



MEMORANDUM

To: MCWD Board of Managers

From: Laura Domyancich, Planner - Project Manager & Janna Jonely, Project and Land Technician

Date: July 25, 2019

Re: Information Item 4.2 - Big Island Nature Park Improvements Update

Purpose:

To provide the Board of Managers an update on recent District staff coordination with City of Orono and DNR staff regarding the conditional granting of an Outdoor Recreation Grant administered by the DNR. This memorandum will also serve as an update on the current status of the Big Island Nature Park Concept Master Plan and projected timeline of next steps.

Background:

In early 2018, the City of Orono initiated a process to develop a concept master plan to explore site improvements to the City of Orono's Big Island Nature Park. In 2006, the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District (MCWD or District) purchased an easement over the 68-acre park which guides the recreational use and natural resource protection of the property. The concept master plan process grew from the City's desire to seek grant funding for the improvements and develop a conceptual plan and projected budgets for this purpose.

District and City staff coordination ensued with District staff providing feedback on the concept master plan and review of the improvements for compliance with the District's conservation easement. This review included consideration of allowable improvements within both the 11-acre "Recreation Area" where trails, structures, and other amenities are permitted, and the 45-acre "Natural Area" which is strictly protected from human intrusion (Attachment A).

In April 2018, the MCWD Board reviewed the concept master plan and raised concerns regarding proposed permanent structures (picnic tables) at Point Charming Beach and gates or bollards to prevent vehicle passage, as permanent structures in this area are not allowed by the easement. The proposed shelter and picnic tables at the beach location have since been removed from the concept plan, but the plan does include two gates at trails leading from the beach. If the City chooses to construct these gates, approval by the MCWD Board would be needed. Other improvements including the addition of 1-2 vault toilets, the conversion of an existing trail to meet ADA guidelines, interpretive signage, and a potential veterans' memorial were reviewed and found to be acceptable within the framework of the easement, but concerns were raised about protecting the planned improvements from vandalism. The current concept master plan is largely unchanged with the exception of rerouting ADA trails, removing proposed picnic tables from the area of Point Charming Beach, and reducing the number of proposed vehicle barriers.

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Outdoor Recreation Grant Program

In the spring of 2019, City of Orono staff submitted an application to the Outdoor Recreation Grant Program administered by the DNR. This application sought \$200,000 in grant monies which would fund approximately 50% of the proposed improvements to Big Island Park. In June 2019, the City of Orono received conditional approval for the \$200,000 request from the DNR.

The structure of the grant program is such that the City of Orono is responsible for supplying the remaining 50% of the Park improvements budget. A majority of this match may come from donor sources, however, the City of Orono must contribute no less than 20% of the match.

The Big Island Committee, appointed by Mayor Denny Walsh in the summer of 2017 to contemplate Park improvements and organize work to initiate master planning, formally evolved into a non-profit organization [501(c)(3)] earlier this year. This organization will continue to provide input to the Big Island Master Plan, but is now poised to fundraise for Park improvements including the match dollars for the Outdoor Recreation Program Grant.

On July 9, 2019, District, City of Orono, and DNR staff performed a site visit of Big Island Park. This site visit provided DNR grant program staff the opportunity to become familiar with the existing condition of the park and its two management areas. Staff discussed the proposed site improvements at their proposed locations and discussed the grant application and master plan concept.

During the site visit, DNR staff indicated that a grant contract between the City of Orono and the DNR would be required as part of the approval process. The grant contract stipulates that Big Island Nature Park must be dedicated in perpetuity for “solely outdoor recreation”. DNR staff transmitted the draft contract to the District and requested that the District confirm that this stipulation does not conflict with the District’s conservation easement. After District review, this requirement does not present a conflict.

Current Planning and Design Efforts

In 2018, the City of Orono received a grant from the Minnesota State Historical Society to perform an archaeological survey of Big Island Nature Park. The intent of the survey is to inform planning of the proposed improvements for the park and development of interpretive signage and future educational programming. The archaeological survey field work was conducted in spring 2019, and City staff is awaiting the completed report.

On July 8, 2019, Orono City Council approved a Bolton & Menck Design and Bidding Services agreement to take the Big Island Master Plan from survey and engineering through construction and bidding documents.

