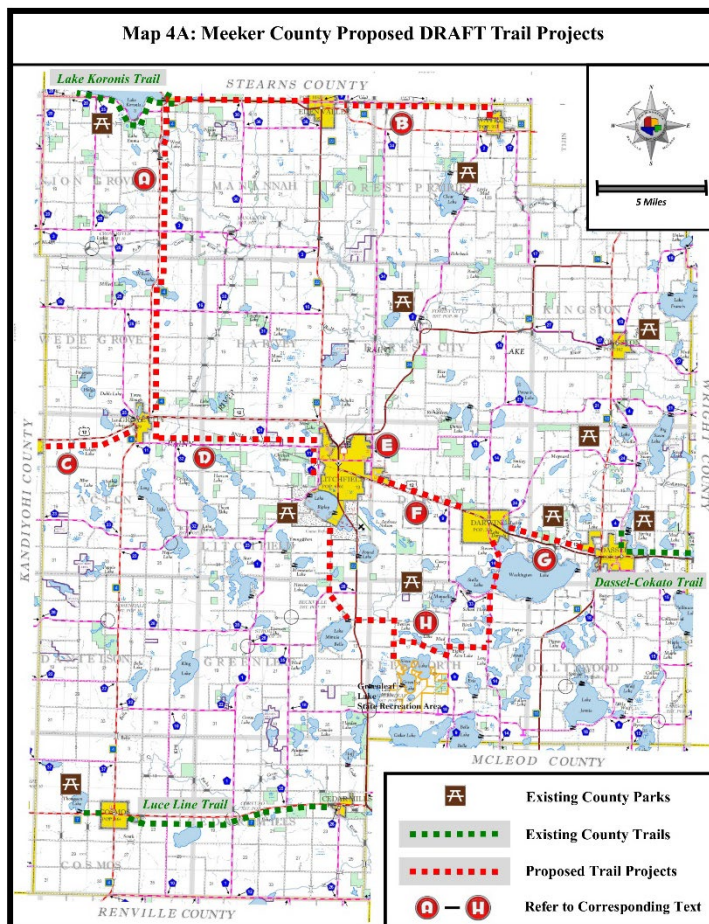
City	Number
<i>Litchfield</i>	72
<i>Dassel</i>	28
<i>Eden Valley</i>	20
<i>Watkins</i>	10
<i>Cokato</i>	7
<i>Darwin</i>	7
<i>Grove City</i>	4
<i>Other</i>	6

C. Public Open House

A Public Open House was held on April 17, 2019, to review and solicit comments on the Meeker County Draft Trails Plan Implementation Map. Although numerous comments were made on the draft, most of them could be summarized into the following four highlight areas:

Highlights of the Public Open House:

1. Many wanted to see the Draft Meeker County Trail Projects Map distinguish between proposed ‘trails’ and ‘bicycle routes.’
2. Due to this being a 10 to 20-year trails plan, the additional bicycle routes along the various County Roads should be added to the final implementation Map.
3. Make sure to add a bicycle route to connect with the numerous trails in the Hutchinson area.
4. There is a need for the Meeker County Trails Stakeholder Group to continue meeting in the future. The MMDC will initially help facilitate this effort until the local committee can become better established.



A Draft Map 4A was circulated prior to the Meeker County Trails Plan Public Open House held on April 17, 2019, at the Meeker County Courthouse. A few revisions were made to the final implementation map shown as Map 5A in Chapter Five.

Chapter Five: Implementation

A. Chapter Highlights

Chapter Five establishes an implementation section for the Meeker County Trails Plan. Section B outlines the potential trail projects that will be pursued by the County and the various trail stakeholders when the time is right. It should be noted that not all of the priority projects identified in Chapter Five are likely to be implemented over the next 10 to 20 years. It is the intent of this plan, however, to be ready to proceed when funding and maintenance agreements have been made. Section C identifies a few of the key non-infrastructure implementation steps that are needed. Section D identifies several potential funding sources. Finally, Section E profiles the key stakeholders who will be involved with implementing the Trails Plan.

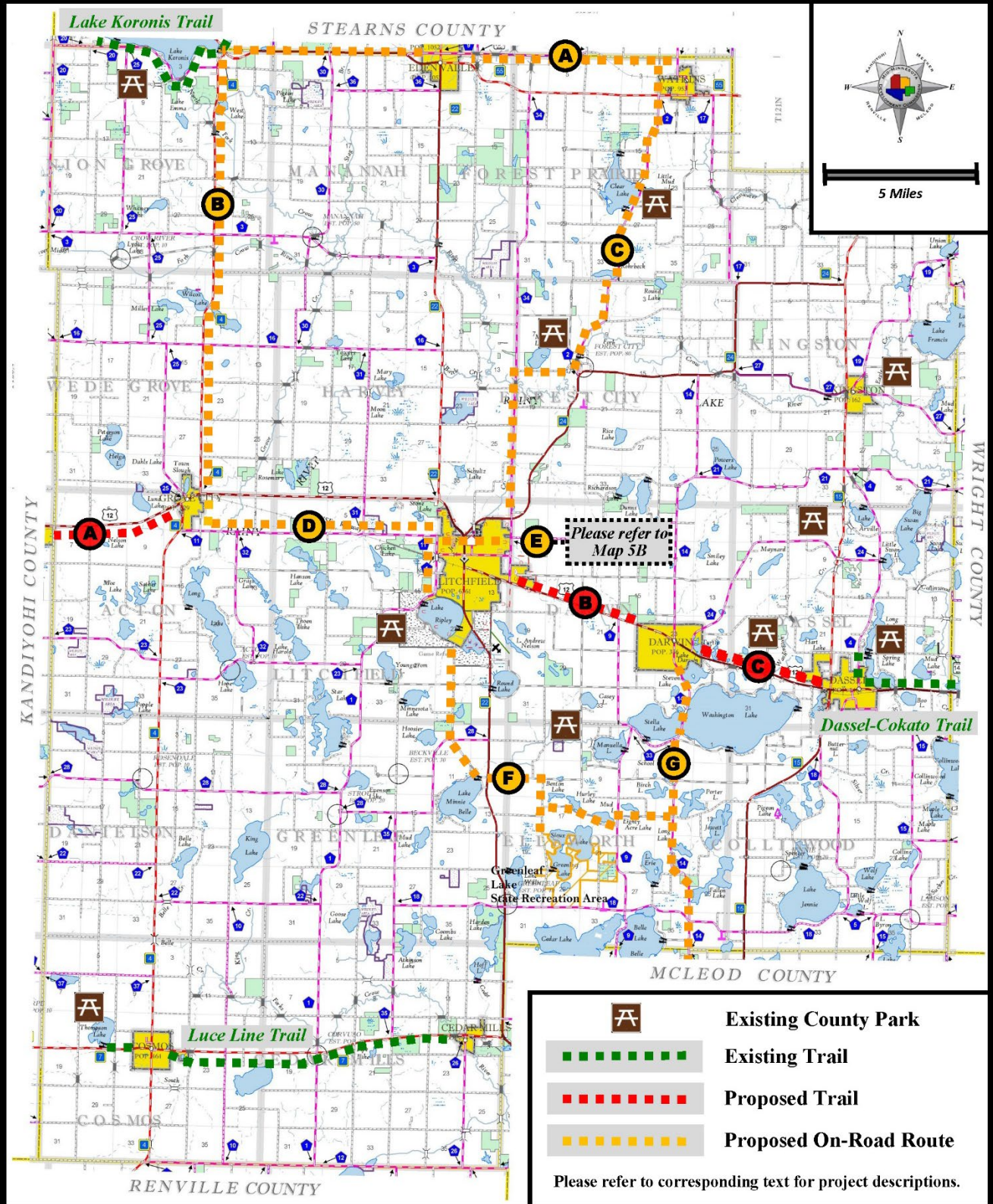
B. Meeker County Trail & Bicycle Route Projects

A number of potential trail projects were identified from a variety of sources throughout the planning process. The sources include comments received from the Meeker County Trails Survey, comments made during the various planning meetings, and comments made at the Public Open House. Maps 5A and 5B display the priority projects. Each project is briefly described following the maps. Please keep in mind the identified trails and bicycle routes are not a list of projects Meeker County is committing to pay for, but rather a list of potential projects the County is likely to endorse as the various stakeholders work out the various details (i.e., type of trail, funding sources, maintenance agreements, etc.). Due to the unknown timing of the projects, cost estimates are not provided. Maps 5A and 5B are divided into potential ‘trails’ and potential ‘bicycle routes.’ Each is briefly described below:

