#### ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

#### OLD MILL STATE PARK

#### I. DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED ACTION

A. <u>Purpose of the Action</u> - Old Mill State Park was established by an act of the Minnesota State Legislature in 1937.

The renovation of certain facilities and adjoining lands within the park, by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources Division of Parks and Recreation, will enhance the outdoor recreation experiences of Minnesotans and visitors to the state.

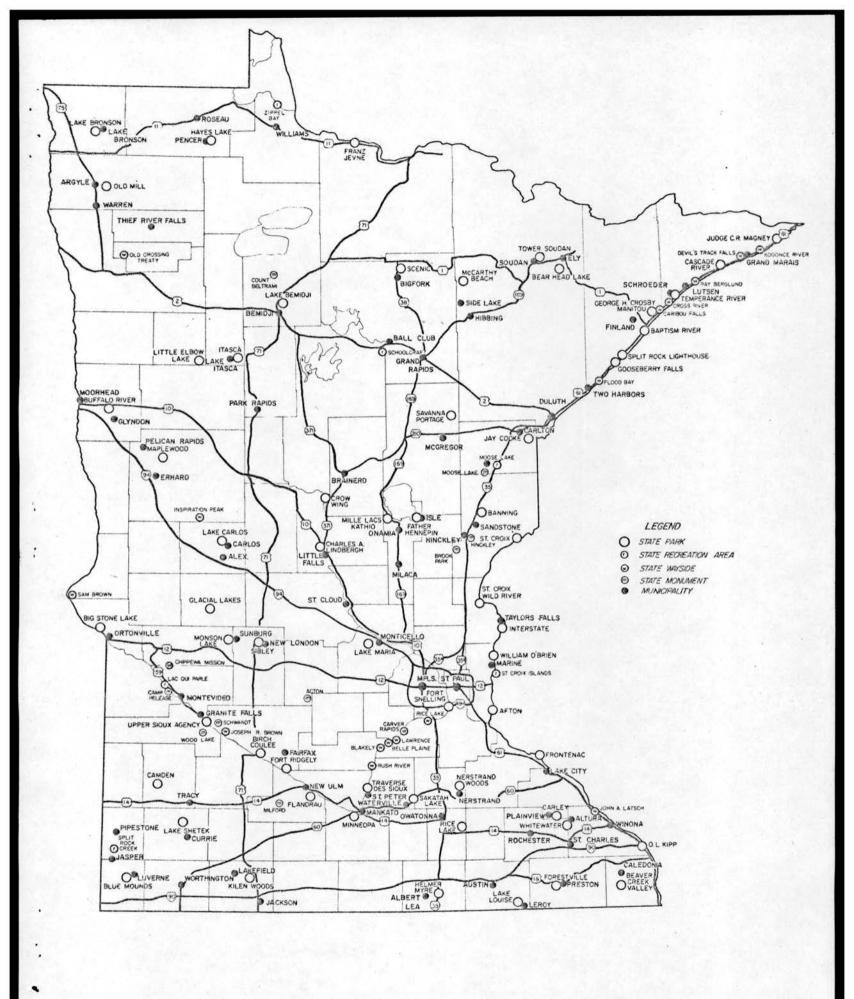
The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources proposes that the Federal Bureau of Outdoor Recreation, as administrator of the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LAWCON), participate in this action.


B. Location and Magnitude of the Project - Old Mill State Park
is located in Marshall County approximately 10 miles east
of Argyle and 325 miles northwest of the Twin Cities, between
Highways 75 and 59 (Map 1 and 2).


The present authorized land area of the park is 285 acres.

As of July 1, 1974, the total land area acquired is 285 acres (Map 3).

It is proposed that erosion control, landscaping, and plantings be undertaken adjacent to use areas and that a drainage ditch diversion presently under construction be completed.







The estimated cost of the renovation project is as follows:

Completion of 'Dhrainage Dirch Landscaping and Planting

\$6,000

Erosion Control

\$3,000

Total anticipated cost of work

\$9,000

- C. <u>Timing of the Project</u> State funds are available for the completion of the project, which should be completed in one construction season.
- D. Future 'Development Under the Minnesota Outdoor Recreation

  Act of 1975, comprehensive management plans are being developed for all state parks. Old Mill is scheduled for planning in the current biennium. This legislation authorized necessary renovation, coordinated with the planning staff, but no development prior to final plan approval.
- E. Recreation Needs Served by this Proposal Old Mill State Park provides campers and day users with a variety of recreational facilities ranging from camping and picnic grounds, to multipurpose trails and swimming area in a part of the state that is otherwise lacking in such facilities. In order to maintain the quality of these facilities, an undegraded park environment, and satisfying experiences for park visitors, this renovation project is proposed.

