

MEETING DATE: April 12, 2018

TITLE: Approval in Concept of the Big Island Nature Park Master Plan

RESOLUTION NUMBER: 18-039

PREPARED BY: Laura Domyancich

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REVIEWED BY: Administrator Counsel Program Director:
 Board Committee Engineer Program Manager:

WORKSHOP ACTION:

<input type="checkbox"/> Advance to Board mtg. Consent Agenda.	<input type="checkbox"/> Advance to Board meeting for discussion prior to action.
<input type="checkbox"/> Refer to a future workshop (date):_____	<input type="checkbox"/> Refer to taskforce or committee (date):_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Return to staff for additional work.	<input type="checkbox"/> No further action requested.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other (specify): Seeking approval at the April 12, 2018 Board Meeting.	

PURPOSE or ACTION REQUESTED:

Approval in concept of the City of Orono’s Big Island Nature Park Master Plan.

PROJECT/PROGRAM LOCATION:

Big Island Nature Park in Orono.

PROJECT TIMELINE:

Spring 2018 with future phased implementation.

PAST BOARD ACTIONS:

March 10, 2005 – Resolution 05-013: Resolution in Support of Public Ownership of the Big Island Veteran’s Camp Property

November 3, 2005 – Resolution 05-060: Authorization to Enter into an Agreement to Purchase a Conservation Easement on Approximately 56-acres on Big Island in the City of Orono

February 1, 2007 – Resolution 07-007: Declaration of Official Intent to Finance Big Island – City of Orono Conservation Easement Acquisition Through Hennepin County Land Conservation Financing Partnership

SUMMARY:

In March 2006, the Board of Managers authorized the purchase of a conservation easement on Big Island in Lake Minnetonka in a joint effort with the City of Orono to purchase the property for conservation of its biological, physical, and cultural resources balanced with appropriate and responsible recreation use. The conservation easement encompasses the entirety of the City-owned property and serves to protect these

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resources by restricting activities within the 56-acre area, which is divided into a 45-acre Natural Area and an 11-acre Recreation Area each with specific restrictions on use and improvements. In 2011, MCWD and City of Orono staff worked to draft the Big Island Nature Park Management Plan, which provides greater detail on use of the easement area and how future improvements are contemplated. The management plan elaborates on uses allowed by the easement, but may not authorize activity that the easement does not allow.

In December 2017, the City of Orono developed the Big Island Master Plan (Attachment 1) for phased improvements within Big Island Nature Park, and is seeking approval of the plan in concept. District staff have been involved in a review of the plan with City of Orono staff and provided initial comments on the Plan's adherence to easement restrictions. The Master Plan was then reviewed with the Board of Managers by District staff and again evaluated for consistency with the easement and management plan. Following this preliminary review, District staff also attended the March 13 Orono Park Commission and provided MCWD's draft evaluation and comments to the Commission and Orono staff.

The District staff review included a proposed action analysis (Attachment 2), which lists 1) specific actions contemplated by the Master Plan for improvements within either the easement Natural Area, Recreation Area, or in both areas, 2) restrictions the District's Conservation Easement places on the actions, 3) guidance provided by the Management Plan regarding those actions, and 4) if the actions are subject only to District collaboration and input.

One proposed improvement does not comply with the Conservation Easement: the placement of picnic tables within the area of Point Charming Beach on the southeast shoreline of Big Island, which is situated within the Easement Natural Area. The sandy area is used by park visitors as a beach and for landing of small watercraft. The Easement states that structures are to be constructed in accordance with the Management Plan and prohibits structures within the Natural Area. The Management Plan guidance is to consider grassy picnic sites within the defined Recreation Area and that any structures are to be vandal-proof. District staff recommend that the Board of Managers direct the City of Orono to assess the need and level of improvement provided for siting picnic tables at this location and return to the Board of Managers with this assessment and separate approval based on its findings.

