



Minnesota Natural Resources  
Department: Environmental  
Assessment Files Regarding State  
Parks

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ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Lake Maria State Park

LW27-00919

- I. Description of the Proposed Action - Lake Maria State Park was created by an act of the Minnesota Legislature in 1947. Further legislation was passed in 1963. This new legislation allowed for direct purchase of park lands. The previous U.S. Forest Service/Department of Natural Resources land exchange authorized in 1947 had proven to be unworkable.

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources intends to provide additional recreation opportunities at Lake Maria State Park through the development of lands within the authorized boundaries of the park.

The Bureau of Outdoor Recreation, as the Federal administering agency of the Land and Water Conservation Fund, proposes to participate with the state of Minnesota in a development project within the statutory boundaries of Lake Maria state park. Such development projects will be for recreation purposes.

The development projects include the following actions:

Construction of walk-in campsites, landscaping of the contact station, construction and surfacing of a roadway and parking lot, management for water and vegetation resources and a cultural resource survey.

Each of the project descriptions is shown as follows:

Walk-In Campsites: This consists of selecting a trail loop leading off from the Trail/Interpretive Center and establishing campsites along the way. Each campsite will consist of tent pads,

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picnic tables, fire ring and access to nearby garbage cans, toilet facility and drinking water supply. Each campsite will have a capacity for four (4) people and there will be one screened wilderness toilet for two campsites. The number of campsites will not exceed forty (40). Sites will be spaced to afford optimal privacy. Sites will be located relative to vegetation and topography and within 400 feet of a toilet and garbage can. Sites will be accessible from the hiking trail. Each site will consist of a cleared area of 2,500 square feet, irregular shape with only brush being removed. All possible attempts will be made to avoid tree felling.

Contact Station: This facility will be landscaped with native species being utilized. This structure is already emplaced and requires only minimal landscaping as it is a very small structure. This action is designed to enhance the site by encouraging re-establishment of native species and to off-set the negative effects of facility construction.

Roadway and Parking Lot: This action is designed to allow vehicular access to the Trail/Interpretive Center with adjacent parking consistent with resource and aesthetic needs including handicapped and elderly accessibility. Approx. 1,500 feet of roadway will be established with bituminous surfacing leading from the main park road to the aforementioned facility and the associated trail network. There will be parking for about 75 cars. A pathway will lead to the Trail/Interpretive Center nearby and will be fully accessible. Because of the siting of the parking lot only

a few trees will be removed; probably less than five. Some curbing will be installed about the perimeter and the work will require one construction season. The roadway extends approx. due south of the existing main park roadway and will incorporate an S-turn for aesthetic purposes.

Water and Vegetation Management: This consists of filling in some old drainage ditches in the park as well as planting some native species to encourage native wildlife propagation including birds.

Cultural Survey: This consists of representatives from the State Historical Society doing both a surface collection along with some test pitting as well as a study of relevant literature. This is designed to inform park management as to any cultural remains either historic or pre-historic. There will be little or no environmental impact as a result of the survey. The entire park will be surveyed with special emphasis on construction areas. It will require one visit to the park over several days during the Spring or Summer.

II. Description of the Environment - Lake Maria State Park consists of rolling woodlands and wetlands with several small lakes within or bordering the park. It contains a large remnant of the Big Woods forest that is rapidly disappearing in the surrounding countryside. Lake Maria State Park is classified as a natural state park and management is conducted accordingly.

The topography of the park was formed by glacial action and is located on several feet of till resting on a granite bedrock. There are eight major soil series and one, two series complex of soils. About  $\frac{3}{4}$ 's of



the park is composed of the Emmert-Milaca sandy and gravelly sandy loam which are excessively well drained and of marsh soils. It is toward these soils that recreation facilities are directed as well as those of the Hayden Series soils. Generally, none of the soils within the park are excellent soils for any major development. Thus, all projects planned and constructed reflect this awareness.

Available data shows the park to have a large volume of groundwater located in till aquifers. Surficial water consists of Slough, Maria, Bjorkland and West lakes and other unnamed lakes, potholes and marshes. Maria is the largest with a highwater surface area of 180 acres. Blocking old drainage ditches will improve the habitats for fur bearing mammals and waterfowl.

The park contains eight different vegetation communities and are shown:

Big Woods (oak and maple)

Northern Hardwoods (maple, oak, basswood, birch, aspen)

Marsh

Wet Meadow

Aspen

Old Field

Pasture

Alder-Willow

Vegetation Management in the park consists of the following:

Maintain marshes, potholes and wet meadows by fire or passive management.

Convert old pastures and fields to native prairie by fire and planting.

Maintain Big Woods and Northern Hardwoods by timber removal and fire.

The end result is a diverse, healthy vegetation cover akin to that found by the areas first settlers.

Park wildlife data show 205 bird species, 23 mammals and 10 reptiles and amphibians which either inhabit or visit the park each year. Some of the notables include:

- Common Egret
- Common Loon
- Great Blue Heron
- Northern Bald Eagle
- Osprey
- Pileated Woodpecker
- Snowy Owl
- Badger

Waterfowl and raptor nesting sites are to be protected as well as the general habitat needs of all park wildlife. Habitat improvement and removal are considered respective to beaver and deer overpopulation potentials. Removal is called for if other measures fail.

The park offers prehistoric and historic potential and a preliminary survey is called for.

The probable future environment of the park is essentially the same as that presently shown. The park has not been unduly disturbed at the time of this writing and so the future resource descriptions in all areas considered would be to remain essentially the same.

