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SUBJECT: Duluth Parks and Recreation to receive \$1.3 million grant to fund enhancements to Duluth Traverse

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**City of Duluth - Parks and Recreation**

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## **Duluth Parks and Recreation to receive \$1.3 million grant to fund enhancements to Duluth Traverse**

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[DULUTH, MN] Outdoor recreation enthusiasts in the Duluth area will soon have their experiences enhanced, with a \$1.3 million award for improvements at the Duluth Traverse.

The Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission (GMRPTC) just completed its extensive application review process and chose Duluth Traverse and 11 other parks and trails around the state for \$11,326,845 million in funding for Fiscal Year 2027. The Minnesota Legislature annually approves the recommendations for the grants with funding coming from the Parks and Trails Legacy Fund, one of four funds created by the 2008 Minnesota Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment. The Parks and Trails Legacy Funds are dedicated and may only be spent to support parks and trails of regional or statewide significance.

The Duluth Traverse trail network is a bike-optimized, multi-use natural surface system with 102.5 total miles stretching along Duluth's ridgeline and connecting 22 city parks, with Lester Park being the eastern terminus of the Duluth Traverse. This project will redevelop the Lester Park trailhead at 61 Lester River Road and develop a new bike skills area. This project will reduce barriers to access and better connect visitors with the Duluth Traverse trail system. Construction on the project is expected to begin in 2027.

"Duluth is a world-class mountain bike destination," said Jessica Peterson, Duluth Parks and Recreation Manager. "Our goal is to ensure all levels of riders have fun and safe places to build their mountain bike skills. This project represents years of planning and collaboration with COGGS, whose leadership, advocacy, and fundraising efforts made this project possible. Parks and Recreation staff look forward to expanding our Youth on Trails mountain biking program with this new practice facility, leaning into Duluth's designation as an IMBA gold-level ride center. We are grateful to the GMRPTC for lifting up our community's vision to ensure our Duluth Traverse trail

system supports all levels and abilities of riders.”

“The Twin Ports are home to a world-class trail system, yet until now have lacked a dedicated skills development area, an essential space where children can safely learn to ride and where cyclists of all ages can build confidence, practice techniques, and progress in a controlled, repeatable environment,” said Ansel Schimpff, Executive Director of COGGS. “Thanks to strong collaboration with our partners at Duluth Parks and meaningful community input, we have secured funding for our first bicycle playground and trailhead improvements project. We are excited to begin construction and continue our mission of developing and maintaining world-class mountain biking opportunities for all.”

“Every grant awardee is deserving, and we commend them for how thoroughly they described their needs in their grant applications,” said GMRPTC Chair Rick Anderson. “It’s the dedicated people at the local level who make Greater Minnesota’s parks and trails really shine, and we’re pleased to assist them with their efforts.”

GMRPTC Executive Director Renee Mattson stated that the Commission has set aside funds to cover expenses related to environmental and archaeological reviews, as well as to support efforts for better accessibility and inclusivity in the 84 designated parks and trails across Greater Minnesota. Each fund contains \$238,000, and applications will be accepted until the funds are expended.

The 12 parks and trails recommended for GMRPTC funding are below. District numbers in the grid refer to these geographic areas of Minnesota: 1-Northeast; 2-Northwest; 3-West Central; 4-East Central; 5-Southwest; 6-Southeast.

Grant Recipient/Award/District:

Duluth Traverse/\$1,318,978/1

Grand Marais Recreation Area/\$1,066,750/1

Mille Lacs County Soo Line Trail/\$600,000/1

Roseau River Water Trail/\$1,112,254/2

Detroit Mountain Recreation Area/\$821,700 /3

Lac qui Parle County Park /\$368,202/3

Otter Tail County Phelps Mill County Park/\$713,747/3

Willmar Robbins Island Regional Park/\$1,327,945/3

Chisago County Swedish Immigrant Trail/\$447,441/4

Lincoln County Hole in the Mountain Park/\$901,890/5

Olmsted County Oxbow Park and Zollman Zoo/\$2,040,000/6

Rochester Gamehaven Park/\$577,938 /6

Total \$11,326,845

“Legacy Funding is an amazing and far-reaching gift that Minnesotans chose to make happen by voting to tax themselves,” added Anderson. “Without Legacy dollars, many of these projects simply would not happen or would take many years before coming to fruition.”

The GMRPTC provides recommendations to the Minnesota Legislature for grants to parks and trails of regional significance in the 80 counties outside the seven-county metropolitan area. Counties, cities and Tribal governments are eligible to apply for regional designation. Since 2015 the GMRPTC has awarded more than \$115 million in grants with community investment matches of almost \$42 million. Grants are used to fund infrastructure improvements and repairs, land acquisitions, new facilities, trail rehabilitation, programming and more. Additional information may be found at [gmrptcommission.org](http://gmrptcommission.org).

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