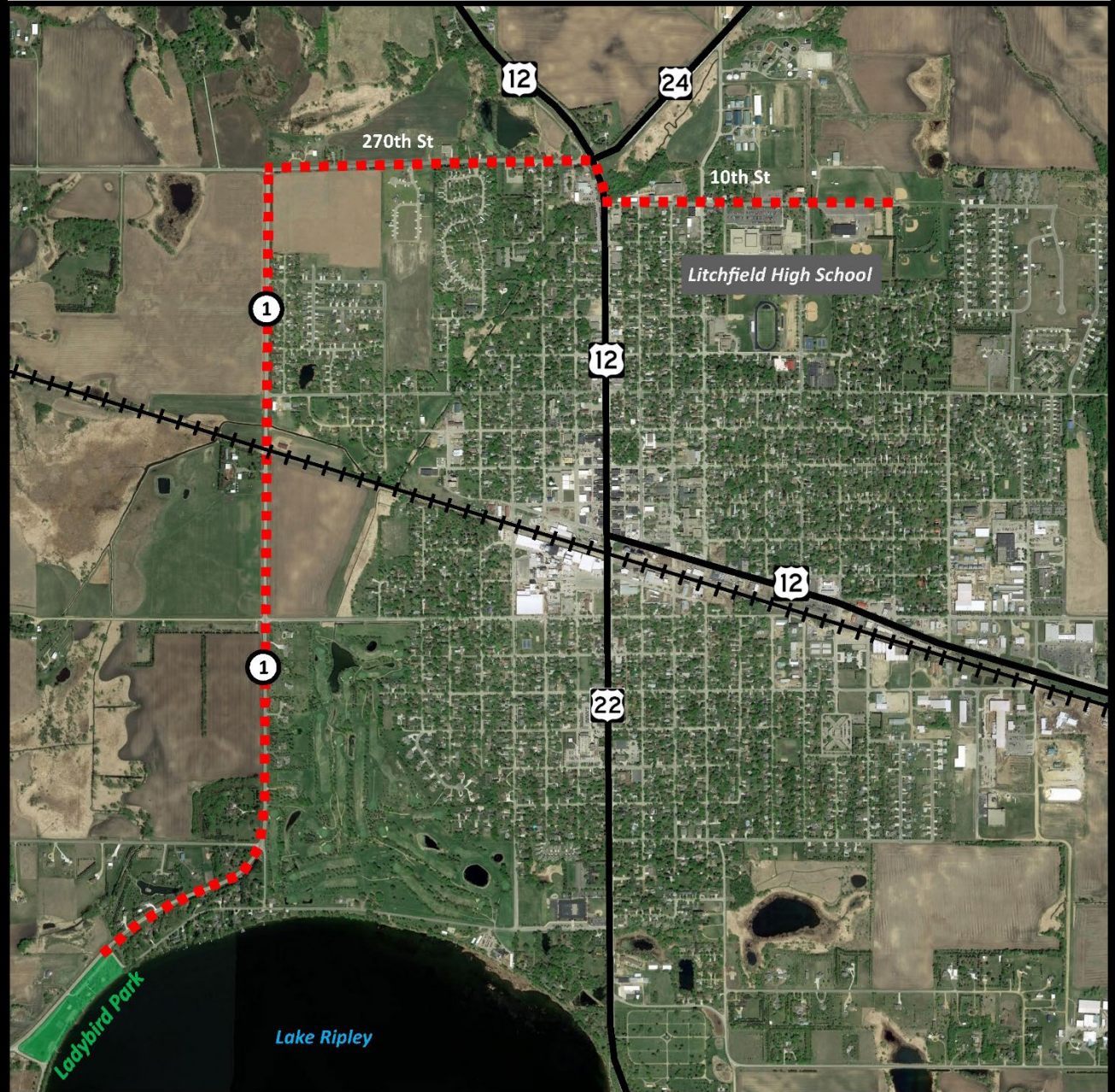
Trail – A linear corridor, on land or water, which provides recreation or transportation as well as related outdoor education or sport activities. It may be single purpose or multi-use; non-motorized and/or motorized; single season or year-round; urban and/or rural; and comprised of various types of surfaces. For the purposes of this Trails Plan, a trail will be thought of and referred to as something separate from a roadway (i.e., not a paved shoulder).

Bicycle Route/Lane - A bike lane/route is a portion of the roadway or shoulder designated for exclusive or preferential use by people using bicycles. Bicycle lanes/routes are distinguished from the portion of the roadway or shoulder used for motor vehicle traffic by striping, marking, or other similar techniques.

Map 5A: Meeker County's Proposed Trail & On-Road Bicycle Routes

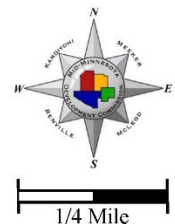


Map 5B: City of Litchfield's Proposed Trail*



*Landowners and other key stakeholders will have the opportunity to provide input into the proposed trail location and design. This map is intended to assist with the needed conversations.

- ■ ■ ■ Proposed Trail
- State/U.S. Highway
- |||| BNSF Railroad



Map 5A and 5B Project Descriptions

- A** The cities of Eden Valley and Watkins recently identified working towards a trail connecting the two communities as part of the EVW Safe Routes to School Plan (2018) and connecting to the Lake Koronis Recreational Trail. The need for a trail has clearly been communicated by the communities. The two main roadways are either State Highway 55 or the Meeker-Stearns Street. The various options will need to be explored by the County Highway Departments, MnDOT and both communities.
- B** This on-road bicycle route would connect the City of Grove City to the Lake Koronis Recreational Trail. The route would travel along MN State Highway 4 and would connect U.S. Highway 12 and MN State Highway 55. The goal is for the bicycle route to have paved shoulders and proper bicycle route signage. The bicycle route would be approximately 12.6 miles in length.
- C** This on-road bicycle route would connect the cities of Litchfield and Watkins to Clear Lake and Shaw Memorial County Parks.
- D** This on-road bicycle route would connect the cities of Litchfield and Grove City. The trail would travel approximately 7 miles along County Road 11 from the intersection of County Road 1 in Litchfield and 545th Avenue in Grove City.
- E** Please also refer to Map 5B. This trail/bicycle route would run through the City of Litchfield starting near the Litchfield Middle/High School. The suggested route would travel along 10th Street. The need for pedestrian/bicycle infrastructure has been documented in the Litchfield Safe Routes to School Plan (2019). After 10th street, the trail/bicycle route would cross U.S. Highway 12, connect to County Road 1, and then continue to Ladybird Park (located on the northwest shores of Lake Ripley). The trail will be paved and dedicated for non-motorized, multipurpose use. The total distance for this trail would be approximately 3.5 miles. Specific details need to be identified and discussed with stakeholders and affected landowners.
- F** Bicycle Route F, in combination with project G, would establish a long scenic loop traveling between the communities of Litchfield and Darwin. The route would begin near Lake Ripley, travel south towards the Greenleaf Lake Recreation Area, and then back north towards the City of Darwin. Project G would establish an on-road bicycle route along County Road 14 to connect to the City of Hutchinson and its extensive trails network.
- G**

Chapter Five: Implementation

- A** This 4.5-mile off-road multipurpose trail would connect the cities of Grove City and Atwater. This trail would create a safe recreational trail between the ACGC Elementary School in Atwater and the ACGC Middle/High School in Grove City. For this reason, the trail would ideally be located on the south side of Highway 12. The trail should be surfaced and dedicated for non-motorized, multipurpose use.
- B** This 6-mile off-road multipurpose trail would connect the cities of Litchfield and Darwin. This could alleviate some pedestrian and bicycle concerns/issues in eastern Litchfield along U.S. Highway 12. The trail should be surfaced and dedicated for non-motorized, multipurpose use.
- C** This project would be a 4-mile multipurpose non-motorized extension of the Dassel-Cokato Trail. It would travel between the western border of Dassel and the eastern border of Darwin. The trail would be a paved, off-road trail that would run adjacent to U.S. Highway 12. The trail will be made for non-motorized, multipurpose use.

Note: it has been expressed by multiple planning participants to keep the Luce Line Trail unpaved at this time, but to make it a priority to work with the DNR to maintain the trail better on an ongoing basis.



Luce Line Trail near Cosmos

C. Implementation Steps

The future success of the Meeker County Trails Plan rests on how successful stakeholders are in being organized, securing funding, and agreeing to stand behind the projects they are promoting. The Meeker County Highway Department will also play a large role in helping to facilitate projects, including budgeting for the needed improvements. Finally, the County Board will ultimately need to support trail projects by appropriating funds and/or agreeing to the terms of the various grants and funding mechanisms.

In addition to these items, the following list of implementation steps should be completed in order to properly implement the Meeker County Trails Plan:

1. Keep the ***Meeker County Trails Stakeholder Group*** active. Having an ongoing group of stakeholders meet regularly would greatly help to ensure projects are implemented properly. The group could help to address issues, apply for funding, identify needs, and determine short-term priorities. The Mid-Minnesota Development Commission has agreed to assist with scheduling future meetings on a quarterly or as needed basis.
2. ***Trail Signage*** – Many of the trail projects identified only require designated trail route signage to be posted along the roadways. Although installing the signage would be the responsibility of the Meeker County Highway Department, the Task Force could help with identifying where signage is needed.

Standardized county trail signs help both motorists and cyclists identify trail routes.



In addition to ensuring that trail routes have the proper signage, this implementation step also refers to ensuring that directional and other bicycle-friendly signs are posted where needed. Examples include mile markers along trails, business directional markers, mileage to restrooms, etc. The goal is to help make trails user-friendly.

3. ***Develop an Adopt-A-Trail Program*** – These types of programs are similar to Minnesota’s Adopt-A-Highway Program. This would allow volunteers and/or sponsors to actively participate in performing maintenance on a specific trail segment. The highway program focuses entirely on picking up litter, however, a customized local trails program could also cover items such as mowing, tree trimming, replacing signage, and ensuring the trail has the proper amenities.



4. ***Trail Amenities*** – One of the main messages conveyed by the public throughout the planning process was the need to make it a priority to ensure that all trails have the proper amenities. Examples include signage, mile markers, trailheads, parking, bike racks, lighting, benches, and toilets. Many of the amenities could be donated through an Adopt-A-Trail program (refer to #3 above) and/or through a dedicated Trails Fund (refer to #5 below).
5. ***Establish a Trails Fund*** – The County should explore the possibility of establishing a ‘trails fund’ that would receive an annual allocation in the county budget. With funds collected over time, a trails fund could provide the local match for grants and help fund new trail development, maintenance needs and/or the purchase of trail amenities. The fund could also serve as a collection place for donations and/or funds raised through trail events. Donations could be targeted for a specific project or be available for general trail needs.