# II. DESCRIPTION OF THE ENVIRONMENT

A. Topography - Old Mill State Park lies in Minnesota's Red
River Valley, within an area that was once covered by Glacial
Lake Agassiz. Aside from slightly elevated beach ridges,
this relatively flat country was once covered with tall grass

prairie that has since been converted to cropland (Map 4).

B. Biological Resources - Old Mill encompasses some remnant prairie flora and the wooded banks of the Middle River, which transects the park. The flora is a mixture of prairie remnants, brush, and wooded river banks. The prairie contains big blue stem, indian grass, and cord grass. The brush areas are mainly willow and alder. The stream banks are wooded with willow, elm, and cottonwood.

The fauna include deer, moose, coyote, badger, fox, beaver, mink, short-eared owl, great horned owl, and red-tailed hawk.

The fish found in the river include northern pike, bullhead, and several species of minnows.

No rare or endangered species are present.

C. Historical and Archaeological Resources - Although thorough inventory and documentation of park resources awaits the forthcoming master plan, Old Mill is named for the historic gristmill that the park manager has recently restored to operating condition along with a homesteaders' cabin. Other features worthy of preservation and interpretation of cultural adaptations to the prairie environment likely occur within the park. A 1973 state park's study conducted by the State Archaeologist listed Old Mill as one of the parks not needing further archaeological exploration. However, care will be taken in project development to watch for evidence of previous habitation, and if discovered, projects will be halted until such evidence can be analyzed.



- D. <u>Transportation and Utilities</u> The park lies between State
  Highways 75 and 59, affording good vehicular access for
  north-south traffic to and from the Canadian Border, about
  60 miles away. No major utility corridors intersect existing park boundaries.
- E. <u>Water Resources</u> The surface water resources consist of the Middle River. The river's flow is 0-1330 C.F.S. with an average of 43.6 C.F.S.

The ground water resources are located in sand and gravel deposits in the glacial beach ridges. The park wells are between 114 and 250 feet. The water quality is good.

- F. Socio-Economic Factors The park lies within Economic Development Region 1, a six-county area in the northwestern corner of the state (Map 5). A deficit in the type of outdoor recreation facilities offered at Old Mill State Park exists in this region.
- G. Land Use The proposed project site lies within an area reserved for recreational uses consistent with environmental protection. Adjoining lands are primarily agricultural.
- H. Existing Recreational Facilities Park facilities currently include campgrounds, picnic area, swimming beach, multipurpose trails and historic site with interpretive potential.

  Weekend interpretive programs have been offered during the summer for the past three years.

