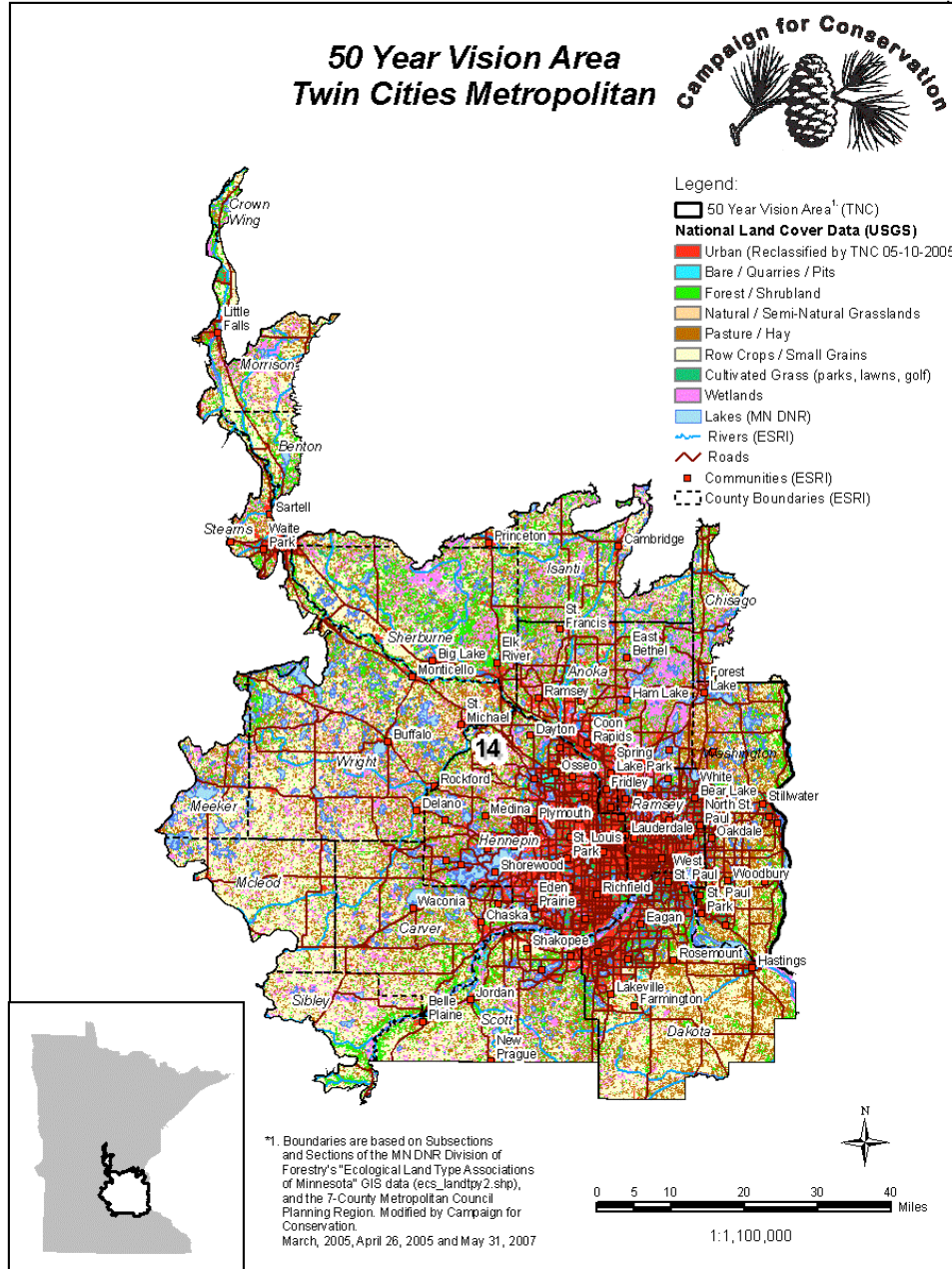


Metro Conservation Region



Final Conservation Template
March 2007

Acres in Conservation Region (Seven County Metro)

1,903,803

Population

2,968,805 (total for 11-county Metro)

1,581,445 (employed 2004 data seven-county Metro)

891 (people per square mile in seven-county Metro)

Population Change (seven-county Metro)

1980 – 2000 +33%

2000 – 2030 +29%

2000 – 2030 Individuals over 65 years of age +147%

Percent of Land in Federal, State, or Local Public Ownership

7.2%

Counties (All or Part)