Rochester resident Gelene Pigott recently donated a bench for the Letica Road Trailhead

6. **Trail Condition Report** – Related to maintenance, the county should work with stakeholders to develop a Trails Condition Report. These reports could be completed by stakeholders and/or volunteers and collected by whoever is responsible for each trail segment. The completed reports could then be submitted to the Meeker County Highway Department. A small sign posted periodically along the routes asking for the public to report problems to the department is also needed.
7. **Trail Use & Enforcement** – Trail users should be informed of rules and regulations in a variety of ways. Kiosks and signs should be strategically located to provide specific information about allowable trail uses, permitted and prohibited activities, directions, and required fees or permits. Printed and web-based materials and maps could also provide similar information. The Meeker County Sheriff's Office would also be responsible for enforcement, responding to emergencies, and dealing with criminal activities.
8. **Make Safety a Priority** – As future trail decisions are made, ensure that safety remains at the forefront of the discussion. This includes ensuring that trails have the proper width depending on where they are located, and that trail crossings have both the proper lighting and signage notifying motorists.
9. **Keep Map 5A Current** – This Plan was created with the intent of being able to periodically update the implementation priorities identified in Map 5A. Future updates could be reviewed by the Trails Stakeholder group and/or county staff prior to being voted on by the County Board. This will allow the map to be updated periodically without having to revise the entire Meeker County Trails Plan.
10. **Meeker County Trails Map** – This implementation step refers to working with stakeholders to produce a Meeker County Trails and Bicycle Route Map. The foldout map could be handed out in various locations and posted online to help promote the use of local trails in Meeker County. As new trails and bicycle routes are added, the map could easily be updated.

D. Potential Funding Sources

In order to be properly implemented, trail projects in Meeker County will ultimately need to rely on a variety of stakeholders and funding sources. From securing grants, to developing maintenance agreements, the success of projects will be an ongoing effort. This section of the plan identifies some potential funding sources for trail projects.

Donations (time and money)

Individuals, families, businesses and user groups have increasingly been willing to donate time and/or money towards trail projects. From paying for trail benches and volunteering to pick up garbage, to sponsoring rest areas and raising money to build trail segments, volunteers have made a number of trail projects become a reality.



One way to help offset some of the ongoing expense of maintaining trails is to develop a Meeker County Adopt-A-Trail Program. This would allow volunteers, families, businesses and user groups to assist with a variety of trail needs, including picking up garbage and reporting back to the county when trail signs need to be replaced. Another way to help reduce costs would be to develop a Meeker County Trails Fund where interested parties could provide donations. The donations could be trail and/or project specific or could simply help with ongoing trail expenses.

Local Government Match

Most trail projects are not completely covered by grants. To be competitive on securing grant assistance, local governmental units commonly are required to match grant dollars, usually ranging from 25% to 50% of the total project costs. In addition, having a long-term maintenance plan is normally a funding prerequisite.

Identifying stakeholders who are willing to share costs and/or perform maintenance responsibilities has become an increasingly popular way for local governmental units to justify funding and their overall commitment to trail projects. Fortunately, user groups who are promoting local projects usually have the capacity to help out when and where it is needed.

Grants

According to the Parks and Trails Council of Minnesota, over \$7 million was granted to communities and organizations across Minnesota in 2014 to acquire, develop, construct, and renovate parks and trails (*2015 Resource Guide: Grants for your Park or Trail*). Although securing grant money has become increasingly competitive, one of the main benefits of developing the Meeker County Trails Plan was because many funding sources require projects to be identified in a locally adopted plan. Furthermore, having a project identified in an official plan usually allows the project to objectively score higher in the grant review process. This section of the plan highlights some of the main sources of grants that fund trail projects. It should be noted that grant funding details periodically change, and that new funding sources occasionally become available.

Federal Recreational Trail Program

www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/recreational_trails

Program Goals & Priorities? To provide funds for trail activities and facilities that support a wide variety of motorized and non-motorized trail activities. Special consideration is given to projects involving urban youth worker programs, such as the Minnesota Conservation Corp.

Who can apply? All projects must be sponsored by a unit of government. Preference is given to projects that have a local trail partner organization.

Eligible projects? Acquisition and development for new trails; contracted maintenance on existing trails; development of permanent trailside facilities; and purchases of equipment. Priority projects for 2015 included trail linkages, trail rehabilitation, trail signs to increase safety, trail grooming equipment, and single-track mountain biking trails.

Level of assistance? The maximum grant is \$150,000, with the average grant ranging from \$30,000 to \$85,000. Costs must be incurred and paid for before reimbursement. The grantee must cover at least 25% of the total project cost (50% for equipment purchases over \$75,000). Funding for 2015 was approximately \$1.7 million.

Source of funds? Grants are funded by a portion of federal excise taxes on off-highway recreation fuel, which is deposited into the Federal Highway Trust Fund and appropriated to each state. States are required to use 40% for diverse recreational trail use, 30% for motorized use, and 30% for non-motorized use.

The review process? The Minnesota Recreation Trail Users Association reviews grant priorities, applications, and recommends projects to be funded. Selected projects are then reviewed and approved by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources.

Local Trails Connection Program

[www.dnr.state.mn.us/grants/recreation/ trails_local.html](http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/grants/recreation/trails_local.html)

Program Goals & Priorities? To accelerate the acquisition and development of local trail connections between where people live and significant public resources (e.g., historical areas, parks, other trails). This program is not intended to create significant new trails.

Who can apply? All local units of government. Trail organizations and/or user groups may apply, but only in coordination with a local unit of government.

Eligible projects? Land acquisition from willing sellers; trail construction and/or restoration; permanent trailside improvements (e.g., drainage, parking, bathrooms); ADA compliance projects; contracted maintenance; bridge construction and restoration. Projects within state park boundaries or wilderness areas are not eligible for funding.

Level of assistance? Grants range from \$5,000 to \$150,000. Costs must be incurred and paid for before reimbursement. The grantee must cover at least 25% of the total project cost.

Source of funds? Grants are funded primarily by the Minnesota State Lottery. Every year, the State Lottery returns 6.5% of gross sales to the state as a payment “in lieu of” sales tax. From these proceeds, state law dictates 2.2% is spent on local trail grants. These dollars are divided between the Local Trails Connection Program and the Regional Trail Grant Program. In recent years, state bond sales and the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund have also been used to fund local trail grant programs.

The review process? The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources reviews all applications and makes final funding decisions. Priority is given to projects that provide significant connectivity, with consideration also given to trail length, amount of use, and quality of natural and cultural resources.

Regional Trail Grant Program

[www.dnr.state.mn.us/grants/recreation/ trails_regional.html](http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/grants/recreation/trails_regional.html)

Program Goals & Priorities? To accelerate the acquisition and development of long-distance, regionally significant trails outside of the seven-county metropolitan area (Anoka, Carver, Dakota, Hennepin, Ramsey, Scott, and Washington).

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Who can apply? All local units of government (e.g., cities, counties, townships) outside of the seven-county metropolitan area are eligible to apply. Trail organizations and/or user groups may apply, but only in coordination with a local unit of government.

Eligible projects? Land acquisition from willing sellers; trail construction and/or restoration; permanent trailside improvements (e.g., drainage, parking, bathrooms); ADA compliance projects; contracted maintenance; bridge construction and restoration. Projects within state park boundaries or in state trail corridors are not eligible for funding.

Level of assistance? Grants range from \$5,000 to \$250,000, with the average grant ranging from \$100,000 to \$170,000. Costs must be incurred and paid for before reimbursement. The grantee must cover at least 25% of the total project cost.

Source of funds? Grants are funded primarily by the Minnesota State Lottery. Every year, the State Lottery returns 6.5% of gross sales to the state as a payment “in lieu of” sales tax. From these proceeds, state law dictates 2.2% is spent on local trail grants. These dollars are divided between the Local Trails Connection Program and the Regional Trail Grant Program. In some past years, state bond sales and the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund have also been used to fund local trail grant programs.

The review process? The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources reviews all applications and makes final funding decisions. Priority is given to projects that develop trails of significant length, projects that are expected to have high usage, and projects that provide a unique and interesting connection to the outdoors.

Outdoor Recreational Grant Program

[www.dnr.state.mn.us/grants/recreation/
outdoor_rec.html](http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/grants/recreation/outdoor_rec.html)

Program Goals & Priorities? To provide funds to local governments for acquiring parkland and developing, or redeveloping, outdoor recreation facilities.

Who can apply? All cities, counties, townships, and recognized tribal governments are eligible. The applicant must be the current or intended owner and manager of the property to be acquired and/or developed.

Eligible projects? Acquisition, development, redevelopment, and/or rehabilitation of outdoor recreation facilities, including but not limited to: boat/canoe access sites, campgrounds, fishing areas, skating rinks, nature areas, picnic shelters, playgrounds, sports fields and courts, swimming areas, splash parks, and non-motorized trails within a park boundary.

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Level of assistance? Grants range from \$5,000 to \$100,000, with the average ranging from \$35,000 to \$65,000. Costs must be incurred and paid for before reimbursement. The grantee must cover at least 50% of the total project cost.