The widening, lengthening, and relocating of existing trails is allowed with MCWD approval only. All other elements of the Master Plan comply with the Easement and Management Plan.

In its regulatory role, the District may also require specific permits for the planned improvements and has communicated this element of oversight and approval to the City of Orono. The regulatory review is a separate process of evaluation, and the approval in concept of the Master Plan is not connected to the regulatory process.

MCWD Board approval in concept of the Big Island Nature Park Master Plan does not constitute an endorsement of the project or commitment of financial participation. The approval in concept only confirms that the current plan, with the exception of proposed picnic tables at Point Charming Beach, conforms to the terms of the Conservation Easement and Management Plan.

Future review of the Master Plan as it moves from concept plan to design will include District staff assessment and providing regular and timely updates to the Board of Managers. City of Orono staff intend to present the Concept Master Plan to the Orono City Council for approval on April 23, 2018, and District staff will be present to participate in this Council meeting. District staff will participate in further review as the plan progresses toward final design. The City of Orono will again seek MCWD Board approval for the plan in future phases.

ATTACHMENTS: 1. Big Island Master Plan Concept Plan; 2: Proposed Action Analysis

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RESOLUTION

RESOLUTION NUMBER: 18-039

TITLE: **Approval in Concept of the Big Island Nature Park Master Plan**

- WHEREAS, the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District (MCWD) has invested substantial public resources in targeted geographies to acquire conservation rights, restore lands, and establish natural conservation corridors in order to pursue and achieve the District's water quality and water resource protection goals; and
- WHEREAS, in 2006, the MCWD purchased a conservation easement over the 56-acre Big Island Nature Park within the City of Orono to conserve and manage its biological, physical, and cultural resources balanced with appropriate and responsible recreation use, and in 2011, the MCWD and the City of Orono developed a management plan providing further detail on specific uses permitted under the conservation easement; and
- WHEREAS, the City of Orono has developed a Master Plan proposing specific improvements within Big Island Nature Park to be implemented in a phased approach and the MCWD, in its role as easement holder, has reviewed the Master Plan for conformance to the easement and management plan; and
- WHEREAS, in its regulatory role, the MCWD will require the City of Orono to submit final plans for review under MCWD rules as applicable, and the MCWD will separately consider the proposed improvements for regulatory compliance; and
- WHEREAS, the approval in concept of the Concept Plan does not specifically endorse the proposed improvements or reflect a role of financial participation in the City's implementation, but is simply a finding that the Concept Plan conforms to conservation easement restrictions, with the exception of the proposed picnic area at Point Charming Beach.
- NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District Board of Managers approves in concept the Big Island Nature Park Master Plan Concept Plan.

Resolution Number 18-039 was moved by Manager _____, seconded by Manager _____.
Motion to adopt the resolution ___ ayes, ___ nays, ___ abstentions. Date: April 12, 2018