Anoka, Benton, Carver, Chisago, Dakota, Hennepin, Isanti, Morrison, Ramsey, Scott, Sherbourne, Stearns, Todd, Washington, Wright

Natural Characteristics

Oak Savanna

Prairie

Wooded-Nonforest

Upland Deciduous Forest (Aspen-oak)

Upland Deciduous Forest (Hardwood)

Grassland

Shallow lakes

River-Headwaters to Large

Wetlands-Non Forest

Ecological Classification System Subsection

Anoka Sandplain, Big Woods, St. Paul-Baldwin Plains and Moraines

I. Why We Live Here

By nearly any measure, the Twin Cities Metropolitan area (Metro) provides the highest quality of life for its residents of any area in the nation. As the 16th largest urban area in the country, it serves as the economic and cultural center for the Upper Midwest. With one of the lowest poverty rates in the country, a highly educated populace, and a consistent rank as the one of the healthiest cities in the nation, the Metro is a source of pride for the region.

Water is the key distinguishing feature of the Twin Cities Metro. With hundreds of lakes, hundreds of miles of streams, large expanses of wetlands and an urban center at the confluence of three major rivers (Mississippi, Minnesota and St. Croix), few urban areas in the world can boast such a uniquely aquatic setting. The three major rivers form the scenic backbone of the Metro area and a large part of the remaining natural areas in the region are found near their banks.

Our natural diversity was the primary attraction for our first inhabitants and our rivers and lakes continue to draw immigrants from all over the world. This asset has enabled a diverse economy and an increasingly diverse society; the Minneapolis School District now employs translators for 32 different languages to deal with a growingly international student body.

The residents of the Metro take great pride in their community and have consistently exceeded the national norms when it comes to civic participation. We vote in greater numbers than anyone in the country. We have higher levels of volunteerism than most areas of the nation. Our schools consistently rank among the best in the country.

We love to recreate and we relish our four-season climate (well, except for late March). We have easy access to lakes and rivers and can get out to the country or to one of our exemplary regional parks with relative ease.

This is always some debate as to what comprises the Metro Region. Much of the information that has been gathered thus far has centered upon the classic definition as the seven-county Metro overseen by the Metropolitan Council. However, as the area has expanded, it is the 17-county Metro that truly defines the Twin Cities influence on jobs and the environment, including the rapidly growing Wisconsin counties on the St. Croix that will be adding a population equal to another Green Bay over the next 20 years. As cited in the DNR/Ameregis Report of 2006:

... the 17-county area is home to some 3.2 million people, nearly two-thirds of the state's population. The 11-county metropolitan area is projected to grow significantly by 2030, with the seven core metropolitan counties continuing to receive the majority of the state's new residents and jobs.

Like most metropolitan areas in the U.S., the Twin Cities metropolitan area has seen significant decentralization of population and jobs during recent decades. This pattern has not been as pronounced as in many large metropolitan areas due at least, in part, to the existence of relatively strong (compared to other metropolitan areas) regional institutions like the Metropolitan Council and the Twin Cities Fiscal Disparities Program. However, the region has been growing more rapidly than any other metropolitan area in the Upper Midwest and current projections show the metropolitan area adding more than one million people in the first three decades of the 21st century. The non-metropolitan portion of the 17-county region has grown much less rapidly than the Twin Cities metropolitan area.

Like rural areas across the country, many parts of the 6-county non-metropolitan region have endured significant population declines.

The attraction of natural amenities, however, has drawn retirement and resort- driven growth to the 6-county non-metropolitan area, putting increasing pressures on sensitive natural areas. Continued income growth in the Metro, and the increasing share of the retirement-aged population, will likely fuel continuing demand for land and housing in the non-metropolitan part of the area.

II. Current Conditions and Trends

Despite the urban nature of this region, significant natural areas remain, especially in river and stream corridors and on the edges of the seven-county area. In 2003, the Department of Natural Resources conducted a landscape scale assessment of the seven county area to identify remaining areas of ecological significance. Based on this assessment, it is estimated that approximately 280,000 acres of regionally significant habitat remain, which is 15% of the total land area in the seven-county area.

Of the 280,000 acres, 33% are forested areas, 15% are grasslands and 64% (180,000 acres) are regionally significant wetlands.