Source of funds? Grants are funded with federal dollars from the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LAWCON). Since 1965, LAWCON has provided matching grants to federal, state, and local governments for outdoor recreation projects. Income for LAWCON is primarily from fees paid by companies drilling for oil and gas in the Outer Continental Shelf.

The review process? The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources reviews all applications and, if necessary, conducts site visits. Applications are judged based upon consistency with the strategic directions identified in the 2014-2018 State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, including connecting people to the outdoors, acquiring land, taking care of what we have, and coordinating among partners. Additionally, proposed projects are judged based upon the local match, project readiness, site quality, and facility design.

Greater Minnesota Legacy Grants www.legacy.leg.mn/funds/parks-trails-fund

Program Goals & Priorities? To assist in the acquisition, development, improvement, or restoration of regionally significant parks and trails outside the seven-county metropolitan area.

Who can apply? All local units of government outside the seven-county metropolitan area are eligible to apply.

Eligible projects? Land acquisition for development of trails or outdoor recreation facilities; development, redevelopment or rehabilitation of existing trails or outdoor recreation facilities; and protection or restoration of natural resources within parks and trails. Projects must be within a designated regional park or trail in Greater Minnesota.

Level of assistance? There is no minimum or maximum request. Applicants are not required to provide a match, but projects with non-state cash contributions will receive additional consideration. Past grants have ranged from \$20,000 to \$1.5 million.

Source of funds? Grants are funded by the Clean Water, Land, and Legacy Amendment, which was passed by voters in 2008. The Legacy Amendment increased the state sales tax 3/8 of one percent and dedicated 14% of new revenues to a Parks & Trails Fund. A portion of the Parks & Trails Legacy Fund supports regional parks and trails in Greater Minnesota.

The review process? The Greater Minnesota Regional Parks & Trails Commission receives, reviews, and evaluates all applications. Projects are selected based upon criteria in the Parks & Trails Legacy Plan, the Greater Minnesota Regional Parks & Trails Strategic Plan and Funding Program, the availability of a non-state cash match, and the project's overall quality, readiness, and design.

Transportation Alternatives (TA) Funding

www.t4america.org

Program Goals & Priorities? To support alternatives to automobile transit, including pedestrian and bicycle facilities, access to public transportation and enhanced mobility, community improvement activities, environmental mitigation, and safe routes to schools.

Who can apply? Local governments; regional transportation authorities; transit agencies; natural resource and public land agencies; school districts, local education agencies, or schools; and tribal governments are all eligible to apply.

Eligible projects? Construction, planning, and design of on-road and off-road trail facilities for non-motorized forms of transportation, including: sidewalks, bicycle infrastructure, pedestrian and bicycle signals, traffic calming techniques, light and other safety-related infrastructure, ADA compliance, and conversion of abandoned railroad corridors into trails. Per Minnesota rules, engineering activities and the purchase of right-of-ways are not eligible.

Level of assistance? Grants are recommended to range from \$100,000 to \$1 million. The grantee must cover at least 20% of the projects total cost.

Source of funds? Grants are funded by the Highway Account of the Highway Trust Fund for Federal-Aid highways, of which 2% is reserved for transportation alternatives and appropriated to each state. The Minnesota Department of Transportation allocates Minnesota's share of these federal funds to each of the eight Area Transportation Partnerships based upon population.

The review process? Applicants must first submit a Letter of Intent to their regional Area Transportation Partnership. For Meeker County, interested parties should contact the Mid-Minnesota Development Commission (www.mmrhc.org). The letter of intent process coaches the applicant through the grant process, helps the applicant balance effort with the likelihood of receiving funds, and ensures the full requirements of federal funding are understood. Following the Letter of Intent, full applications are received, evaluated, and selected by each Area Transportation Partnership's committee. Projects are evaluated on their connection to statewide and regional plans, their connection to safe routes to school, their transportation purpose, and the feasibility of being completed on schedule.

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State Park Road Account Program [www.dnr.state.mn.us/grants/recreation/ parkroads.html](http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/grants/recreation/parkroads.html)

Program Goals & Priorities? This program exists to help local governments improve access to public recreation facilities. It provides financial assistance to improve county state-aid, county, township, and city roads which provide access to state parks and other outdoor recreation.

Who can apply? County, Township, and City Governments.

Eligible projects? The establishment, location, relocation, construction, reconstruction, and improvement of County State Aid Highways that provide access to state parks, state trails, state scientific and natural areas, state wilderness areas, state forests, state wildlife management areas and state water access sites. The reconstruction, improvement, repair and maintenance of county, township and city roads provide access to public lakes, rivers, state parks and state campgrounds.

Level of assistance? Costs for construction and right-of-way acquisition are reimbursable for up to 100% of eligible costs. Preliminary and construction engineering costs are not reimbursable and are the responsibility of the local unit of government. Requests are not subject to a minimum or maximum amount of dollars. Approximately \$4,000,000 was available statewide in 2018.



The review process? The application deadline is normally November 1 each year. The DNR reviews and ranks the applications.

Mini-Grants

There are a number of smaller grants regularly offered through various stakeholders, each with a unique focus. The following 'mini-grants' could assist with implementing the Meeker County Trails Plan:



MRPF New Initiative Grant Program www.mnrpa.org/mrpf

Synopsis: Up to \$2,000 is awarded to spur innovation in parks and recreation services at a local, regional, or

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state-wide level that ultimately could have statewide impact. The program is intended to allow agencies to try new programs and services that demonstrate innovation in parks and recreation services and have future applicability for other agencies at a local, regional, or statewide level. Ineligible projects include capital improvements, funding for existing programs and services, full-time personnel, and on-going expenses. Grants are funded by charitable contributions to the Minnesota Recreation and Park Foundation.

Explore Minnesota Grants

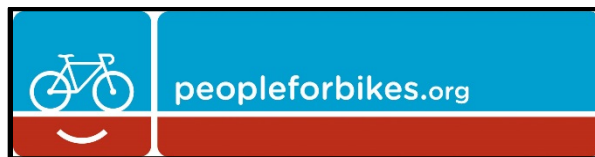
www.exploreminnesota.com/industry-minnesota/ways-to-get-involved/grants

Synopsis: Grants are offered to Minnesota non-profit organizations formed for the primary purpose of tourism promotion and to scenic byway groups incorporated as a non-profit organization. Grants are to be used for marketing and promotional projects or to conduct research to help in this endeavor. Grants range from \$250 to \$8,000. Applicants with organizational budgets less than \$100,000 are required to match grant funds 1:1 or 2:1 if greater.

Minnesota Historical and Cultural Heritage Grants

<http://legacy.mnhs.org/grants>

The program supports history programs and projects to preserve significant historic and cultural resources. While not specifically intended for park and trail projects, the Minnesota Historical & Cultural Heritage Grants Program is applicable to parks and trails that preserve and/or promote historic and cultural resources. The average grant ranges from \$5,000 to \$30,000 with no local match.



PeopleForBikes Community Grants

www.peopleforbikes.org/pages/community-grants

The PeopleForBikes Community Grant Program provides funding for important and influential projects that leverage federal funding and build momentum for bicycling in communities across the U.S. These projects include bike paths and rail trails, as well as mountain bike trails, bike parks, BMX facilities, and large-scale bicycle advocacy initiatives. Average grants range from \$4,500 to \$8,000 with 50% local match required.

National Trails Fund

www.americanhiking.org/national-trails-fund



American Hiking Society’s National Trails Fund (NTF) offers “hiking trail improvement” grants to active member organizations of our Hiking Alliance. Once a year, Alliance Members have the opportunity to apply for a grant (value between \$500 and \$5,000) in order to improve hiking access or hiker safety on a particular trail. No local match is required.

Advocacy Advance Grants

www.advocacyadvance.org/grants



Advocacy Advance is a dynamic partnership of the Alliance for Biking & Walking and the League of American Bicyclists to boost local and state bicycle and pedestrian advocacy efforts. Rapid Response Grants help state and local organizations take advantage of unexpected opportunities to win, increase, or preserve funding for biking and walking. Thanks to support from REI, these grants are for short-term campaigns that will increase or preserve investments in active transportation in communities where program choices are being made on how to spend federal, state, and local funding. Average grants range from \$1,000 to \$10,000 with no local match required.

Rails-to-Trails

www.railstotrails.org



Since 1986, Rails-to-Trails (RTC) has helped communities across the country convert abandoned railroads to multi-use trails. In 2015, RTC launched a new grant program to support organizations and local governments implement trail projects. They are currently offering \$85,000 per year for five years to qualifying projects.

State Programs

There are a couple of key programs in Minnesota that have been successful in working with local groups to make trail and pedestrian improvements. Trail advocate groups should determine if local projects can benefit from these programs.



Minnesota Statewide Health Improvement Partnership (SHIP)

In 2008, Minnesota lawmakers recognized that controlling health care costs would require more than just changes in medical care - additional investments in prevention were needed. With bipartisan support in the legislature, Minnesota passed a groundbreaking health reform law. A key component of that reform was to create SHIP.

SHIP is designed to improve health by reducing risk factors that contribute to chronic disease, resulting in reduced health care costs. To help achieve this, SHIP has paid for the development of Active Living Transportation (ALT) plans for communities. These plans help identify needed improvements to community's bicycle and pedestrian network. For more information on SHIP, visit:

www.health.state.mn.us/ship

Minnesota Safe Routes to School (SRTS)

Safe Routes to School is a comprehensive program to help children safely walk and bicycle to school through infrastructure improvements, education and promotional activities. The program follows the 6 “E’s” of active transportation planning, which include Evaluation, Engineering, Education, Encouragement, Enforcement and Equity.