At this time, only the survey and engineering work is planned, with a tentative completion date of September 2019. The purpose of the survey and engineering work is to determine slopes and grades for ADA accessibility, overlook and pavilion area improvements, and ADA restroom facilities. This early design work is being initiated now to ensure site investigation can occur during the growing season.

City staff indicated that design and coordination with partners is anticipated to occur between October-December of 2019.

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Next Steps

District staff will continue to coordinate with City of Orono staff through the design process slated for this fall and intends to represent Board direction previously provided. This includes adherence to the Big Island Nature Park Conservation Easement and Management Plan, i.e., no permanent structures, and to continue to ask questions regarding feasibility and need of the proposed improvements and the ability of the City to perform long term maintenance.

District staff will also continue to inspect the conservation easement as part of the District's Project Maintenance & Land Management Program. The next inspection is scheduled to take place this fall.

If there are questions in advance of the meeting, please contact:

Laura Domyancich at ldomyancich@minnehahacreek.org, 952.641.4582 or

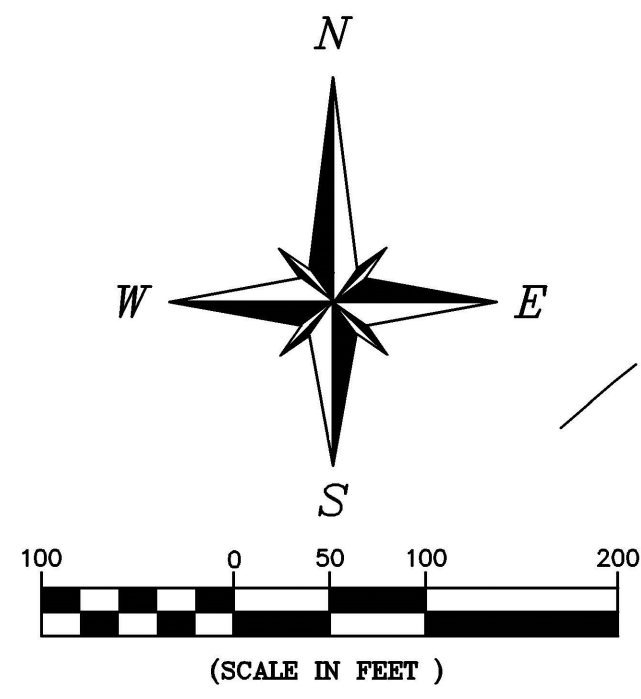
Janna Jonely at jjonely@minnehahacreek.org, 952.641.4523