A. Demographics and Economy

Between 1970 and 2000, the population of the seven-county area grew from 1.97 million to 2.64 million people. By 2030, the Twin Cities will have another one million people and 500,000 households. The Twin Cities is the 17th largest metro area in the nation.

According to current projections in cited in the DNR/Ameregis Report of 2006, the vast majority of new growth will occur in largely middle-class communities that have low density housing. These communities also contain the lion's share of the region's remaining sensitive natural areas. Home to just 33% of the 7-county area's households in 2003, these communities are projected to receive 67% of regional growth between 2003 and 2030 and they contain 85% of the sensitive areas in the region that remain undeveloped and unprotected. In addition, a number of these communities, especially those on the edges of the region, face the possibility of water supply constraints, due to the changing nature of the region's aquifers and the availability and predictability of potable water sources needed to meet new demands resulting from growth. Beyond the core region, water-bearing bedrock aquifers disappear and groundwater supply needed to meet new demands resulting from growth becomes less predictable and reliable.

Since the 1980s, development has become increasingly land consumptive. From 1982 to 1992 the rate of conversion was 1.1 square mile of new urban land for each additional 1,000 urban residents, a rate that is close to double the existing urban land use. With a projection of 500,000 new households added by 2030, there will be increasing pressure on remaining open spaces.

One of the primary tools for growth management in the Metro has been the establishment and manipulation of the Metropolitan Urban Service Area (MUSA) boundary by the Met Council. It defines the area service by the region's primary network of sanitary sewers. Communities, in conjunction with the Met Council, have increasingly expanded this area of service outward from the core Twin Cities. The following, as reported in the DNR/Ameregis Report, clearly establishes the need to redefine our patterns of growth:

... If the MUSA boundary were expanded out to include all of the area in the 38 municipalities currently split by the MUSA, this would add about 280,000 acres of new area inside the MUSA.¹⁵ If each new household projected for this part of the region by 2030 consumes land at rates like the recent past, then there will be a shortfall of more than 115,000 acres of available land inside the expanded MUSA to accommodate future growth. This is true even though the 280,000-acre increase assumed for the purposes of this assessment is substantially more than the Metropolitan Council currently plans for future growth. The shortfall of 115,000 acres represents about 65% of the non-urban, unprotected, sensitive land in these communities.

This reinforces the conclusions from the calculations based on the community classification: if the region grows the way it has in the past, future growth will either have to occur beyond the areas targeted for development by the Metropolitan Council—primarily within the current MUSA and in areas immediately adjacent to it—or it will consume much of the region's remaining protected, sensitive natural areas.

The overriding conclusion from each of the simulations is that we must find new ways to grow if we want to both conserve the region's remaining sensitive natural areas and avoid inefficient expansion into the far reaches of the metropolitan area. To do this while accommodating the amount of growth that is currently projected to 2030, new development on currently underdeveloped land must occur at greater densities than in the past or as "infill" development on already developed land. Further, even if new development occurs in ways that consume less land than in the past, it still must be directed to non-sensitive areas as much as possible—natural resource planning must play a significant role in local and regional land-use planning.

The Metro has produced a vibrant economy with per capita personal income of \$40,915 in the Twin Cities in 2004 that was good enough for 13th place nationally, ahead of larger metro areas like Los Angeles and Chicago. Also, despite a nationwide lull in real estate, the Minneapolis Area Association of REALTORS reported in 2006 "robust population growth, regional economic health, and quality housing stock paints a picture of the Twin Cities remaining a great place to buy and sell residential real estate." Minnesota, especially the Metro, has seen only a slight pause in real estate activity and property values continue to appreciate.

Manufacturing is the primary industry in Minneapolis's diversified economic base. Principal manufacturing areas are electronics, milling, machinery, medical products, food processing, and graphic arts. Sixteen of the Fortune 500 largest U.S. corporations are headquartered in the Twin Cities, which is among the largest commercial centers between Chicago and the West Coast. The area is also home to 30 Fortune 1000 companies and several of the world's largest private companies.

While manufacturing exists as the core of today's economy, agriculture has historically been the foundation and continues to play an important role in the use of land in the Metro. However, today only 5% of the Metro workforce is employed in agricultural activities. One of the challenges is that while the economic impact of agriculture is declining, it still comprises approximately 50% of the activity on the land. To an enormous degree, it is the decisions of this aging population of landowners, whether they will reap the "final harvest", the selling of the land for development, or continue to farm that is the determining factor in how conservation of our land and water resources will succeed.

