



# Update on the Dakota County Land Protection and Natural Systems Plan

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## Overview



- Plan Purpose
- Related/Guiding Plans
- Project Approach
- Draft Objectives and Strategies
  - Land Protection
  - Natural Systems Stewardship
- Next Steps
- Questions/Comments

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## Purpose



Combine the 2017 Parks Natural Resources Management System Plan (NRMSP) with the 2020 Dakota County Land Conservation Plan (LCP) to:

- Build from the 2050 Parks Vision Plan (VP) foundation
- Provide minor updates to original plans
- Update strategies, priorities, targets, and timeframes
- Streamline content

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## Related Plans: NRMSP



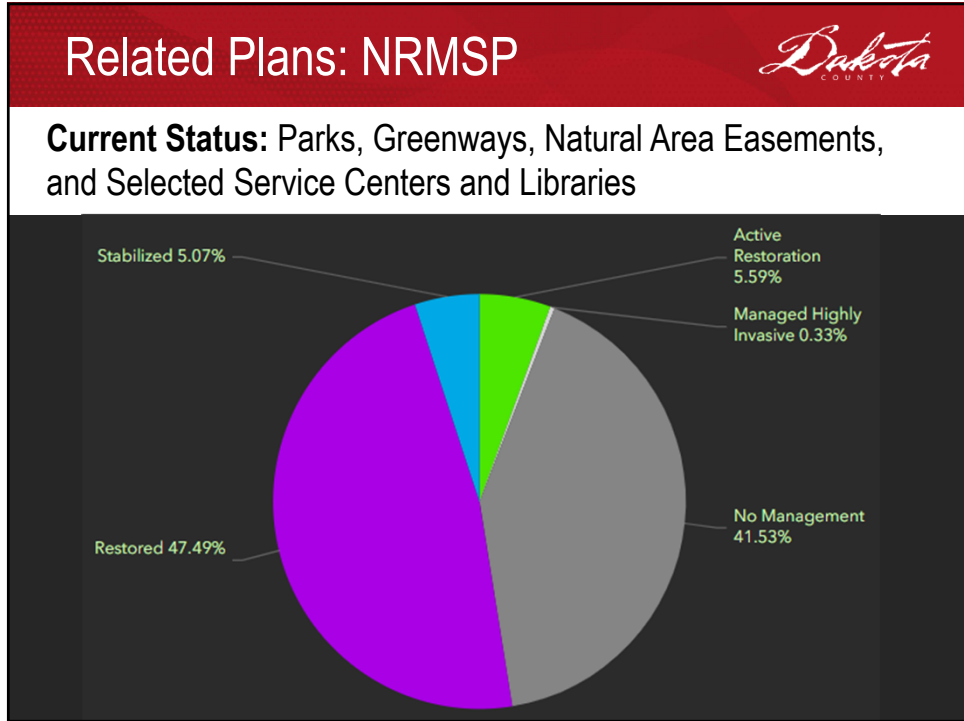
Dakota County  
Natural Resource Management System Plan  
May 2017



### 2017 NRMSP

- Increased investment in Parks natural resources
- Has guided restoration of roughly half of the Park System to-date

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## Related Plans: NRMSP

*Dakota*  
COUNTY

### Highlights: Wildlife

- Bison Reintroduction
- Cliff Road Wildlife Tunnel
- Saw-Whet Owl Banding

Northern Saw-Whet  
*Aegolius acadicus*

River Otter  
*Lontra canadensis*

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**Related Plans: NRMSP** *Dakota* COUNTY

**Highlights: Plants**

- Rare species discovered or rediscovered



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**Related Plans: NRMSP** *Dakota* COUNTY



**Highlights:**

- Active volunteer participation
- Greenhouse for propagation
- New partnerships

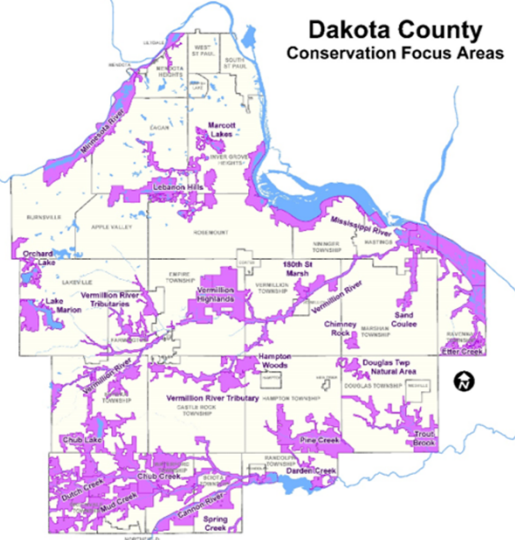
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Dakota
Related Plans: LCP

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Land Conservation Plan for Dakota County</b></p>  <p style="text-align: center; font-size: 0.8em;">Adopted on November 17, 2020</p> 	<p><b>2020 LCP</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Refined land protection priorities into Conservation Focus Areas (CFAs)</li> <li>Initiated the City-County Conservation Collaborative</li> <li>Updated guidance for the County Land Protection program</li> </ul>
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Dakota
Related Plans: LCP