Secretary April 12, 2018

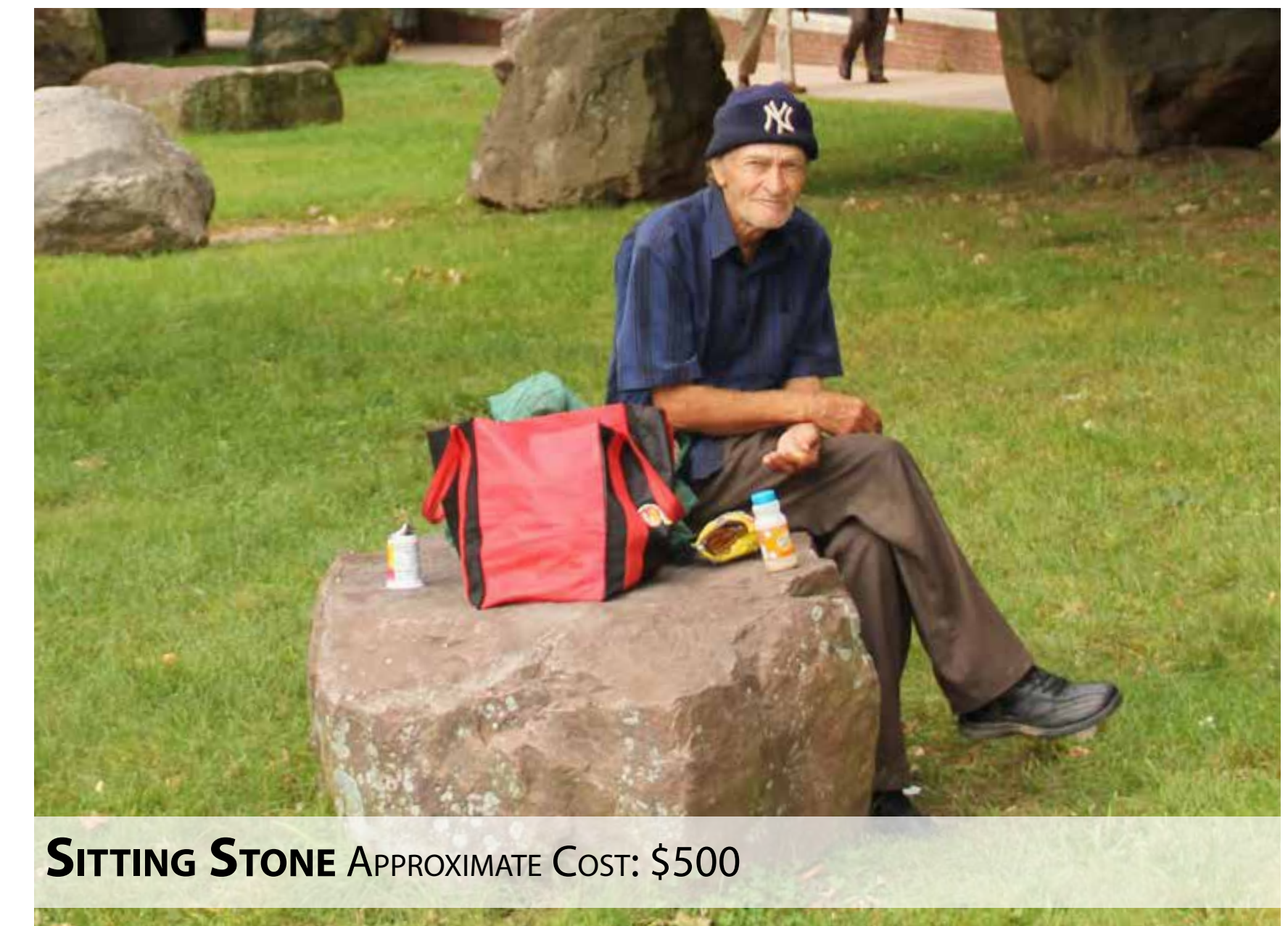