Also integral to the local economy are high-technology industries. With the University of Minnesota and other colleges and technical schools providing applied research and well-trained scientists and engineers, one of the largest concentrations of high-technology firms in the nation—more than 1,300—developed in metropolitan Minneapolis-Saint Paul.

Among the banks and other financial institutions that make the Twin Cities the financial center of the upper Midwest, seven of the largest are based in Minneapolis. In addition, the headquarters of the Ninth Federal Reserve District Bank is located in the city. Local banks, savings and loan companies, venture capital concerns, and insurance companies play a major role in the economic development of the region.

Items and goods produced: electronics, food and dairy products, super computers, structural steel, thermostatic controls, conveyor systems, medical electronics equipment, farm machinery, ball bearings, tools, construction machinery, boilers, tanks, burglar alarms, underwear and hosiery, packaging, garden tools, lawn mowers, sprinklers.

B. Land and Habitat

This region was originally characterized largely by limestone river bluffs, flood plains, and surrounding prairies and oak savannas. Within the Metro, there are three historic ecological regions: the oak barrens and upland prairie of the Anoka Sand Plains, the maple–basswood forests of the Big Woods, and the oak and aspen savanna of the St. Baldwin Plains.

As documented in the DNR/Ameregis Report, during the 16 years between 1986 and 2002, the amount of land classified as urban in the seven-county core region grew significantly more quickly (one and one-half times) than did population and population growth is expected to continue. Nearly 900,000 more people (or 460,000 new households) are expected in the seven core counties by 2030 and another 100,000 people are projected for the four collar counties.

The vast majority of population growth in Minnesota is expected to occur in the 11-county Metro area with the four collar counties expected to grow by 46% from 2000-2030 and seven-county metro expected to increase by 29% in the same period. This increase in population will have a profoundly negative impact on the area's natural resources if current trends in land consumption continue.

This is now a predominantly urban area, although areas of agricultural land and forest remain. Current land cover composition is:

Row crops/small grain	26%
Pasture/hay	25
Urban	19
Wetlands	13
Forest/shrubland	13
Cultivated grasses	4
Bare rock/quarries/gravel pits	<1
Natural Grassland	<1
	100%

Land developed in the Metro at a rate of 60 acres/day during the real estate boom of the past ten years. The amount of impervious area has increased from 9% to 13% from 1986 to 2002.

Habitats with the highest sensitivity to external pressures (based on Minnesota County Biological Survey data and Regionally Significant Ecological Areas, modeling by the DNR) constitute more than 40% of the remaining sensitive natural areas identified. These high quality habitat areas are the patches that are left, in most cases, and can only sustain themselves if the lower quality habitats, that still provide many important benefits for buffering encroachment of exotics and filtering pollutants, are likewise protected. Only 14% of the region's sensitive natural areas are protected by public ownership.

The region is characterized as having a relatively low percentage of public ownership (approximately 7%), but a great demand for public areas. The Metro, when compared to other cities in the nation, has a relatively high degree of open space per capita. The Green Guide Institute named Minneapolis the sixth greenest city in the U.S. citing 15% of the land that is devoted to parks (fifth among high-density cities). Also, 14 acres of parkland exists for every 1,000 residents placing Minneapolis first in the nation among high-density. As good as this seems, the reality is that there is a substantial difference between urban parks as inventoried by these studies and natural areas. Also, many of our remaining natural areas are either degraded or isolated putting the integrity of our ecological systems at risk. It should also be noted that public ownership cannot necessarily be construed as offering protection for sensitive natural systems that require ongoing management.

C. Lakes, Rivers, Wetlands & Groundwater

The region's abundance of water resources is its hallmark. Unlike many parts of the country, the Metro, particularly the seven-county Metro, has units of government entirely devoted to the management of our waters and this management is organized by watershed. There is not, however, always a continuity of purpose or coordination among the water management organizations, and their constituent cities, when it comes to land use decisions.

There are 136 lakes greater than 150 acres in size and many more smaller lakes in the seven-county Metro Region and 3,350 miles of rivers and streams. There are 1,942 lakes larger than three acres comprising more than 108,000 acres of open water in the Metro. The majority of lakes and streams in the Metro, if sufficient data was collected, would be categorized as impaired by current EPA standards. As it stands, there are 78 stream segments and 170 lakes comprising over 56,000 acres listed as impaired. The number is daunting and given that most TMDL studies take 2-3 years to complete, it will be some time before the lakes and streams in the Metro have been assessed and their respective strategies for mitigating impairment implemented.