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 180th Street Marsh</li> <li>2. Cannon River</li> <li>3. Chimney Rock</li> <li>4. Chub Creek</li> <li>5. Chub Lake</li> <li>6. Darden Creek</li> <li>7. Douglas Township Natural Area</li> <li>8. Dutch Creek</li> <li>9. Etter Creek</li> <li>10. Hampton Woods</li> <li>11. Lake Marion</li> <li>12. Lebanon Hills</li> <li>13. Marcott Lakes</li> <li>14. Minnesota River             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. Black Dog Unit</li> <li>B. Fort Snelling Unit</li> <li>C. Mendota/Lilydale Unit</li> <li>D. Oheyawahe Unit</li> </ol> </li> <li>15. Mississippi River             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. Pine Bend Unit</li> <li>B. Spring Lake Unit</li> <li>C. River Bluffs Unit</li> <li>D. Vermillion Bottoms Unit</li> </ol> </li> <li>16. Mud Creek</li> <li>17. Orchard Lake</li> <li>18. Pine Creek</li> <li>19. Sand Coulee</li> <li>20. Spring Creek</li> <li>21. Trout Brook</li> <li>22. Vermillion Highlands</li> <li>23. Vermillion River Main Stem</li> <li>24. Vermillion River Tributaries</li> </ol>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Dakota County Conservation Focus Areas</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>74,863 acres total</li> <li>21,990 acres public lands</li> </ul>
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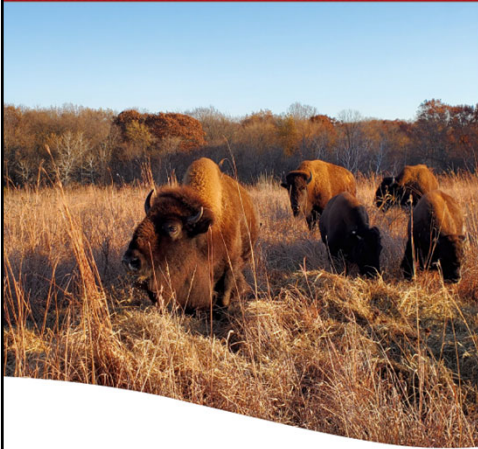
Dakota
Related Plans: LCP



- 10 Natural Area easements acquired since plan adoption, protecting 243 acres
- 3 County Park Conservation Area acquisitions, 188 acres

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Dakota
Related Plans: VP




2050 VISION PLAN

DAKOTA COUNTY PARKS, GREENWAYS, AND NATURAL SYSTEMS

Nature Protected, Community Reflected, All Are Connected

ADOPTED BY THE DAKOTA COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
JULY 29, 2025



2050 Parks Vision Plan (VP)

- Updated the Dakota County Parks vision with more emphasis on inclusivity and the interconnectedness of nature and people
- 15 Goals
  - ✓ Included goals for natural systems stewardship
  - ✓ Included goals for land protection

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## Related Plans: VP



### Vision Plan Areas to Incorporate:

- Climate mitigation and resilience
- Engagement of Tribal Nations in traditional ecological knowledge
- Greater outreach and partnerships
- Investment in opportunities to increase natural resource career pathways
- Recommendations for new park search areas
- Protection and resource goals

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## Project Approach



Merge the LCP and NRMSP into one document with Land Protection and Natural Systems Stewardship chapters

- Incorporate new content from the 2050 Vision Plan
- Update objectives and targets (mostly NRMSP, the older plan), with lessons learned
- Streamline background content
- Provide a clear implementation path

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## Draft Objectives



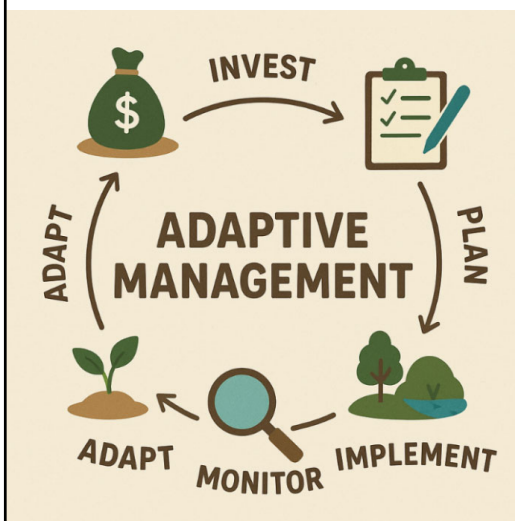
### Land Protection Chapter

LCP Goals become objectives (mostly unchanged)

1. Ecologically important areas are prioritized for protection.
2. Water quality and quantity are enhanced and protected.
3. *Natural resource quality is improved and sustained.* (moved to next chapter)
4. Biodiversity is restored and sustained.
5. The public is informed, involved, and strongly supports natural resource protection and management.
6. Nature-based recreational access to conservation lands is enhanced.

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## Draft Objectives



### Natural Systems Stewardship Chapter

Objectives restructured from NRMSP

1. Manage natural systems on protected lands in a comprehensive and sustainable manner (Invest, Plan, Implement, Monitor, Adapt).

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## Draft Objectives



### Natural Systems Stewardship Chapter

2. Manage systems to improve resilience to the impacts of a changing climate.
3. Improve ecological quality in County Parks, on other public lands and permanently protected private lands.

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## Draft Objectives



### Natural Systems Stewardship Chapter

4. Manage permanently protected land to improve surface and groundwater quality.
5. Manage habitat to sustain native and rare species, increase biodiversity, and enhance ecosystem health on permanently protected lands

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## Draft Objectives



### Natural Systems Stewardship Chapter

6. Expand capacity for natural systems management by building and sustaining effective partnerships and supporting the efforts of others.

- A. Engage Tribal Nations to incorporate Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) into stewardship approaches
- B. Co-management of cultural sites

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## Draft Objectives



Questions and Thoughts on Draft Objectives?

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## Next Steps



### **Build Out Implementation Chapter:**

- Update and incorporate lessons learned for setting priorities, targets, and timeframes
- Metrics and reporting
- Budget and CIP
- Funding sources
- Partnerships and program operations
- Public information and outreach

Engagement to be held on selected areas of change in the plan

Draft document in first quarter of 2026

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## Next Steps



Questions?

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Thank you