Since 2005, MnDOT has awarded more than \$22 million to Minnesota communities for SRTS projects. The SRTS projects have included infrastructure improvements (i.e., redesigned roads, crosswalks, and access points); mini-grants to help fund miscellaneous school equipment (i.e., bike racks, bicycle fleets, crossing guard equipment, etc.); and funds to create SRTS plans. To help promote SRTS activities, Minnesota developed an online Minnesota Safe Routes to School Resource Center, which can be accessed at:

www.dot.state.mn.us/mnsaferoutes

E. Meeker County Trails Key Stakeholders

In order to have a successful Meeker County Trails Plan, there are numerous stakeholders who need to be involved with developing and implementing the Plan. This section provides a brief description of the key stakeholders who directly play a role.

Meeker County Board

The Meeker County Board acts as the executive of the local government, levies local taxes, administers county governmental services such as prisons, courts, public health oversight, property registration, building code enforcement, and public works such as road maintenance. The county board will have to approve any future projects relating to trails, so working with the Meeker county board will be a key element to an effective trails plan.

Meeker County Highway Department

The Meeker County Highway Department has a large role in the success of the Litchfield School District SRTS Plan. Ultimately the County Board will need to support any of the proposed infrastructure changes along the county roads. For more information on the Meeker County Highway Department, visit the following website:



Meeker County Public Works Website:

www.co.meeker.mn.us/181/Highway

Meeker County Municipalities

It is common for trails and bicycle routes to lead to, from, and through communities. As a result, working with the municipalities located in Meeker County will improve connectivity and consistency within the County's trail system. Municipalities have approximately half of the county's population, so their interests will be considered throughout the planning and implementation process.

Chapter Five: Implementation

Collectively the nine cities located in Meeker County are key stakeholders in successfully developing and implementing the Meeker County Trails Plan. Although technically they only have jurisdiction within their respective corporate boundaries, the decisions they make largely impact the trail decisions being made countywide. Furthermore, when communities join together with other stakeholders to lobby for specific trail enhancements, they increase their odds of being successful.

Local School Districts

Meeker County contains three separate school districts that include Atwater-Cosmos-Grove City (ACGC) School District, Eden Valley-Watkins (EVW) School District, and the Litchfield School District. Collaborating with the school districts is beneficial because students and families frequently use trails. Also, when families are looking to re-locate, they will be drawn to areas with high-quality trail systems.

Meeker Memorial Hospital

The Meeker Memorial Hospital has been providing medical care to Litchfield and the surrounding area since 1952. In 2007 the hospital underwent a major expansion/renovation project that expanded the surgery, radiology and emergency branches. The hospital now has a 35-bed facility and is at the forefront of medical technology, service, and care. The Meeker Memorial Hospital is county owned and is staffed with expertly trained professionals with knowledge in the areas of nursing, technical specialties, support, and admission. MMH is committed to, “care as it should be” with a mission to serve you.



Statewide Health Improvement Program (SHIP) – The Minnesota Department of Health houses the Statewide Health Improvement Program. One of the many objectives of SHIP is to help create active communities by increasing opportunities for walking and biking. They are also involved in promoting education on a number of other health-related topics, such as healthy eating, drugs and alcohol prevention, and reducing TV and other screen time. Meeker-McLeod-Sibley is the local SHIP program. For more information, visit the following websites:



Statewide SHIP website: www.health.state.mn.us/ship



Local SHIP Website:

www.health.state.mn.us/divs/oshii/ship/communities/meeker-mcleod-sibley.html

Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT)



The **Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT)** is the State's main agency dedicated to supporting a multimodal transportation system that maximizes the health of people, the environment, and Minnesota's economy. This includes not only planning for roads and bridges, but also facilitating the discussion on numerous trail issues as they directly or indirectly relate to transportation. Bicycle and pedestrian safety are two key areas that MnDOT focuses on in its day-to-day activities. For more information on MnDOT, please visit the following website:

www.dot.state.mn.us

MnDOT's Safe Routes to School Program

To increase opportunities for children to walk and bicycle to school safely, the 2005 federal transportation bill, SAFETEA-LU, provided funding for Safe Routes to School programs in all 50 states. SRTS was created to help reverse the alarming nationwide increase in childhood obesity and inactivity. The program has been successful in Minnesota in delivering numerous benefits to local communities. SRTS projects have assisted with reducing traffic congestion, enhancing crosswalks, and helping pay for some trail improvements if it is shown they will help get students to/from school safely. For more information on Safe Routes to School, visit:

www.dot.state.mn.us/mnsaferoutes/resources

Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR)

The DNR is charged with a number of responsibilities surrounding trails, including maintaining one of the finest systems of state parks and trails in the country. They also help fund trail projects and play a role enforcing safety regulations.



State Water Trails

Water trails are recreational routes on waterways such as rivers and lakes that have public access points and campsites for canoeists, kayakers and other boaters. Minnesota has the first and largest water trails system in the nation. The DNR and its partners manage more than 4,500 miles of mapped paddling routes on 32 rivers and Lake Superior. The North Fork of the Crow River, which flows through Meeker County, is one of the State's Water Trails (profiled in Chapter Three). For more information on the State's Water Trails, visit:

www.dnr.state.mn.us/watertrails

Minnesota Department of Health (MDH)



MDH is also a key stakeholder as it plays a large role in promoting physical activity. The department's mission is "To protect, maintain and improve health of all Minnesotans." To accomplish this, they partner with MnDOT and other agencies to develop and implement a number of health-related initiatives. These include partnering on the development of the State's Pedestrian Plan and the State's Bicycle System Plan (refer to the text box on the next page), among numerous other collaborations.

MDH also oversees the Statewide Health Improvement Program (SHIP), aimed at decreasing the percentage of Minnesotans who are overweight or use tobacco. Meeker-McLeod-Sibley Healthy Communities is the local SHIP collaborative. SHIP works upstream to prevent these conditions by partnering with hundreds of schools, communities, clinics, and employers. The goal is to increase access to healthy choices by implementing smoke-free policies and other structural changes that make it easy for people to be physically active and eat right. To learn more about SHIP and/or the Minnesota Department of Health, visit:

www.health.state.mn.us

State Bicycle and Pedestrian Plans

MDH and MnDOT are co-leading the development of the State's first Pedestrian System Plan. For more information on State's Pedestrian Plan, visit:

www.dot.state.mn.us/peds/plan/index.html

In addition, MDH also provided assistance with the development of the State's Bicycle System Plan. For more information on State's Bicycle System Plan, visit:

www.dot.state.mn.us/bike/system-plan/index.html



Explore Minnesota Tourism

Minnesota's vast amount of trails provides a great destination for residents and people visiting the state. Explore Minnesota Tourism helps connect people to where they want to be and what they want to experience. Not only do they provide links to trails and facilities, they also importantly provide information about hotels, restaurants, and local events. Explore Minnesota should be contacted to help promote all future trail events in Meeker County. For more information on Explore Minnesota, visit:

www.exploreminnesota.com

Pedal Minnesota

Launched in 2012, Pedal Minnesota aims to get more people on bikes in Minnesota because bicycling has a positive impact on the state, including benefits to individuals, communities, the environment and the economy. For more information, visit the following website:



<https://www.exploreminnesota.com/pedal-mn/>

Parks & Trails Council of Minnesota

The Parks & Trails Council is a grassroots organization working on behalf of Minnesota's parks and



trails since 1954. Fueled by contributions, the Parks & Trails Council has helped add more than 10,000 acres of land to key areas within the state's network of parks and trails. The organization has become one of the state's most powerful voice for parks and trails due to relationships with community groups, legislators and local governments throughout the state. For more information on the Parks & Trails Council, visit:

www.parksandtrails.org

Statewide User Groups

There are a vast amount of statewide user groups who are organized on behalf of their sport and/or hobby. The following groups are likely to directly benefit from Meeker County's trail network.



Bicycle Alliance of Minnesota

The Bicycle Alliance of Minnesota (BikeMN) was launched in 2008 with major contributions from five members of the Minnesota bicycle industry including Quality Bicycle Products, Penn Cycle, Erik's Bike Shop, Park Tool, and Dero Bike Racks. Membership has grown to over 1,000 with 130 communities represented throughout Minnesota. BikeMN has identified the following four program areas:

1. **Advocacy** for bicycle friendly laws, policies, projects and programs.
2. **Education** of drivers and bicyclists using a national curriculum.
3. **Encouragement** of biking through events and promotions.
4. **Technical Assistance** to businesses and communities to be more bicycle friendly.

For more information on the Minnesota Bike Alliance, visit:

www.bikemn.org

Minnesota United Snowmobilers Association



Minnesota United Snowmobilers Association (MnUSA) was organized in 1978 to protect, preserve and promote the sport of snowmobiling throughout Minnesota through favorable legislation and programs. Through the years, MnUSA has become a state and national leader in recreational support. Minnesota today enjoys over 22,000 miles of snowmobile trails because of combined efforts of local snowmobile clubs, state and federal leaders, Department of Natural Resources and snowmobile volunteers. For more information, visit:

www.mnsnowmobiler.org



Minnesota Horse Council

The Minnesota Horse Council, a non-profit corporation, encourages and supports equine-related activities, concerns and education.