By the same token, the region also has 181 lakes and 514 stream segments ranked as outstanding for regional ecological importance. The Met Council Aquatic Resource Assessment (2003) states that there are 81 lakes totaling more than 56,000 acres and six rivers classified as excellent recreational opportunities. The St. Croix River was one of the first rivers in the nation to receive the Wild & Scenic designation and continues to be one of the best preserved rivers within a metropolitan area.

There are approximately 250,000 acres of wetlands in this region that support a wide array of plant and animal life. There are also greater than 250 miles of agricultural ditches that were originally constructed to drain much of this remaining wetland. Pressures to develop in this region, particularly in the northern suburbs lying in the heavily ditched and fragile Anoka Sandplain, creates a land use conflict that continues to challenge local communities.

Protection of existing wetlands is important for flood control and pollution filtering. A good number of the wetlands in the Metro have been identified as regionally significant. Of the remaining 180,000 wetland acres identified as regionally critical habitat, approximately 50,000 acres fall outside current protected park status. The designation of regional significance does not afford these resources any higher level of legal protection and they could still be impacted within the confines of current state and federal regulations. This suggests that 27% of the regionally significant wetlands in the Metro Region require additional protection beyond current regulations if they are to retain their ecological significance.

Many of these wetlands have been impacted by exotic species and there is a great need for more detailed inventories that not only assess wetland locations and type, but also their ecological functions. Also, there needs to be a greater understanding of groundwater systems and their interplay with wetlands along with an assessment of vulnerability of the drinking water supply.

Groundwater quality and supply is an ongoing and often overlooked issue in this region. Approximately 1.8 million residents obtain their drinking water from bedrock aquifers in this area with an additional 900,000 residents getting their drinking water from the Mississippi River. The accessibility to groundwater is limited in the northern part of the Metro, in the area of the Anoka Sandplain in particular, where the bedrock aquifers are not available and shallow water deposits amid the sand and gravel are utilized. These sources are inherently fragile and easily contaminated from surface activity. They are also vital to the ecological function of most of the wetland systems in this area.

D. Fish and Wildlife

The Mississippi Flyway serves as the corridor for more than 40% of North America's migratory waterfowl and shorebirds. Additionally, neotropical migrants also utilize the Mississippi basin as a primary route to summer feeding grounds. The Audubon Society, Minnesota Audubon and the American Bird Conservancy have designated the Mississippi River area of the Twin Cities as an Important Bird Area (IBA).

There are more than 179 species in need of conservation action in this region with habitat loss being the dominant issue for nearly all. Because this region includes a variety of natural habitats, including the Mississippi River, the Big Woods and the Anoka Sandplain, it includes a wide diversity of wildlife species including the Blanding's turtle, Loon, Trumpeter Swan, the Bald Eagle, Blackburnian Warbler, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Eastern Meadowlark, and a large number of mollusks.

E. Recreation

In 1974, the Metropolitan Council designated about 31,000 acres of existing parks owned by counties, cities and special park districts as "regional recreation open space." By 2004, the Metropolitan Regional Park system encompassed approximately 50,000 acres. This system includes significant natural features such as the oak savannas and wetlands of the Rice Creek Chain of Lakes Park Reserve in Anoka County and the maple-basswood forests of the Carver Park Reserve in Carver County. There are also 237 miles of canoe routes to enjoy in the Metro area.

Land is currently being acquired for a park reserve on the south shore of Big Marine Lake and for a regional park on Grey Cloud Island in Washington County. Land is also being acquired for a regional park in the northwest corner of Cedar Lake Township in Scott County.

Nevertheless, development has outpaced open space preservation in recent years. In the seven county metro area, agricultural and undeveloped lands declined by 140,624 acres between 1990 and 2000, whereas parks, preserves and recreation lands increased by only 36,527 acres, for a net loss of over 100,000 acres of open space.

The region's growing population will need additional large scale park and open space lands in order to meet the growing demand for outdoor recreation and to prevent overuse and resulting deterioration of existing protected areas. An estimated 33.4 million visits were made to the regional parks system in 2005 and annual use has increased 28% since 1995. A growing number of outdoor enthusiasts participate in passive recreational activities such as hiking or nature viewing, but there is also a large percentage that seeks the adventure of ATV use. The total acreage of parks open to the public and land yet to be acquired within those parks, plus "planned acquisitions" from the 2006 Met Council park policy plan, is 70,000 acres and 700 more miles of regional trails.