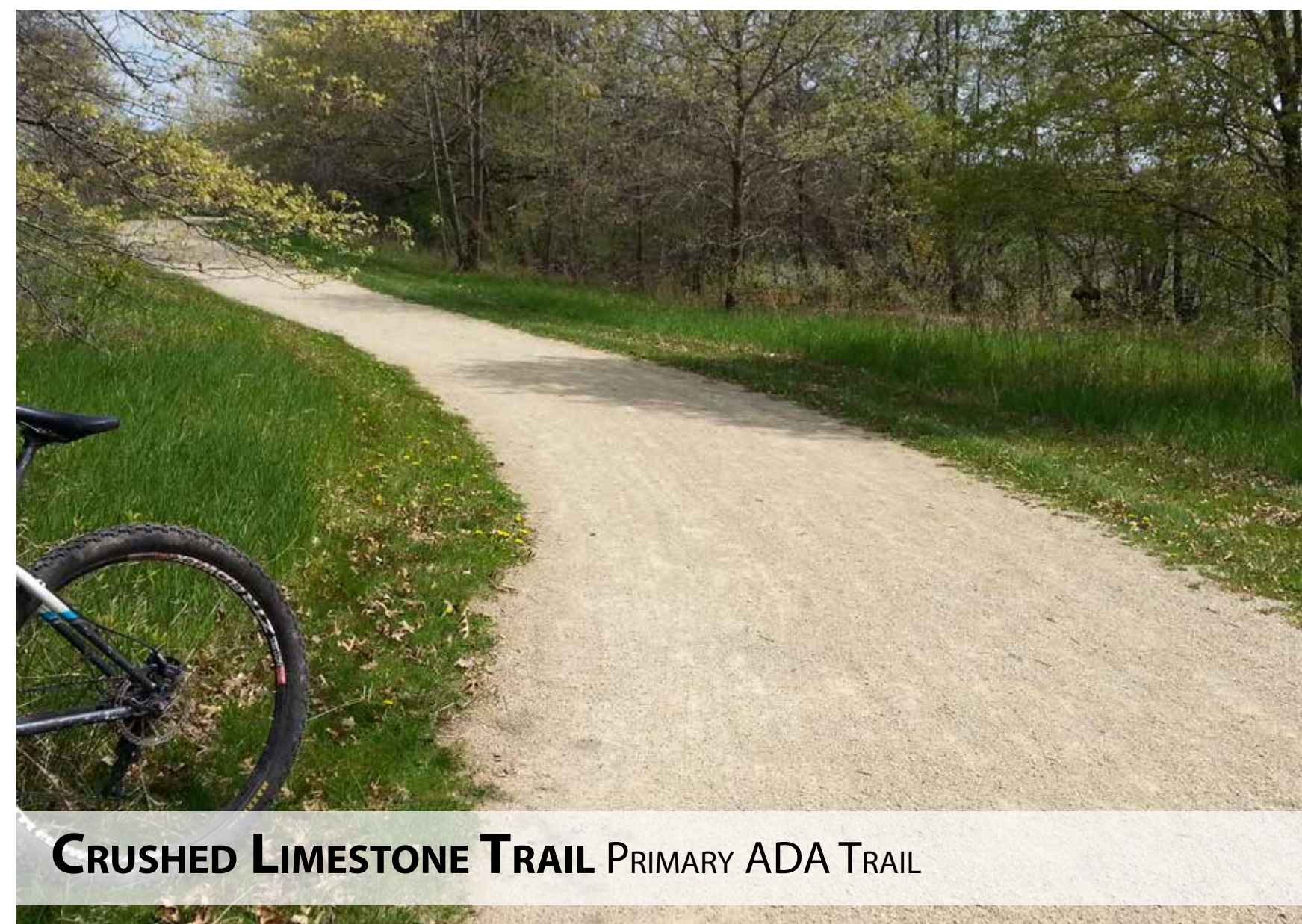
SINGLE STALL VAULT/PIT TOILET APPROXIMATE COST: \$75,000