## III. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT OF THE PROPOSED PROJECT

A. Impact on the Physical and Biological Environment - Some

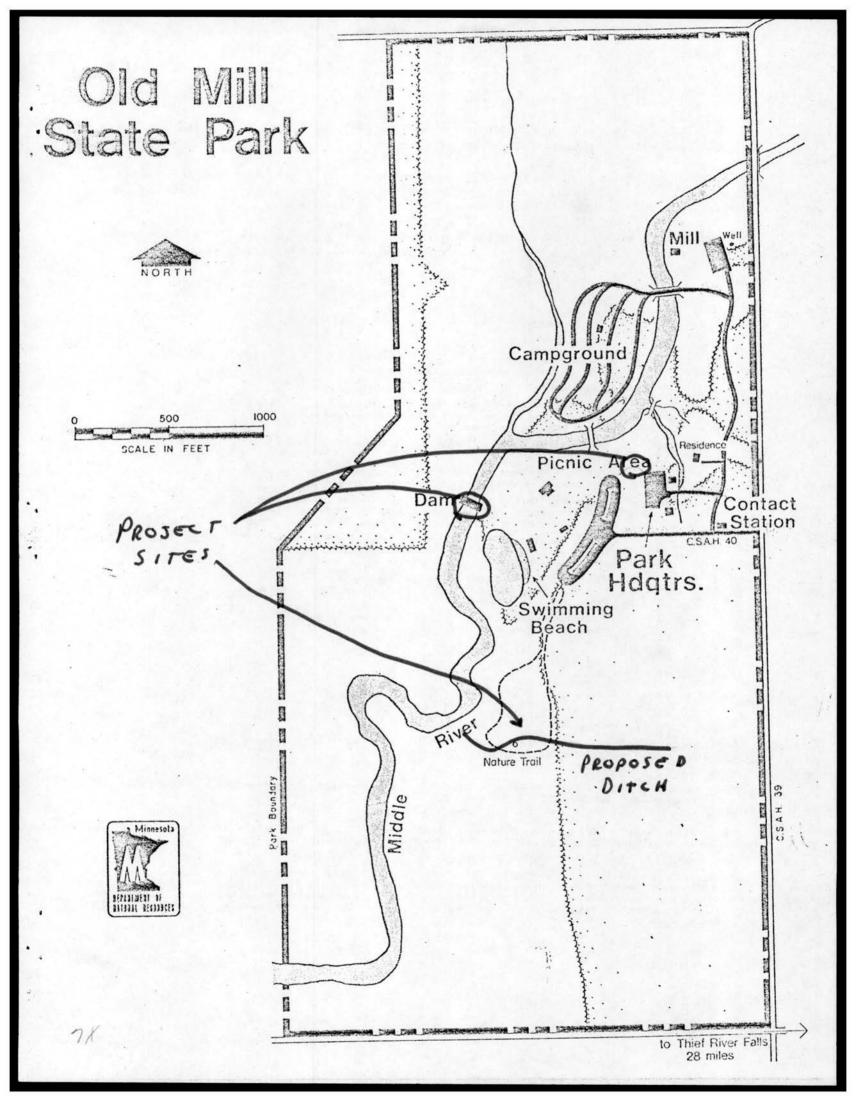


localized disruption of flora and fauna will occur in and immediately adjacent to use areas undergoing erosion stabilization and landscaping necessitated by completion of the drainage ditch marked on the attached project map (Map 6).

Care will be taken in landscaping disturbed sites to prevent introduction of non-native species to nearby remnant prairie environments.

- B. Impact on Historical and Archaeological Resources Since the areas to be rehabilitated have already been disturbed and there are no known sites in these locations, no adverse effects are anticipated. However, existing laws require that until an intensive park-wide survey has been completed, project locations must be individually surveyed and monitored (Map 5).
- C. <u>Impact on Transportation and Utilities</u> No significant impacts on transportation and utilities are anticipated.
- D. <u>Impact on Socio-Economic Factors</u> The local economy should benefit from contracting and increased attractiveness of the park to tourists.
- E. Impact on Land Use Since the area is already being used for recreational purposes, the project is compatible with present land use.
- IV. MITIGATING MEASURES INCLUDED IN THE PROPOSED ACTION

  Much of the proposed erosion control and landscaping will mitigate against the long-term impacts of overintensive use, which will be addressed in the forthcoming master plan. Completion of the drainage ditch presently under construction will make it possible



### OLD MILL STATE PARK

The Middle River breaks through the vast level plain of the Red River Valley and bisects Old Mill State Park which is located seventeen miles northeast of Warren, Minnesota.

This area has been a mecca for early settlers in this region, due to the establishment of the grist mill. Farmers in this segment of the valley brought their grain to the mill, and also brought their families to enjoy an outing in this scenic river valley while they waited for the flour to be milled.

The remanents still exist of the old water-powered-operated flour mill, constructed in 1888. The original grindstones, which were shipped from France to Fargo, North Dakota, were hauled to the site by ox-carts.

#### PARK MANNERS

Read and heed all posted rules and park signs.

Help protect your park. Preservation is everyone's business.

Take pictures and memories; leave only footprints. Don't dig trenches, pick plants, molest animals, or scavenge dead wood — it's needed for the soil environment.

Be considerate of others. Maintaining a clean, quiet park is best for everybody.

The use of firearms, explosives, air guns, slingshots, traps, seines, nets, bows and arrows and all other weapons is prohibited.

Pets are prohibited from all park areas except when restrained on a leash measuring six feet or less. Pets may not enter buildings. Horses are permitted only on trails specifically designated for such use.

The park is closed from 10:00 p.m. until 8:00 a.m. of the following day, except in campgrounds or in cabin areas. Loud noises or other disturbances are prohibited after 10:00 p.m.

Park permits are required for every vehicle and can be purchased at park headquarters. Permit prices are \$3.00 per car for Annual Permit; \$1.00 for Daily Permit.

Motor bikes and other licensed vehicles are allowed only on the motor vehicle roads - not on the trails.

# **FACILITIES**

#### Camping, Picnicking and Hiking

Campsites are provided with water and toilet facilities. Tables and parking areas are available for picnicking. Trails provide diverse opportunities to experience the park and participate in nature.

#### Water Sports

Where appropriate, boat launching and swimming facilities have been developed. Activities should be confined to designated areas. Fishing subject to state law.

#### Winter Sports

Ski touring and snowshoeing are encouraged in all state parks; snowmobiling is permitted in some parks only in designated areas and posted trails under conditions considered adequate for park protection by the park ranger or manager.

#### **Environmental Education**

Today, not only is our quality of life reduced but life itself is jeopardized. A new life style is called for, based upon enlightened ways of living in harmony with nature, with each other and with our world. One way to begin a new way of thinking and of living is through environmental education. Schools and other groups are encouraged to use state parks for environmental education activities; park visitors can acquaint themselves with the natural uniqueness of the park by participating in the park naturalist's programs.

to impound water in the existing ditch adjacent to the park roadway for waterfowl and other aquatic species.