Founded in 1935, the Council began as a vehicle for horse owners and exhibitors to coordinate horse activities with the Minnesota State Fair Board. Since then, the Minnesota Horse Council has evolved into an umbrella organization uniting and supporting equine activities throughout the state. One key function they perform is to fund and improve horse trails throughout Minnesota through their Trail Blazers group. For more information, visit:

www.mnhorsecouncil.org



Minnesota Nordic Ski Association

The Minnesota Nordic Ski Association (MNSA) works closely with Minnesota cross country ski trail administrators, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR), and the legislature on all issues and funding associated with cross country ski trails in Minnesota. MNSA also promotes education, recognition, involvement, and competition of cross-country skiing. For more information on MNSA, visit:



www.mnnordicski.org



The Mid-Minnesota Development Commission (MMDC) – The local Regional Development Commission, serving Kandiyohi, Meeker, McLeod, and Renville Counties, is involved with taking the lead in the development of the Meeker County trails plan. MMDC staff also works with MnDOT on transportation planning activities and helps local governmental units with technical and grant writing assistance. For more information on MMDC or the Meeker County Trails Plan, visit the following website:

www.mmrhc.org

Appendix A:

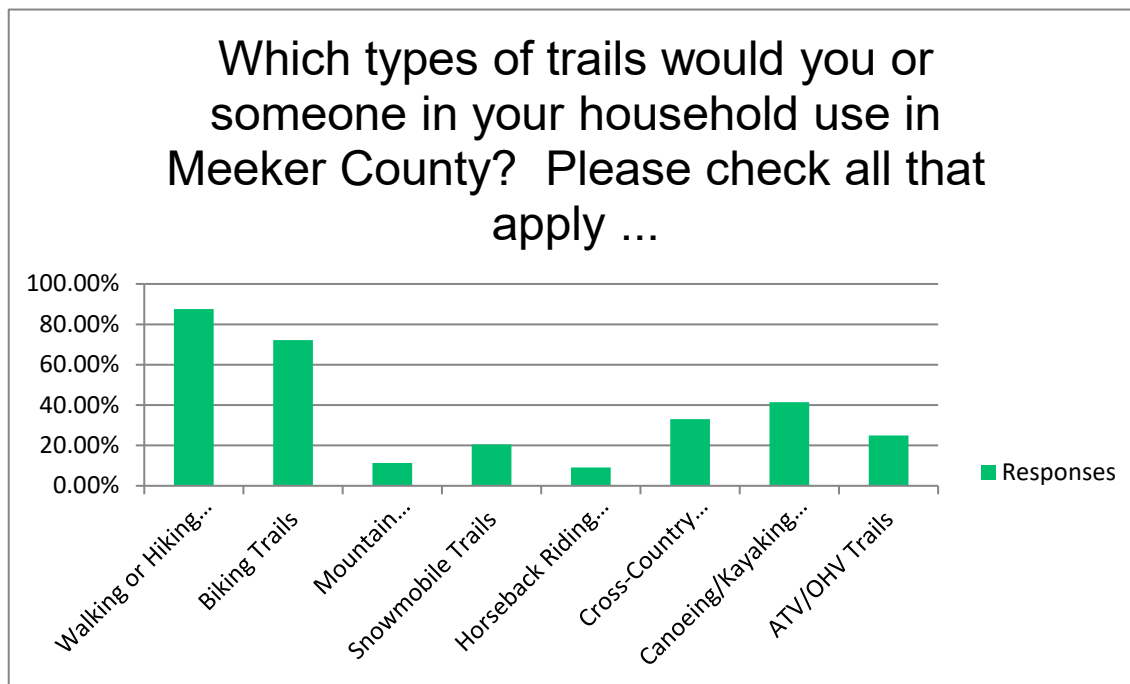
Meeker County Trails Survey Results

& Written Comments

Meeker County Trails Survey

Which types of trails would you or someone in your household use in Meeker County? Please check all that apply ...

<i>Answer Choices</i>	<i>Responses</i>	
Walking or Hiking Trails	87.50%	154
Biking Trails	72.16%	127
Mountain Biking/Fat Tire Bikes (off-road paths)	11.36%	20
Snowmobile Trails	20.45%	36
Horseback Riding Trails	9.09%	16
Cross-Country Skiing/Snowshoeing Trails	32.95%	58
Canoeing/Kayaking Water Trails	41.48%	73
ATV/OHV Trails	25.00%	44
Other (please specify)		7
	Answered	176
	Skipped	4



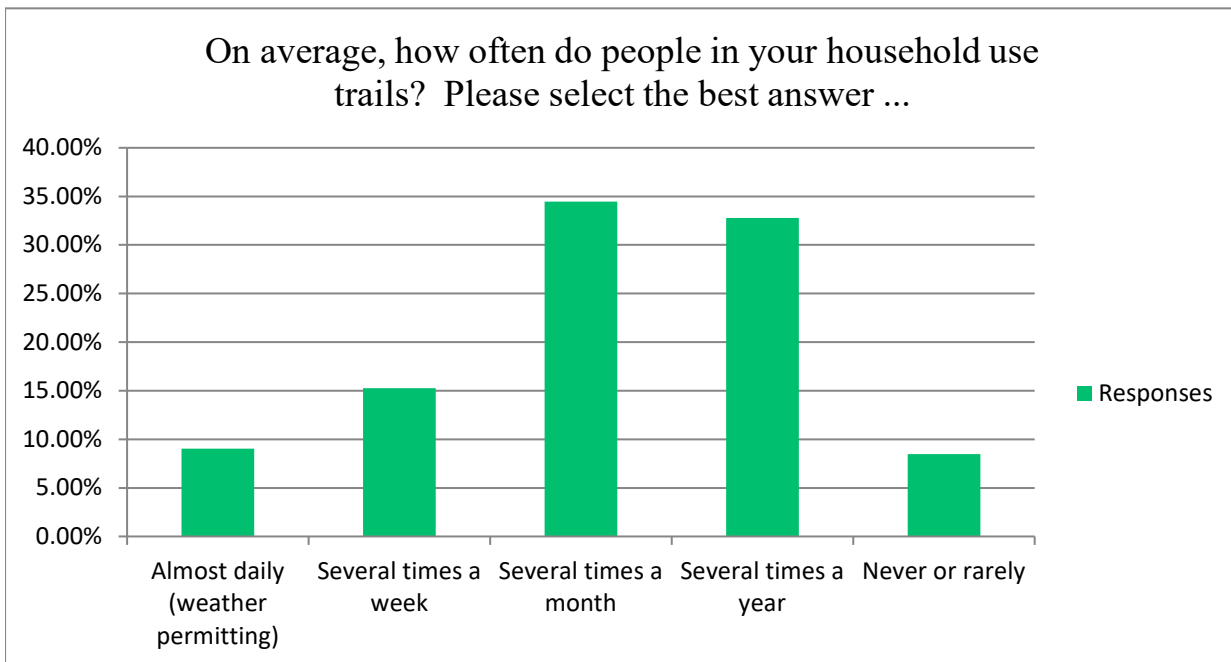
Other (please specify)

Dog park
 More biking trails, thanks
 Paved trails for strollers would be nice
 Dog walking trails
 don't know about these trails

Meeker County Trails Survey

**On average, how often do people in your household use trails?
Please select the best answer ...**

Answer Choices	Responses	
Almost daily (weather permitting)	9.04%	16
Several times a week	15.25%	27
Several times a month	34.46%	61
Several times a year	32.77%	58
Never or rarely	8.47%	15
Other (please specify)		16
Answered		177
Skipped		3



Survey comments found on the next page ...

Other (please specify)

Would use more often if a trail was located closer to me.

None close, just bike in town.

We only have half a trail around the lake! If there were more trails, I would use them

Answer based upon availability of trails

If trails were available near me, I would use daily.

Not as often as I would like due to safety concerns

Biking trails that are more accessible would be wonderful. Unfortunately, the trend toward narrower highways in the country and gravel shoulders often making biking unsafe to reach those trails without having to use our cars to drive our bikes to them.

Only because there aren't any around Litchfield. And im not going to go out of town with my newborn and 4 year old to walk when it's a little chilly

Depends on the snow or where we go camping

We exercise daily but can only ride trails in places other than Meeker county because we have none anywhere near Litchfield

Would more often with closer availability

We drive to locations with bike trails. If there were some around here, I would use them. The lack of bike/pedestrian friendly routes in this town is frustrating!

As not sure what is available/location

I can't use them if I don't know about them

Trail around Lake Ripley a few times a month. Other trails a few times per year. If they were more available, we'd use them more.

I am an almost daily bicycle commuter, but my route does not utilize any bike trail.