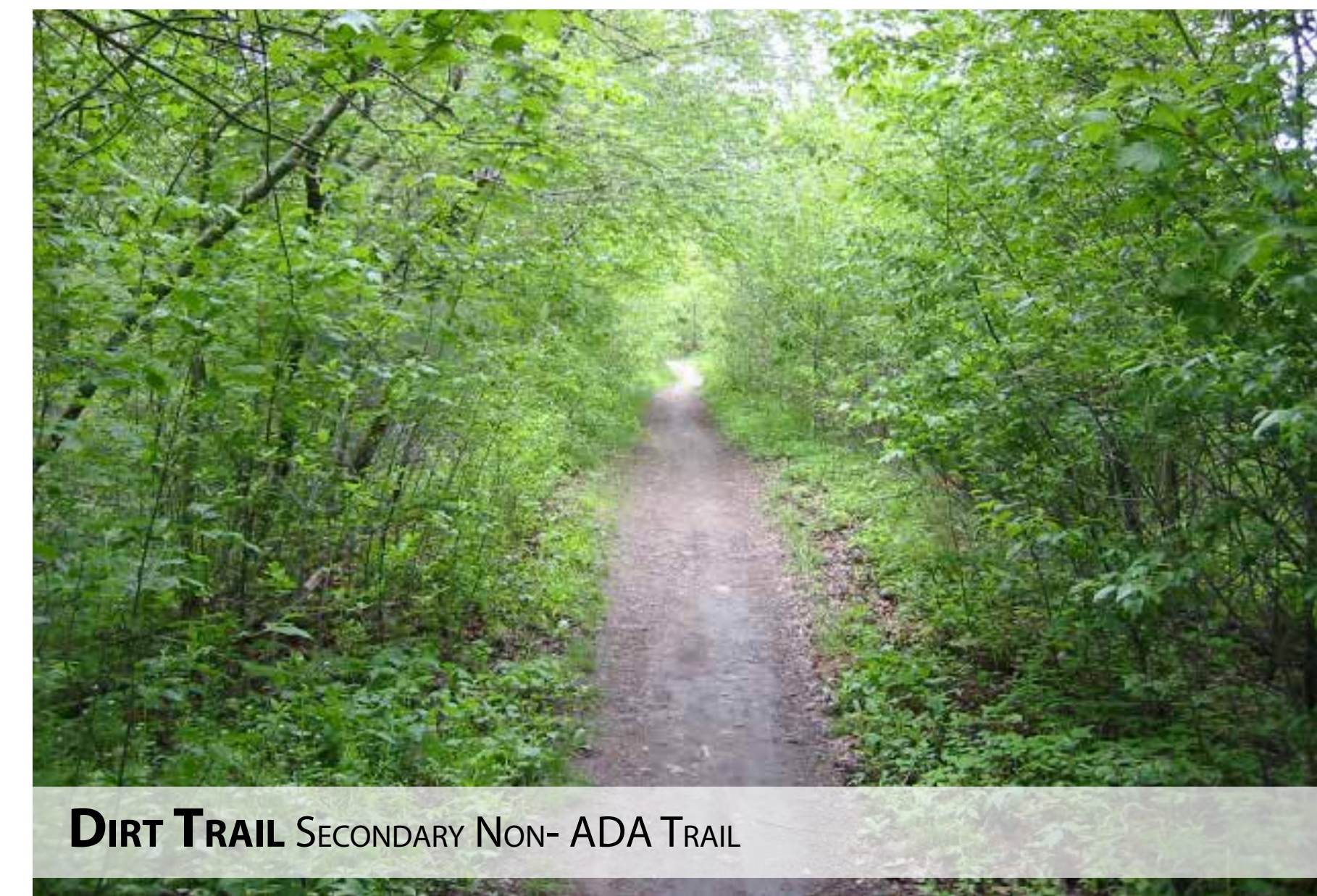
STONE PICNIC TABLE APPROXIMATE COST: \$2,000-\$4,000