### III. The Environmental Impact of the Proposed Actions -

Walk-In Campsites: Aprox. 75 saplings will be removed to establish each campsite. Air pollution will result from use of chain saws and exhaust from vehicles and equipment used in their construction. Some grading of campsites and tent pads may be required. Thus, some soil disturbance and

vegetation disturbance will result. Animal habitats and behavior will be affected accordingly. Some soil compaction will occur along foot paths. With campsites located along ridgelines, some soil erosion is possible. Use of campsites is expected to be rotated to minimize adverse impacts. Noise levels will increase following park visitor usage of the sites. Enforcement and maintenance requirements will increase. Some damage to wildlife and vegetation can be expected. An increased interpretive program will be of some value respective to mitigating against such damages. Rescue and medical assistance for injured park visitors will be more difficult in both winter and summer. Extra patrolling may be necessary and special equipment kept on hand at the Trail/Interpretive Center.

Contact Station: No adverse impacts are anticipated due to this landscaping project.

Roadway and Parking Lot: Major impact will be made on soils, vegetation and wildlife. Heavy equipment will be used to advance roadway to parking lot. Parking lot will disturb soils and vegetation associated with meadowlands. Very few trees will be affected. Vehicular and people traffic to and from the Trail/Interpretive Center can be expected. Wildlife will be killed and injured, especially rodents, small mammals, turtles, skunks, porcupines, racoons, insects, snakes and an occasional deer or larger mammal. There is little that can be done to mitigate against these impacts. Site selection and protection of soils against erosion are, in themselves, maximum mitigating steps. Project users can expect to make some adverse impacts such as noise, littering and some soil, vegetation and wildlife impacts. Some aesthetic impacts can be expected from the standpoint of the parking lot siting. Air and noise pollution can be expected during the construction phase. Lower levels can be expected following regular use of the facilities mentioned. It may be better



to avoid the meadow for the parking lot and investigate the siting of the parking lot in the nearby forest. There seems to be more forest than meadow in the park and meadows are important to maintaining raptor populations. The pro's and con's of meadow vs. forest for parking lot construction should be addressed in detail. Visitor comfort is another important factor which favors the shade produced by the forest. Snow removal would seem to be less of a problem (and lower cost) if placed in the forest. The aesthetic of meadow vs. forest is worthy of debate. The time needed for construction of these facilities is one construction season commencing Spring, 1978.

Water and Vegetation Management: As these are conducted for the purpose of converting park lands back to their original vegetation and associated wildlife habitats, no adverse impact can be seen. Any impact will be very slight and the results will greatly outweigh any negative side effects. Such side effects are not discernible at my level of analysis.

Cultural Survey: No adverse impact is anticipated.



## ADDENDUM

### Lake Maria State Park Environmental Assessment

LW27-00919

#### I. Description of the Proposed Action

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources intends to increase the quality of outdoor recreational opportunities at Lake Maria State Park by developing new facilities.

The Heritage Conservation Recreation Service proposes to participate with the State of Minnesota in the following projects:

- the trail system will be completed by constructing boardwalks in wet areas and interpretive signing.
- an interpretive and trail center will be built.
- the roads and parking lots will be paved.
- the vegetative management program will consist of control burns to restore the prairie areas of the park.

#### II. Description of the Environment

(see assessment previously submitted LW27-00919)

#### III. The Environmental Impact of the Proposed Action

The interpretive and trail center and trail work will displace and disturb animals living on or near the project sites. The existing vegetation will be removed. There will be noise impacts from the construction.

The road and parking lot paving will prevent users from using the park. The project will be done during low use periods to reduce the impact.

The vegetative management will cause some animals to leave the area but those which require a prairie habitat will benefit. Those plants which are not members of the prairie plant community will be lost but the prairie plants will benefit.

LAKE MARIA STATE PARK--COUNTY STATE  
AID HIGHWAY NO. 39 IMPROVEMENTS

Environmental Assessment

I. Description of Proposed Action

The Wright County Highway Department proposes to upgrade County State Aid Highway (CSAH) 39 to meet safety requirements. The action will result in the conversion of 4.16 acres of land in Lake Maria to highway purposes (Map 1)

II. Description of the Property

The 4.16 acres to be converted lie adjacent to CSAH #39. The area consists of 1.6 acres of wetland and 2.56 acres of upland.

The area contains no rare or endangered plant or animal species.

The area contains no known historic or archaeological resources.

No recreational development exists on the lands.

III. Environmental Impact of the Proposed Project

The project will convert 4.16 acres of recreational land to highway purposes.

It will dispose those plants and animals now occupying the area.

It will improve the safety of CSAH #39 which is used by the public to reach the park.

IV. Mitigating Measures Included In the Proposed Action

A 55 acre parcel of land is being acquired in Maplewood State Park. It is proposed that Wright County assist in acquiring this parcel. The parcel contains 55 acres of high quality park land and approximately 1/3 mile of shoreline (Map 2)

V. Adverse Environmental Effects Which Cannot Be Avoided Should The Proposal Be Implemented

There will be a permanent conversion of 4.16 acres of park land in Lake Maria State Park to highway purposes.

VI. Relationship Between Local Short-Term Uses Of Man's Environment And The Maintenance And Enhancement Of Long-Term Productivity

GAINS

1. A safe road for park users traveling to Lake Maria State Park
2. Replacement lands in Maplewood State Park which are of higher quality and better suited for recreational use since they are not adjacent to a highway.

LOSSES

1. The conversion of 4.16 acres of park land to highway purposes

VII. Any Irreversible And Irretrievable Commitment Of Resources Which Would Be Involved In The Proposed Action Should It Be Implemented

The 4.16 acres of park land will be committed to highway purposes.

VIII. Alternatives To The Proposed Action

The only alternative is no action. This is not an acceptable alternative since the highway is in need of repair and safety improvements.

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