

SECTION

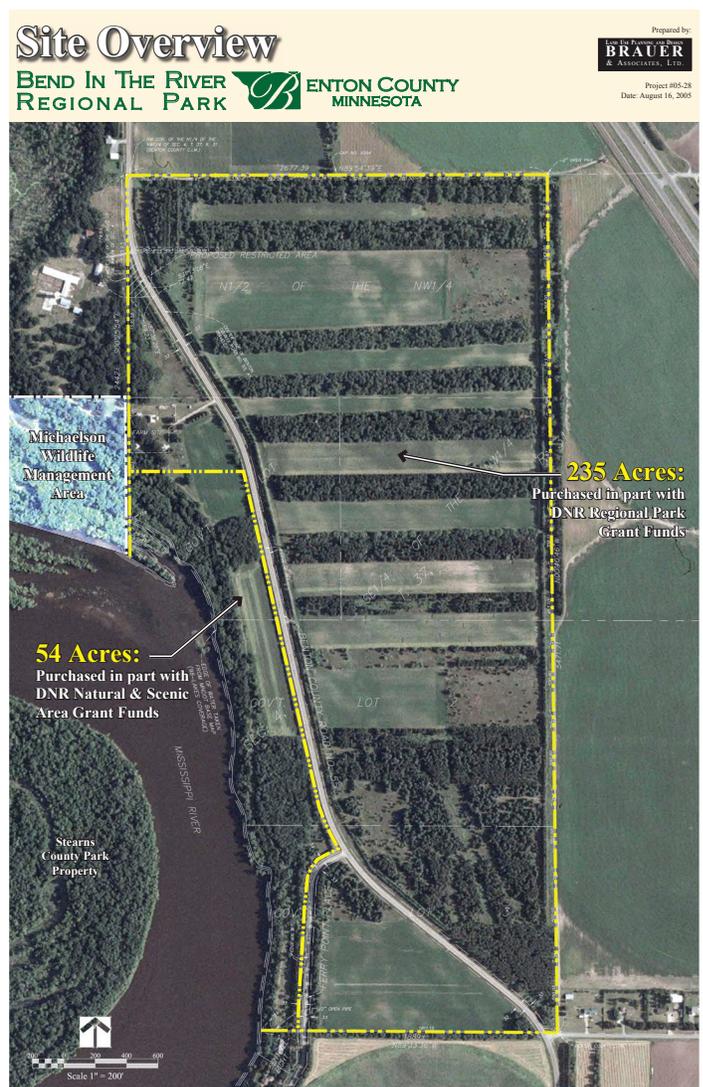
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Statement of Introduction and Description of Public Process

Overview

The project focused on the preparation of a comprehensive park master plan for the 289 acre Bend in the River Regional Park. In 2001 Benton County was successful in acquiring two separate grants from the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, (DNR), for purchase of the property. A DNR Regional Park Grant was used to aid the County in purchasing that portion of the park that lies east of County Road 55 and the farmstead. A DNR Natural and Scenic Area Grant helped the County purchase the 54 acre portion between County Road 55 and the Mississippi River. The importance of these two grants is that they do require that the development of the park meet established guidelines; see Appendix A for Guidelines, Criteria and Program Manuals for Natural and Scenic Area and Regional Park Grant Programs. The property was acquired by Benton County in 2002.

The master plan is a physical interpretation of the Counties vision for this park and is the first step in the planning, design, restoration and development of the park. It should be viewed as firm enough to guide park, ecological, and historical development and restoration, yet flexible enough to change based on increased knowledge, experience and changing public needs and opportunities.



Graphic illustrating areas purchased with different DNR grants

Public Involvement

With a profound public interest in the park the County made every effort to, not only, allow public input but seek it through the use of a Technical Advisory Committee, (TAC), made up of residents, staff, Parks Commission members, public and private agencies, and County Board members. In addition to the TAC meetings, public open houses were held to solicit further comment on the proposed master plan. The formal schedule for the project included the following public meetings:

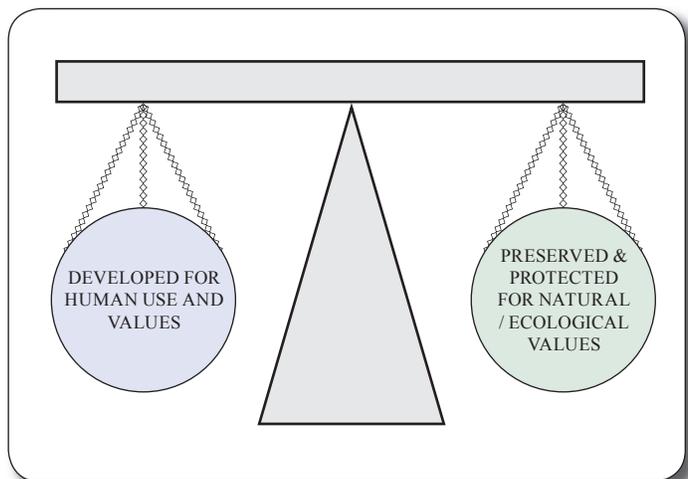
- July 12, 2005 Project Focus - Parks Commission Meeting
- August 16, 2005..... Park Program - TAC Meeting / Public Open House
- August 30, 2005 Ecological / Historical Charrette – TAC Meeting
- September 20, 2005 Park Development Charrette – TAC Meeting
- October 11, 2005..... Park Development Alternatives – TAC Meeting
- October 25, 2005 Preliminary Master Plan - TAC Meeting / Public Open House
- November 2, 2005 Project Update - Parks Commission Meeting
- December 14, 2005..... Presentation of Master Plan - Parks Commission Meeting
- December 20, 2005 Presentation of Master Plan – County Board Meeting

In addition to the formal meetings, numerous informal meetings with agency representatives and landowners, phone conversations and electronic mail communications were undertaken to ensure that issues were understood and that interested parties had direct access to the consultant team to express their views and concerns.

Balancing Human Use of the Land and Natural Resource / Historical Preservation

Inherent to this project was finding the right balance between developing the land for human use while at the same time preserving and restoring the natural and ecological values that are important to the County and its citizens. In this context, development refers to the development of infrastructure to support human recreational activities.

Although preserving and restoring the environment of this park is of paramount importance, public recreation and ecological and historic educational opportunities found in no other area park also need to be accommodated. This plan strives to meet that balance.



Graphic illustrating balance between human use and ecological preservation