Attachment A: Big Island Nature Park Site Survey

Attachment B: Big Island Master Plan—Concept Plan

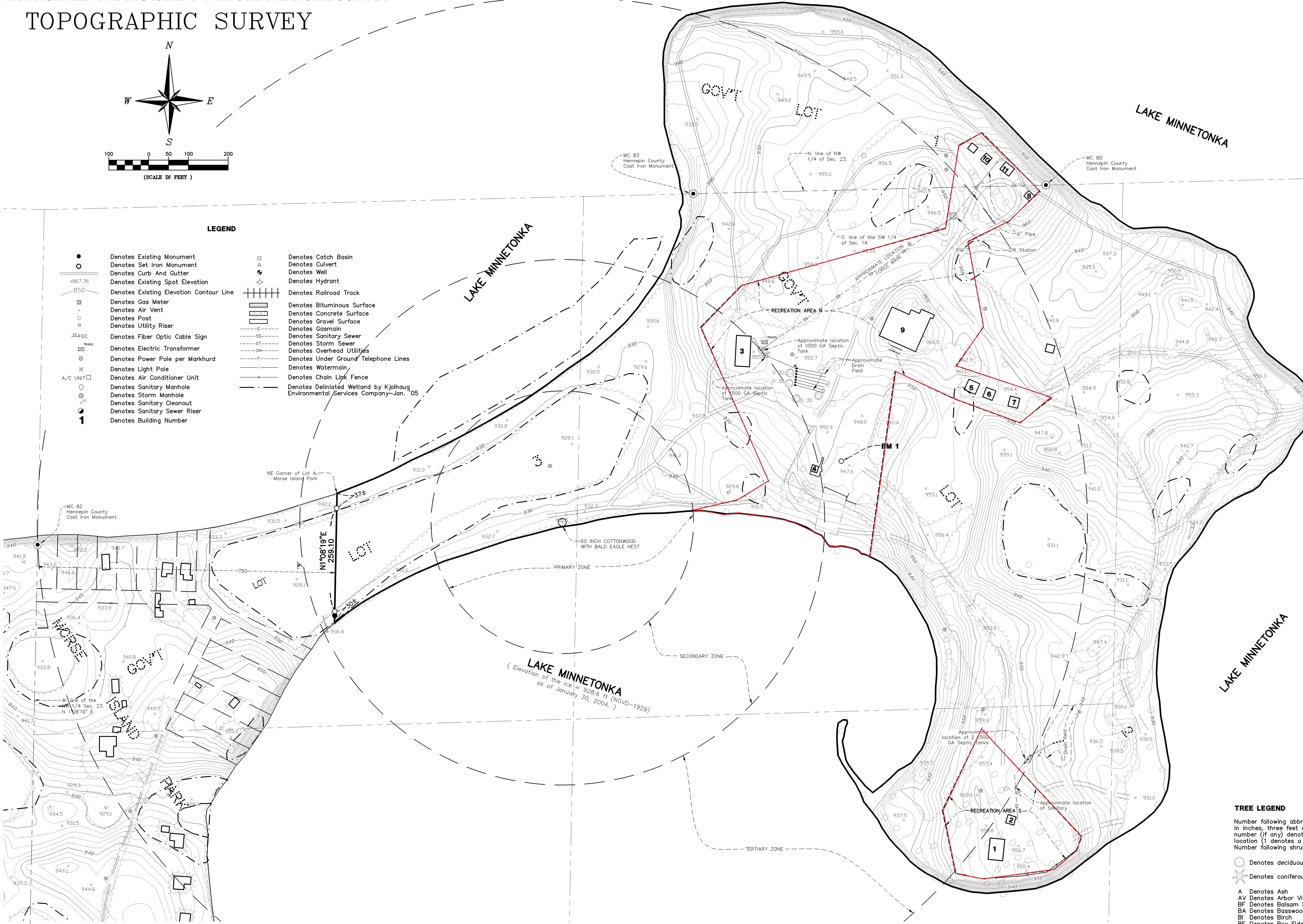
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TOPOGRAPHIC SURVEY



LEGEND

- | | | | |
|----------|---|-------|--|
| ● | Denotes Existing Monument | □ | Denotes Catch Basin |
| ○ | Denotes Set Iron Monument | △ | Denotes Culvert |
| — | Denotes Curb And Gutter | ⊙ | Denotes Well |
| • | Denotes Existing Spot Elevation | ⊕ | Denotes Hydrant |
| 850 | Denotes Existing Elevation Contour Line | —+—+— | Denotes Railroad Track |
| ⊠ | Denotes Gas Meter | ▭ | Denotes Bituminous Surface |
| ⊡ | Denotes Air Vent | ▭ | Denotes Concrete Surface |
| ○ | Denotes Post | ▭ | Denotes Gravel Surface |
| ○ | Denotes Utility Riser | ▭ | Denotes Gasmain |
| —FOC | Denotes Fiber Optic Cable Sign | —SS— | Denotes Sanitary Sewer |
| TRANS | Denotes Electric Transformer | —ST— | Denotes Storm Sewer |
| ⊕ | Denotes Power Pole per Markhurd | —OH— | Denotes Overhead Utilities |
| ⊕ | Denotes Light Pole | —T— | Denotes Under Ground Telephone Lines |
| A/C UNIT | Denotes Air Conditioner Unit | — | Denotes Watermain |
| ○ | Denotes Sanitary Manhole | — | Denotes Chain Link Fence |
| ⊕ | Denotes Storm Manhole | — | Denotes Delineated Wetland by Kjolhaug Environmental Services Company—Jan. '05 |
| ⊕ | Denotes Sanitary Cleanout | | |
| ⊕ | Denotes Sanitary Sewer Riser | | |
| 1 | Denotes Building Number | | |



- BENCHMARK 1**
Top SMI control pt 2, as shown.
Elevation = 948.77 Feet (NGVD-1929)
- BENCHMARK 2**
Galpin MNDT — MNDOT control monument near Excelsior Bay
Elevation = Feet 951.35 (NGVD-1929)
- BENCHMARK 3**
Albans MNDT — MNDOT control monument near Albans Bay
Elevation = Feet 963.90 (NGVD-1929)