- V. UNAVOIDABLE ADVERSE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

  Erosion control and landscaping of use areas will destroy some plant and animal life in the immediate vicinity, although these losses will be largely temporary and offset by enhancement of vegetation resulting from the project. Losses will be more significant along the drainage ditch corridor.
- VI. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SHORT-TERM USES AND LONG-TERM PRODUCTIVITY

  If the project is implemented, the resulting trade-off will cause
  the loss of some localized flora and fauna and expenditure of
  \$9,000 in public funds to gain improved drainage and stabilization
  and beautification of a landscape deteriorated from overintensive
  use. The long term effect will be enhanced recreational experiences
  for park visitors.
- VII. IRREVERSIBLE OR IRRETRIEVABLE COMMITMENT OF RESOURCES

  Project implementation will result in increased attractiveness

  of the area to recreationists and enhanced value of nearby

  recreational lands. The manpower, materials, and funds necessary

  to carry out the project will be irretrievably committed.
- VIII. ALTERNATIVES TO THE PROPOSED ACTION

  Major alternatives considered are 1) no action and 2) a project of larger scope. In 1, failure to stabilize erosion, control runoff and landscape deteriorating use areas could result in intensified and accelerated degradation of resources resulting in eventual loss of much of the same flora and fauna that would

be sacrificed by the project. In 2, more extensive rehabilitation is not judged necessary at this time, since potential problems should be addressed in the forthcoming master plan.

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Total anticipated cost of work \$9,000

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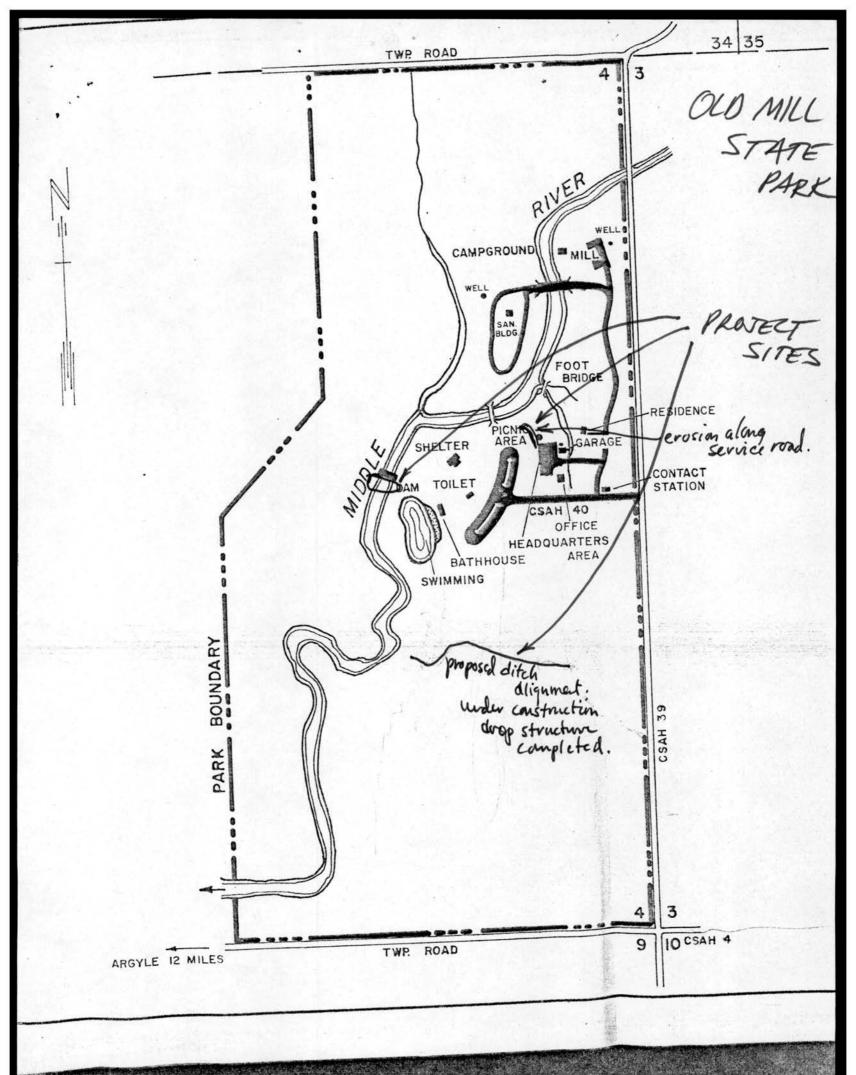
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