SITTING STONE APPROXIMATE COST: \$500



CRUSHED LIMESTONE TRAIL PRIMARY ADA TRAIL



DIRT TRAIL SECONDARY NON- ADA TRAIL



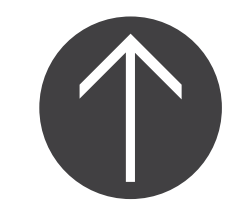
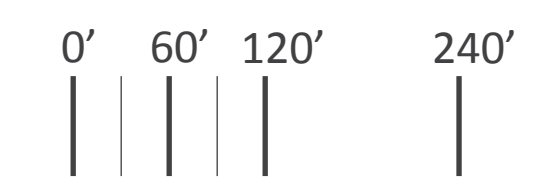
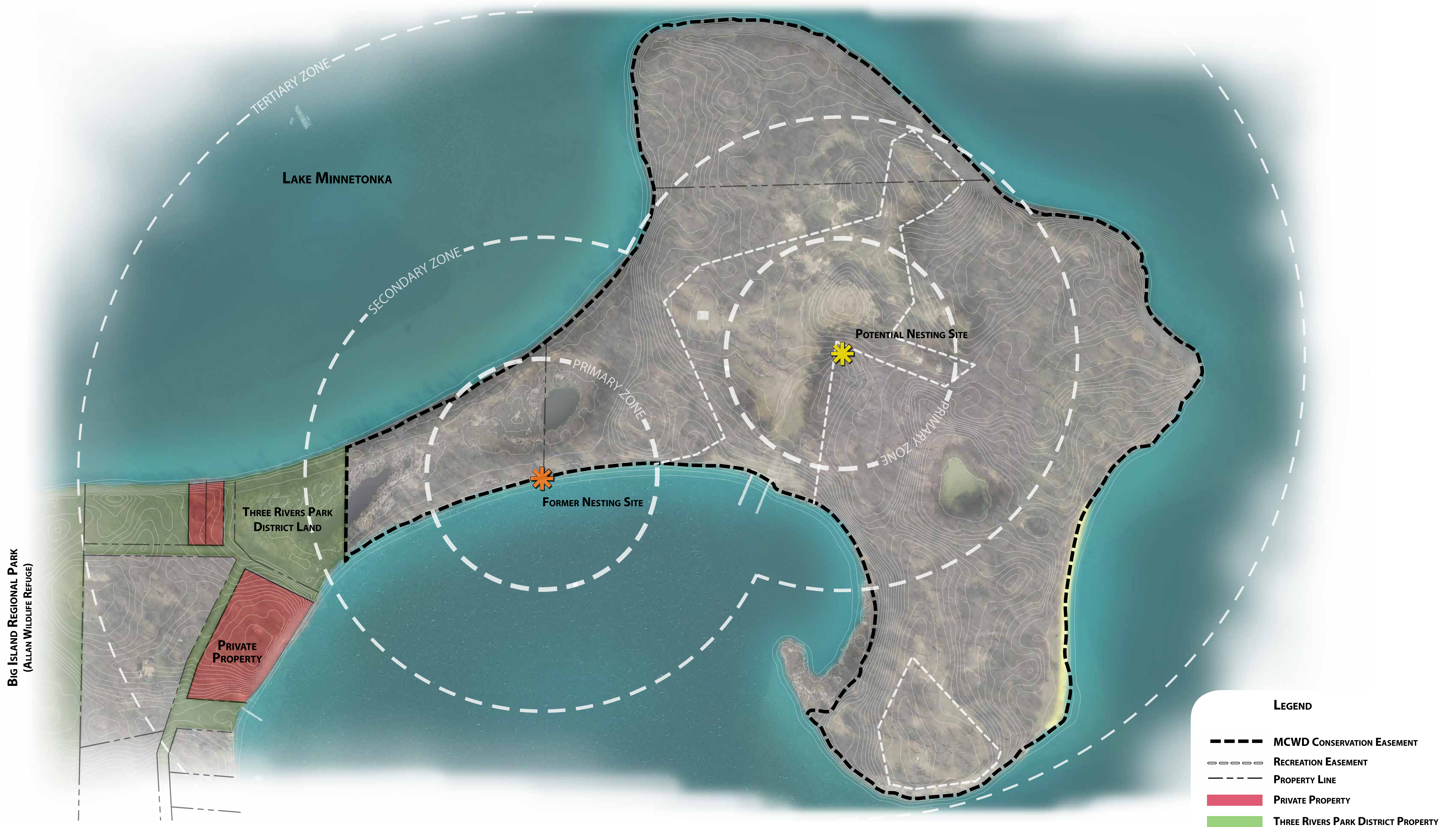
PICNIC SHELTER APPROXIMATE COST \$80,000