Hunting and fishing remain popular activities within the Metro Region and complying with the demand for easy access in this area as property values rise and the human population increases is an ongoing challenge. There are 41 Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) covering more than 51,000 acres with nearly half of that acreage contained in the Carlos Avery WMA. There are more than 18,000 acres targeted by the DNR WMA Plan for acquisition and approximately 14,000 acres of inholdings within existing WMAs that need some form of protection.

The Metro has about 90 miles of designated trout streams with the Vermillion River and Brown's Creek being among the most popular.

The Pheasant Plan calls for approximately 55,000 acres to be protected in the Metro while the Duck Plan calls for approximately 144,000 acres of wetland habitat to be restored or nearly the entire wetland habitat that has been identified as regionally important by a variety of natural area inventories and the regional and local level.

III. Conservation Challenges

A. Demographics and Economy

1. The region is in the throes of extensive cultural and economic changes. These changes will have a profound impact on our land and waters.
 - Fewer individuals are involved in agriculture, but its dominance on the landscape is still evident and increased pressure for agriculture to provide not only our food, but also our energy, will increase the pressure to make those remaining farmlands as productive as possible
 - In the next ten years, a large percentage of our farmland will be sold or passed on to the next generation
 - As baby-boomers retire, we will see a shift in priorities and an increased demand for social services in suburban and exurban areas

B. Land and Habitat

1. The trends of land development are very consumptive, though we have seen a slight shift to less impactful development of late. However, accommodating the next wave of population growth projected for this area will be difficult.
 - Habitat fragmentation will be a persistent problem that compromises the integrity of our natural lands
 - Invasive species will be on ongoing threat
 - The debate of public vs. private property rights will intensify as the landbase diminishes
 - Technological advances allow people to spread out and eliminate the need to be near urban centers for employment

C. Lakes, Rivers, Wetlands& Groundwater

1. A region that defines itself by its water resources, the Metro must rededicate its conservation resources to improved effectiveness in order to succeed.
 - There is too often no continuity of purpose or coordination of financial resources among Watershed Management Organizations (WMOs) or between these organizations and their constituent communities
 - Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) don't effectively utilize the conservation power contained within WMOs
 - There is inadequate enforcement of existing regulations
 - Drinking water supplies will be increasingly challenged and shallow aquifers in the Metro are inherently fragile

D. Fish and Wildlife

1. Habitat loss and invasive species are threats today and will continue to be threats in the future.
 - Urban sprawl destroys or diminishes habitat functions
 - Nuisance wildlife (geese, deer, etc.) continues to threaten our forests and our water quality. Fecal material from geese has been identified as a primary source of E. coli pollution in Metro waterbodies.

- Invasive species from zebra mussels and Eurasian milfoil in our lakes to buckthorn in our forests impinge upon the ecological health of our natural communities
- Our cold water streams continue to be challenged by thermal pollution

E. Recreation

1. Metro residents enjoy the out-of-doors as much as or more than any urban population in the country. That desire to get outside, in every season, puts a strain on our recreational resources.
 - Motorized vs. non-motorized recreation is a difficult balance to strike especially in the Metro where use is high in proportion to the landbase
 - Funds for management of parks and trails is always difficult to obtain
 - The youth of today seem less interested in outdoor activities than previous generations and this lack of connection to the natural world poses a potential threat to future public policy decisions regarding conservation
 - Hunting areas are in closer proximity to housing thereby challenging their recreation potential

F. Culture of Civic Engagement

1. The civically minded populace that is the Metro may seem, at times, as both a blessing and a curse. However, many communities would envy our “curse” of a largely caring and motivated citizenry.
 - Many NGOs operate with uncoordinated and duplicative goals that leads to loss of effectiveness
 - Many units of government have overlapping goals and purposes that leads to loss of effectiveness
 - Civic engagement of the past maybe threatened by disconnected feeling and lack of engagement in today’s youth (or maybe we’re just getting old and crotchety)

IV. Status of Current Planning Efforts

A wealth of plans has been completed in this region with several attempts to integrate land management goals. However, there is a lack of comprehensive regional plans for the area. To a large degree, the goal of the Campaign for Conservation to consolidate existing plans into a coherent evaluation of trends and future conservation targets has been accomplished by Growth

Pressures on Sensitive Natural Areas (DNR & Ameregis, 2006) and it serves as an excellent guide for future sustainable conservation actions.