- GENERAL NOTES**
- The field survey of this site was completed on February 6, 2006.
 - For the purpose of this survey, the West line of the NW 1/4 of Section 23, Township 117, Range 23, has an assumed bearing of N 1°08'19" E.
 - Utilities shown are from visible surface indications. Excavations were not made during the process of this survey to locate underground utilities and/or structures. The location of underground utilities may vary from locations shown hereon and additional underground utilities and/or structures may be encountered. Contact Gopher State One Call Notification Center (800) 252-1166 for verification of utility type and field location prior to excavation.
 - Areas: Property: 2,441,000 Sq. Ft.± (56.0 Ac.±)
Wetlands: 231,500 Sq. Ft.± (5.3 Ac.±)
 - The area of the property was computed using the edge of water as located by Markhurd, Inc.
 - Subsurface conditions were not examined or considered during the process of this survey. No statement is made concerning the existence of underground or overhead containers or facilities that may affect the use or development of this property.
 - Topographic information and building locations shown hereon were obtained by photogrammetric methods provided by MARKHURD, Inc.

LEGAL DESCRIPTION

Government Lot One (1), Section Fourteen (14), Township One Hundred Seventeen (117), Range Twenty-Three (23); and Government Lot Two (2), Section Twenty-three (23), Township One Hundred Seventeen (117), Range Twenty-Three (23); and That part of Government Lot Three (3), Section Twenty-Three (23), Township One Hundred Seventeen (117), Range Twenty-Three (23), commencing at the Northeast corner of said Government Lot Three (3), Section Twenty-Three (23) Township One Hundred Seventeen (117), Range Twenty-Three (23); thence Southwesterly along the lake shore to the Northeast corner of Lot A, Morse Island Park; thence South 350 feet to Lake Minnetonka; thence East along the shore of Lake Minnetonka to the East line of said Lot Three (3); thence North to the place of beginning.

This conveyance is made subject to the conditions and restriction that the property is used for camp purposes for the veterans of the military services of the United States; and in the event such conditions or restriction is violated, then the property shall revert to the grantor (as originally constituted according to the terms of Chapter 72, Section 2, of the Laws of Minnesota, 1947), its successors, heirs or assigns, as trustees for the veterans of the State of Minnesota, as provided by the Stipulation for Hennepin County District Court File No. 732097.

- TREE LEGEND**
- Number following abbreviation denotes estimated diameter in inches, three feet above ground level. The second number (if any) denotes the number of trunks at that location (1 denotes a dead tree).
Number following shrubs denotes it's diameter in feet.
- | | | | |
|---|--------------------------|---|--------------------|
| ○ | Denotes deciduous tree. | ○ | Denotes shrub. |
| ★ | Denotes coniferous tree. | — | Denotes tree line. |
- | | | | |
|----|------------------------|----|-------------------------|
| A | Denotes Ash | HI | Denotes Hickory |
| AV | Denotes Arbor Vitae | IR | Denotes Ironwood |
| BF | Denotes Balsam Fir | JU | Denotes Juniper |
| BA | Denotes Basswood | KC | Denotes Kentucky Coffee |
| BI | Denotes Birch | LI | Denotes Lilac |
| BE | Denotes Box Elder | LO | Denotes Locust |
| BN | Denotes Butternut | M | Denotes Maple |
| BU | Denotes Bush | MP | Denotes Mugo Pine |
| CA | Denotes Catalpa | O | Denotes Oak |
| CR | Denotes Cedar | PI | Denotes Pine |
| CH | Denotes Cherry | PO | Denotes Poplar |
| ON | Denotes Cottonwood | RO | Denotes Russian Olive |
| DG | Denotes Dogwood | SM | Denotes Silver Maple |
| EL | Denotes Elm | SP | Denotes Spruce |
| FR | Denotes Fruit | TD | Denotes Tree Deciduous |
| GN | Denotes Gingko | TE | Denotes Tree Evergreen |
| H | Denotes Hackberry | WA | Denotes Walnut |
| HC | Denotes Horse Chestnut | WI | Denotes Willow |



RECREATION SITE PLAN - BIG ISLAND PARK, ORONO, MINNESOTA