SWING GATES APPROXIMATE COST \$1,100



INTERPRETIVE PANEL APPROXIMATE COST \$1,000



Attachment 2: Proposed Action Analysis

PROPOSED ACTION	ACTION IN NATURAL AREA/ RECREATION AREA/ BOTH	EASEMENT RESTRICTIONS	MANAGEMENT PLAN GUIDANCE	DISTRICT INPUT ONLY
Conversion of existing trails to meet ADA requirements	Both	<i>Widening, lengthening, relocating allowed with MCWD approval only</i> ; trail from dock to pavilion building may be reconstructed to provide ADA access	Identify areas of park to make ADA accessible; assess feasibility and requirements to make selected trail segments ADA accessible	
Maintenance or improvement of existing unpaved trails	Natural Area	May be maintained for non-motorized uses that do not negatively impact the Conservation Values	Limited to addition of limestone or crushed gravel in selected areas where necessary to provide stable walking surface	
Establishment of new unpaved paths or foot trails	Both	May be established in Recreation Area and Natural Area for recreational uses in accordance with terms of Management Plan	Assess feasibility and requirements to make selected trail segments ADA accessible; evaluate need to provide erosion control where trail(s) are threatened by erosion, where erosion is caused by trail(s), or consider relocating trail segments; consider improved safety	
Restroom facility construction	Recreation Area	Structures constructed, maintained, or replaced in accordance with Management Plan	Consider if feasible given history of vandalism; existing septic system will require inspection and pumping if used in future; provide only facilities and amenities compatible with level of recreational activities intended	
Provide for park-wide security measures to prevent vandalism	Both	No temporary or permanent structures or other improvements of any kind may be placed or constructed on the Protected Property except as specifically allowed by the Easement and as consistent with the terms of the Management Plan	Needed given history of vandalism; easement references that improvements are not allowed except as consistent with terms of Management Plan	
Refurbishing existing building near dock area for visitor center	Recreation Area	City may maintain and replace existing improvements without increasing their dimension	Need to assess/determine future use and if it is possible to suitably renovate and secure for "entry point" function; Big Island Committee (2011) determined maintaining structural facilities at Park was not a reasonable expectation with costs outweighing public value; a visitor kiosk or similar is to be considered to provide information	
Interpretive signage	Recreation Area	No temporary or permanent structures or other improvements of any kind may be placed or constructed on the Protected Property except as specifically allowed by the Easement and as consistent with the terms of the Management Plan	Recommended; assess need and appropriate format; designs should be consistent; easement references that improvements are not allowed except as consistent with terms of Management Plan	
Installing trail bollards to prevent illegal vehicle use	Both	No temporary or permanent structures or other improvements of any kind may be placed or constructed on the Protected Property except as specifically allowed by the Easement	Vandalism prevention needed given history of illegal vehicle use; Management Plan also notes other options to consider to prevent vehicle use: public education, signage, establishment and publication of steep penalties; easement references that improvements are not allowed except as consistent with terms of Management Plan	
Erecting a veteran's memorial	Recreation Area	No temporary or permanent structures or other improvements of any kind may be placed or constructed on the Protected Property except as specifically allowed by the Easement and as consistent with the terms of the Management Plan	To be considered; easement references that improvements are not allowed except as consistent with terms of Management Plan	
Construction of overlooks/picnic areas; *picnic table proposed in <i>Natural Area</i> at Point Charming Beach	Both	Structures constructed in accordance with Management Plan; no structures or other improvements in <i>Natural Area</i>	Consider grassy picnic sites within defined <i>Recreation Area</i> ; no picnic tables or benches unless vandal-proof	
Application for grant funding	Both	No restrictions	No guidance	X