Meeker County Trails Survey

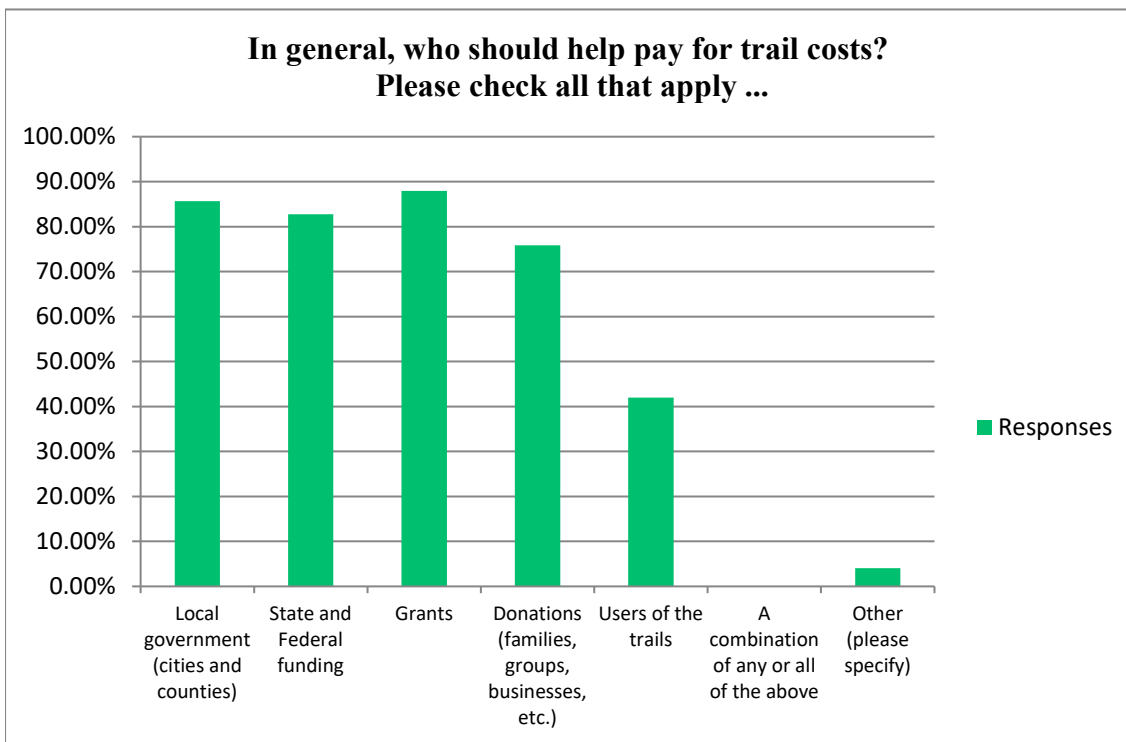
When developing trails in Meeker County, how important are the following considerations?

	Very Important		Neutral/No Opinion		Not Important		Total
Stakeholder/Partner Cooperation	48.55%	84	38.73%	67	12.72%	22	173
Respect for Landowners	89.14%	156	10.86%	19	0.00%	0	175
Safety	87.36%	152	10.92%	19	1.72%	3	174
Accessibility	79.77%	138	19.08%	33	1.16%	2	173
Health & Wellness	70.93%	122	25.00%	43	4.07%	7	172
Environmental Impact	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0
Tourism & Economic Development	52.91%	91	38.37%	66	8.72%	15	172
Trails should be multi-use if possible	60.12%	104	36.42%	63	3.47%	6	173
Maintenance	81.50%	141	17.34%	30	1.16%	2	173
Overall Cost	46.82%	81	46.82%	81	6.36%	11	173
Proper Amenities (parking, toilets, benches, signage, garbage, etc.)	63.74%	109	32.16%	55	4.09%	7	171
	Answered						175
	Skipped						5

Meeker County Trails Survey

In general, who should help pay for trail costs? Please check all that apply ...

<i>Answer Choices</i>	<i>Responses</i>	
Local government (cities and counties)	85.63%	149
State and Federal funding	82.76%	144
Grants	87.93%	153
Donations (families, groups, businesses, etc.)	75.86%	132
Users of the trails	41.95%	73
A combination of any or all of the above	0.00%	0
Other (please specify)	4.02%	7
	Answered	174
	Skipped	6



Survey comments found on the next page ...

Other (please specify)

Stakeholders

Combination of above

Allow local saddle clubs, individual volunteers, and trail users help with the work. Updates on what is needed for labor and materials could be listed on a website. Meeker County didn't allow a shelter to be put up by a local club in memorial of a person instrumental in the development of the Darwin Dassel Park. Rejecting that offer was WRONG.

Legacy Fund, I'm over 65 and Litchfield does everything for children but nothing to keep older folks healthy. Used to ride around Ripley but 615th stretch I nearly got killed many times by traffic not respecting bicikalers. Texting while driving.

It is difficult to charge users of the trails due to enforcement issues and we want visitors to not be an issue.

I believe that there are several state and local entities that can work together such as the Legacy Parks and Trails commission, Minnesota Parks and Trails council, and local organizations. I believe that all methods of funding should be explored to cover the development, building and maintenance of the trails.

Checking every box was not a mistake. Everyone should pitch in.

Meeker County Trails Survey

What trail projects would you like to see developed in Meeker County? For example, new trails, new types of trails, parking areas, toilets, etc.? Please provide a brief answer ...

An adjacent trail along Highway 12 and around lakes. Something connecting to the Lake Koronis Trail.

Bathrooms along the trails. When going on a long run / walk, these are very important, especially for women.

Cross country trails and hiking paths that loop around. Similar to Collinwood park.

New trails, toilets

We live by Dassel and use the trail from Dassel to Cokato. Might be nice to extend to Woodland park trail.

Not very long for biking - so need to bike on main road

New walk/bike trails. Ours are well used.

I would love to see more communities connected like between Dassel and Cokato

Overnight camping for horses at the Darwin Dassel Park and at Woodlands. Funds are available, check with Renville County, they have a really good working relationship with their horse trail users.

water refill stations

walk & bike path along East Highway 12 in Litchfield

more trails around the lakes

Something like Luce line. Youngstrum

I would like to see restroom facilities near all trailheads (port-a-potties are fine!) and proper garbage disposal places along each trail. I can't STAND visiting a park and seeing that people carelessly disposed of trash because a can wasn't nearby.

Trails with interesting features like water, bridges, overlooks, etc.

ATV

Anywhere that I can ride without being afraid of being hit by cars.

New trails

New walking/biking trails

biking trails that connect and are safe to ride on

new walking/biking trails

Trails through quality prairie land.

hiking, biking, snowmobile

Continuing the dassel to coakto trail to litchfield

More single track mountain bike trails. Inter-community paved trails such as a continuous trail from here to Dassel would be nice! Groomed X-country ski trails with skating lanes would also be nice to have.

Would like to see trails from Litchfield to Eden Valley and Eden Valley to Watkins

Paved bike trails.

None.

New trails

New Trails connecting various cities

Trails closer to Eden Valley

new trails at the north end of the county, walking, biking.

Additional hiking trails. We use woodland park, and it would be nice if the buckthorn and poison ivy was removed from the park.

Atv trails

New trails

I would like to see a dog park like the city of Hutchinson has. Spring Lake park in Dassel has space and flat ground on the west side/top of hill.

Trails through nature preserves are peaceful. Benches along the way to rest. Make sure recycle bins and garbage bins available.

Rural trails with safety being #1. Example, Eden Valley has no trails I'm aware of. I just bike on the sidewalks in town with my son. We aren't comfortable on the road.

Walking and biking trails with toilets and rest areas.

I think atv and OHV trails would be a big hit and would bring people from out of town in and they would bring more money into our smaller communities

Walking trails in the Eden Valley area

New trails in areas of small towns and lakes

New trails that connect to Eden Valley

no trails

I would welcome new trails in interesting natural settings.

Trail connecting Darwin and Dassel

Walking and biking trails from city to city or lake to lake

Hiking, biking, connecting trails to existing trails

Walking, Biking trail between cities of Watkins and Eden Valley

We have no walking trails in our area by Watkins. That would get used a ton and if it could be multi use with bikes somewhere close people would really enjoy and use that a lot. Maybe connected to Eden valley? More access along the Crow River for kayaks would be great also. The places to get in and out and park are very far between. Kayaking is becoming very popular.

Trail from Dassel to Darwin hill. Unpaved for minimal upkeep and for hiking/mountain biking.

More trails

New trails connected to existing ones near communities

ATV

None. Disseminate information on what is currently available.

ATV trails

I would love to see new walking/biking trails near me with parking areas available and toilets would be a plus.

new walking trails that are pet friendly

Routes connecting communities and parks

Trails

Additional hiking/snowshoeing trails. Better signage/maps of existing trails

New trails! I would love that! Toilet helpful, but not necessity.

I think the main priority for Meeker County needs to be connecting the City of Litchfield to one of the nearby systems (Dassel-Cokato or Hwy 7). This both brings people to the community and allows people in the community to have options. While these could obviously be used for walking, I think the primary user would be bicyclists.

Trail all the way around Lake Ripley in Litchfield

Snowmobile

Pedestrian path all around Lake Ripley

Trails to all parks in counties, including paved shoulders on state and county roads with signage to warn vehicle drivers.

Maintained cross country ski trails in wooded areas that can be used for hiking and/or mountain biking in the summer.

Multi use trails. I'd like to see trails for mtn bikes-fat tire bikes to enjoy

Safe trails not having to share road/path with cars/trucks

Trails that serve more than the Litchfield and Dassel area

Side by side trails

Something around the watkins area

Atv trails

New trails

pave the luce line

Year round restrooms that aren't locked during daylight and early evening hours.

Trails linking towns such as Grove City to Litchfield and trails around lakes would be nice. Designated parking is nice, and mini-biffs!

Youngstrom Woods cleanup□

Facilities added□

Try to connect parks and recreation areas to each other and with other trail systems

A trail for rollerblading

A 4 wheel drive park

Better trail around lake Ripley, longer trail system possibly to Grove City or Darwin. Paved would be ideal.

Benches and garbages would be nice but necessity. Maps would be nice if trail system we're longer and connect to other signs...it's nice to have parking dedicated to trails...small trail heads are nice and appreciated, some have picnic table and a bathroom. Water is nice to have as well for water bottle filling.

