

# Hear Every Voice

## Case Study: Minnesota Parks and Trails Legacy Plan Public Workshops



Public workshop activities for the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources Legacy Planning effort

Minnesota

Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Citizens League

**Context:** In 2008 Minnesota voters passed the Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment to the Minnesota Constitution. State sales tax increased by three-eighths of one percent in July 2009 and will remain increased until 2034. The revenue generated from the sales tax increase is allocated to four funds in the following manner: 33 percent to the clean water fund, 33 percent to the outdoor heritage fund; 19.75 percent to the arts and cultural heritage fund; and 14.25 percent to the parks and trails fund.

In effort to better understand how to invest the funds allocated to parks and trails, the Minnesota Legislature requested that the DNR develop a 25-year long-range plan and a 10-year strategic coordination plan. The Legislature mandated that the public be included in the “development and finalization of the plans” (Minnesota Laws 2009, Ch. 172, Art. 3, Sec. 6).

**Public Involvement:** The DNR worked with the Citizens League to develop and implement a statewide public participation plan to better understand Minnesotans’ vision and priorities for the use of the Legacy funds (Citizens League 2010). This case study focuses on the public workshop component of the participation efforts during the first phase of the project.

*“Citizen engagement is the foundation of the Parks and Trails Legacy Plan...What we heard from citizens helped shape this plan’s vision and recommendations” (DNR 2011).*

### Public workshop in Saint Paul, Minnesota



**Participants engaged in workshop activities, including the use of live audience polling.**

Source: Cindy Zerger

## Project Details

## Location

## Organizations

## Case Summary

*“Activities were structured with the aim of reaching out to Minnesotans in a way that interests them, solicits their meaningful participation and sets the stage for a ‘common’ good approach. . .” (Citizens League 2010)*

The DNR and Citizens League hosted seventeen workshops across the state during the spring of 2010. Workshops were held at local libraries, schools, and community centers on weekday evenings. The workshops started with a brief presentation by DNR staff which covered background information on the Legacy fund as it relates to parks and trails, provided an overview of the planning process, and described the evening’s activities.

The workshop activities consisted of a combination of individual and group activities. Individuals answered a series of questions about general nature-based recreation preferences and then engaged in a small group discussion facilitated by a table facilitator. This activity allowed participants to think about their own perspectives related to nature-based recreation and listen to other perspectives from individuals at their table. The second activity involved a worksheet containing multiple choice questions on the benefits, priorities, increasing participation, budget challenges, and vision of parks and trails. Participants indicated their personal preferences on the worksheet and then again discussed their answers as a group. For this exercise, participants also used handheld keypads to log their vote in a live polling activity. The real-time feedback allowed by this technology made it possible for participants to see the similarities and differences in their responses to a variety of parks and trails topics.

#### Sample questions from workshop worksheets

*Outdoor recreation provides a variety of community benefits. . . which benefits do you think are most important to your community?*

- A. Livability of community
- B. Environmental protection
- C. Stewardship
- D. Economic impact
- E. Healthy living
- F. Nature education

Source: DNR

*Even though there is more money for parks and trails because of the legacy funds, there is still much more demand for funding than there is money available. . . with this in mind, how should overall funding for parks and trails be prioritized?*

- A. Acquire land for parks & trails
- B. Complete existing parks & trails
- C. Develop new facilities & amenities
- D. Operations & maintenance
- E. Rehabilitation

Source: DNR

A large portion of each workshop was also devoted to a group consensus-building exercise focused on allocating funds across pre-defined parks and trails priority areas. The table of participants received \$100 in ten dollar increments and had to work together to decide how the funds should be allocated across six categories of investment: land acquisition, development, redevelopment or restoration, operations and

maintenance, marketing and awareness, and programming. Participants could add an additional category if the group felt it was necessary. This activity encouraged participants from seemingly different perspectives to work together to find an allocation strategy that was agreeable to all.

### Budget worksheet

**Regional and State Park and Trail Legacy Workshop  
Participant Worksheet**

**How Do You Think Legacy Funding Should Be Prioritized?**

**Exercise Instructions**

- The purpose of this exercise is for your table to come to consensus on how Parks and Trails Legacy Funds should be prioritized.
- Your table has \$100 to spend across seven broad categories of parks and trails activities. Spend according to your priorities—you can divide your cash across activities or spend it all in one place!
- Please briefly share any insights or rationale you have for making your recommendation. Hand this sheet into meeting organizers at the end of the workshop.

Table Funding Choices	
1. Land Acquisition (new parks or trails, or expanding existing parks and trails)	
2. Development (building park and trail facilities)	
3. Redevelopment or Restoration (redeveloping or restoring park and trail facilities or natural resources)	
4. Operations and Maintenance (caring for land and/or facilities)	
5. Marketing and Awareness (promotion and increasing public understanding of recreational opportunities)	
6. Programming (learning about the outdoors and new outdoor activities)	
7. Other _____	
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$100</b>

**Insights or Rationale?**

Source: DNR

Citizens League. 2010. Parks and trails legacy project: Public participation findings final report. Retrieved from <http://www.legacy.leg.mn/funds/parks-trails-fund/plan/public-participation>.

Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. 2011. Parks and trails legacy plan: A 25-year long-range plan for Minnesota. Saint Paul: State of Minnesota, Department of Natural Resources.

**1. Minnesota’s Legacy website:** <http://www.legacy.leg.mn>

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## References

## Resources