

Accessible State Parks: HF 3549/SF 2963

Background: Since 1990, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Title II has required that all public services, programs and activities be provided in a way that is readily accessible to people with disabilities. In the 1990s, Minnesota made great strides in removing physical barriers in state-owned buildings and facilities. Since then **improvements solely for accessibility purposes have lagged due to lack of funding. Access is harder to achieve in outdoor developed areas. One result has been a piecemeal approach to accessibility and ADA compliance in our state parks.**

The Need:

Minnesota's 75 state parks and recreation areas have accessibility barriers which prevent people with disabilities, veterans and seniors from utilizing many park buildings and natural features.

- While DNR upgrades every renovation and construction project to ADA standards, this often results in standalone accessible features within a park while key park amenities remain inaccessible or partially accessible. For example:
 - **William O'Brien State Park** has an accessible picnic area, but the closest restroom is completely inaccessible and unusable for a person in a wheelchair or scooter.
 - **Fort Snelling State Park** does not have an accessible path to the shelter and restroom on Picnic Island.
 - **Nerstrand Big Woods State Park's** amphitheater has no accessible path, making it difficult for people with mobility disabilities to participate in programs and events.
 - **Minneopa State Park's** Falls Area has no accessible restroom.

The Project:

A comprehensive package of accessibility assessment, improvements and upgrades at four state parks.

- Bring **William O'Brien, Fort Snelling, Minneopa and Nerstrand Big Woods state parks** into compliance with ADA standards and provide a comprehensive outdoor recreation experience.
- Fund design, development and completion of accessibility improvements in park buildings, bathrooms, picnic shelters, campsites, trails to natural features, beaches, amphitheaters, play and parking areas.
- Develop new, accessible facilities including yurts and nature play areas.

Bonding Request:

\$20 million to renovate up to four state parks that can be accessed and enjoyed by all Minnesotans, including people with disabilities, young families, veterans and seniors. HF3549/SF2963

Return on Investment:

A Minnesota state park system whose health, historic and cultural benefits can be accessed and enjoyed by all Minnesotans.



Photos Credit: Wilderness Inquiry

...because Minnesotans with disabilities enjoy the outdoors, too!

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