Some have air and tool stations for bike repair...□

I would love to see a paved trail that would loop or extend more than 10 miles.

We are very fortunate for our access to nature!

More hiking trails similar to Darwin Hill. I wouldn't be picky but it would be really nice to have something closer to Litchfield.

Connect to major trails like Glacial Ridge system and Luce Line system, connect parks and safe passage through cities.

A small project to begin with would be a trail out to Walmart. People are always walking or biking in the ditch and side of Hwy 12. I would like to see a connection of a bike/walking trail from Litchfield to Darwin Ski hill and then eventually hook into the Dassel trail. It would be nice to have miles of ATV trails that could run from park to park and possibly create a campground at one of the parks for that.

More paved bike trails-town to town especially.

Connect the DC trail to Darwin Hill.

Extended walking/biking trail from Dassel. ☐

Garbage cans in areas along trail along with restrooms. ☐

More walking/bike trails

Bike path from dassel to high school, trails that would allow horses

More safe biking trails. The roads are just plain dangerous

Horse back trails

New trails, parking and toilets.

I would love to see new trails! I would also love to see a trail map so people know where the trails are. I have lived here for many years and have no idea where I can find this information or even if it exists.

Biking trails

Trails beyond the Litchfield/Dassel area

New trails Dassel to Litch!!

Paved walk/bike: Litchfield to Grove City along highway 11. Litchfield to Minnebelle boat landing.

Litchfield to Eden valley. Eden Valley to Watkins and Koronis Trail. Litch to Dassel. Darwin to Washington/Stella. Stella to Manuella to Minnebelle. Minnebelle to Highway 7. We can use existing parking and bathrooms are not necessary at this time. We should enhance existing recreational areas by making horse, walking, biking, canoe trails in these areas.

Advertising available trails in concise pamphlet or online.

new trails for hiking/biking

DC Trail continued to Darwin

a paved multi-use trail in Litchfield connecting to the current trail on Lake Ripley ☐

☐

a trail connecting the city of Litchfield to the Litchfield Nature Center (Youngstrom Woods) ☐

☐

groomed cross country ski trails anywhere! the golf course would be a great place to groom trails too

biking trails to lakes and around lakes

new trails

hiking trails, cross country ski trails

I would love to see paved trails around the perimeter of Litchfield. Along 260th for a walking/biking route out to Walmart, along county rd. 11, county rd. 1 for starters. Not just on the shoulder, but a separate path, similar to the one between Dassel and Cokato. At least then there would be a way to get from one area to another. I think for all communities in Meeker county, that would be a good place to start. Having longer connecting trails is a longer term goal.

More walking/biking trails

New trails in the Northern part of Meeker Co.. Multi use, walking and biking.

Increased connectivity to what we already have. ☐

New trail connecting the DC trail further west into Meeker County along north side of Hwy 12 (ideally, all the way to Litchfield). ☐

Pave the trail further west along the Luce Line. Ideally, pave all the way to Cosmos, but possibly pave to Cedar Mills and then crushed granite to Cosmos.

A designated walking/biking trail around Lake Ripley....a bike trail to Youngstrom Park. Groomeed CC skiing trails are Darwin hill.

New trails for walking/hiking, ATV, signage

something done with Luce Line from Cedar Mills to Cosmos

Disc golf/hiking trails

New trails sound like a great idea! Meeker County has so much to offer in this area.

A north/south trail and an east/west trail that intersect.

Bike and water trails.

Projects that connect to existing trails to the east, south, northwest.

Bike and walking trails around the lakes!!it would be great if we could become well known for adequate bike and walking trails!

New Trails along the northern part of the county

I would like to see a pedestrian bridge or tunnel to traverse Hwy 12 somewhere between Sibley and Davis Avenues in Litchfield.

Meeker County Trails Survey

Do you have any additional comments regarding trails in Meeker County? Please provide a brief answer ...

They are great for everyone and provide economic development.

Thanks

More trails need to be developed by ppl who actually use them for cross country skiing and horse back riding.

need safe non-motorized way to get to East Highway 12 businesses in Litchfield

We NEED them.

We love to use the county parks and trails when nice weather hits. The spring/summer trail maintenance seems to be on par, but when I've been snowshoeing in Darwin, particularly, the trails are almost inaccessible. My 60 year old mother has been modifying her snowshoeing routine due to overgrowth of the trails she frequents, and that's such a shame! I'd love to be able to take our kids out, as well, without having to worry about them tripping in their snowshoes or having to fight their way through brambles and overgrowth.

There's nothing around Litchfield for us oldersters. Only Luceline 10 miles South. Dassel, Cokato 10miles East and Spicer, Willmar, Paynesville 15 miles West and North. Have to haul bikes wherever you go. No wonder no one want to move to Lfd. Lots of people from Lfd moving to Hutchinson, better health care, more Drs., better choice of housing for retirees.

We have some great trails but it would be nice if there were some more.

We travel 30 to 60 minutes away to bike on trails because we do not have much on a regular basis. Sometimes we go 200 miles or more to bike.

more useful trails would help get people out and about and also provide more safety when walking or biking

Do not create trails where quality deer hunting occurs, as the stakeholders will conflict too much. Or make some only accessible for winter use after Jan. 1.

Litchfield needs safe trails

If added to our already growing taxes we will consider moving out of Meeker county.

Have some that are in or near towns.

Look at the whole county and not just the Litchfield, Darwin & Dassel area

They should be spread out through the entire county, not just localized in the larger towns.

Please start eradicating noxious weeds. IE buckthorn, and wild parsnip. It would be cool if the parks started implementing rotational grazing of goats or cattle to maintain forest and prairie health. I would love to help. Josh Pommier 320 292 5860

Water stations

Pathway does not need to be paved. But if there is ample funds the hard surface is better for bicycling.

We would love a trail system in our area instead of having to go the Wobegon Trail etc

I think that trails are important for every community.

no trails

It would be great if the Greenleaf rec area trail made a loop. At this point, after going in a half mile or more, one simply has to come back on the trail just traversed. / One of the most interesting Crow River canoe runs lies between Hwy 34 and Forest City. Much of it is quite wild. It's been some time since I've made that run because the last time I went through almost every bend had downed trees, etc., making for very hard going. It would be great if the worst of this could be cleared out.

Need more trails

Snowmobile trails are maintained very well, just need snow

Stop looking at taking land from property owners for trails they do not want! Example: Greenleaf and Cedar Lake

N/A

Snowmobile trails need to be worked earlier in the Fall once crops are off. Hard to get a good base started when they go across lumpy plowed fields

Ensure current trails are actually being used before even considering expanding.

Apart from initial installation costs, factors must be considered in the ongoing maintenance costs and who would perform it.

Any kind of bike trails would be great thanks

Promote the trails better

I love the trails that I know we have...I would love a list of existing trails.

I enjoy using the ones near me.

I wish there was a way to keep them a safe place to use.

Snowmobile trails must be maintained, farmers can't leave ridges on trail

Get MN DOT to put the shoulders back on Hwy 22 south of Litch to Hwy 7

We have enjoyed the nature trail south of Litchfield in the fall and winter as well as the north and south sides of the Darwin Park. There are times the Darwin Park is a bit unpleasant to walk after the horses have dug up the trail or left their apples on it.

No

No

Outdoor recreation is very important, please continue to develop and promote these areas.

We mostly travel to Kandiyohi County to use Glacial Lakes trail and to bike around Green Lake, and cross-country skiing trails at Sibley Park, then eat and spend money in Spicer and New London.

Love them. More is always better.

Prairie Park needs upkeep around the trees.

I don't think it needs to be fancy at all, just trails and land. Space to walk and explore with dogs would be great!!

Thank you for your work on this important project for all!

Groomed Snowmobile trail through our yard and across our driveway has caused significant damage to grass, trees, and driveway. Snowmobiles jump our driveway. Please ask landowners if a trail is ok before creating one. We were not asked.

I wish more communities would be connected with a safe bike trail.

Let's develop avenues to allow access to our beautiful county. □

Also, please consider those of us who are handicapped and must use assistive devices

It would be great to have a trail map.

Need exists

Let's have more and keep them maintained

We should engage Jeff Bertram to help source funding as he was very successful doing the lake Koronis trail for a fraction of the cost. I have spoken to a number of land owners whom would donate an easement for trail access if they get a tax deduction.

County funding for maintenance of Dassel Cokato Trails a budget line item for all trails

I am interested in further participation I just haven't been able to attend any planning meetings yet

no

If you look at other communities that are growing, especially for younger families, they offer trails along most main roads, and multiple bike paths. Meeker county is so far behind in this aspect. It is a factor for my husband and I as we consider where to live as our children are approaching graduation. It does make a difference to people, and is worth the investment.

We could see if we could hook up with other trails in our area

County and city park amenities are great and very well maintained, but little trail connectivity between them.

Think this would be a great benefit for county members and tourists

Some in town and some in the more rural areas as well. It would be nice to connect to some of the outlying communities in this way - not just focused on Litchfield.

This is awesome. Thank you!

Let's not have this document sit on a shelf. It needs to be a living document and be at the forefront of decision county leaders make in the future.

Let's get going

As someone who bikes frequently I would also like to see a the promotion of bicycle commuting as a lifestyle choice. Perhaps the schools could offer incentives to teachers and students who bike. I believe that having more bikes on the road actually makes it safer to be a cyclist because drivers become accustomed to sharing the road. The more bikers we have the more they will use and support the trails we are planning!