The following plans were reviewed in putting this template together:

- Anoka County Parks Plan, 2006
- Audubon Important Bird Areas, 2004
- Changing Landscapes in the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area, CURA, 2006
- Conservation Biology Institute Protected Area Database, 2006
- DNR/Ameregis Report: Growth Pressures on Sensitive Natural Areas, 2006
- Explore Minnesota Tourism, U of MN, 2005
- Dakota County 2020 Environment & Natural Resource Plan, 1999
- Duck Plan, DNR, 2006
- Lower St. Croix National Scenic Riverway Cooperative Management Plan, NPS, 2000
- Met Council Aquatic Resource Assessment, 2003
- Met Council 2030 Regional Park Plan, 2006
- Metro Greenprint, Greenways & Natural Areas Collaborative, 1997
- Metro Greenways Planning Documents, DNR & collaborating organizations, 1997-2005
- Minnehaha Creek Watershed District Watershed Management Plan (draft), 2006
- Minnesota Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy, DNR, 2006
- Minnesota State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP), DNR, 2002
- Minnesota State Park System Land Study, DNR, 2000
- Minnesota Wetlands Conservation Plan, BWSR, DNR and other MN state agencies, 1997
- Minnesota Wildlife Management Area Acquisition, DNR, 2002
- Open Space Protection Guidebook, Mississippi National River and Recreation Area, NPS, 2006
- Pheasant Plan, DNR, 2005
- Rice Creek Watershed District Strategic Plan, 2006
- U.S. Census Bureau, 2006
- Wright County Local Water Management Plan, 2006

V. Goals

Extensive open space and natural area planning has already been conducted in the metro area, and the overriding goal should be implementing identified goals before land costs become prohibitive. The Metropolitan Council Regional Parks Plan 2030 and the Metro Habitat Corridors projects have identified priorities for protection within existing parks, adjacent natural lands at a number of parks, the creation of several new parks in the seven-county area, and the acquisition of existing natural areas. Implementing these priorities will help meet growing outdoor recreation needs, preserve water quality, and protect critical wildlife habitat in the region.

Success for any of the following goals mandates synergistically exploiting the shared plans, missions and objectives among the NGOs and units of government in the Metro.

A. Demographics and Economy

1. Healthy natural habitats/systems support economic/regional stability & security for all metro residents.
 - Expand the Fiscal Disparities Program beyond the seven-county metro to allow communities to refrain from developing sensitive areas and be compensated by the pooled tax revenue.
 - Promote industries that have a relatively low impact on the environment.
 - Provide assistance to local communities in developing economic strategies that promote sustainable growth.
 - Establish ordinances and guidelines at the local level that promote low-impact development
 - Promote the use of transfer of development rights (TDR) programs as means of providing development opportunities along with conservation

B. Land and Habitat

1. Ensure that urbanization & agriculture do not jeopardize the quality of life to this region.
 - Concentrate residential and commercial growth in community centers helping to control public service costs and preserve the valuable wild and undeveloped character of the area.
 - √ Enable robust and farsighted planning for growth in all communities, but particularly in unincorporated townships.
 - Continue emphasis on conservation ownership (public and private) in the remote, rural areas with most private ownership near existing infrastructure and services.
 - Promote use and expansion of mass transits systems.
2. Identify and protect high priority natural areas
 - Complete finely focused natural resource inventory and identify stressors to ecological function.
 - Use the full spectrum of protective tools to ensure critical areas are conserved.
 - Identify restoration targets and acquire rights necessary to restore ecological functions.
 - Ensure adequate financial resources for stewardship of natural areas.

- Develop conservation plans for each county and provide funding mechanisms for planning and implementation.
3. Control spread and infestation of exotic species (e.g. zebra mussels, purple loosestrife, etc.)
 - Create incentives for private landowners to reduce the infestation and spread of invasive species
 4. Monitor and prepare for impacts of climatic change on the region's native flora and fauna
 - Preserve ecological reference sites as a control for monitoring change

C. Lakes, Rivers, Wetlands and Groundwater

1. Reduce pollutants load of streams and rivers
 - Decrease sediment loads by use of best management practices on residential, agricultural and commercial lands.
 - Complete impaired waters analysis for all lakes and streams in the region.
 - Develop Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) studies for all impaired waters in the region.
 - Reduce peak flows in streams and ditches that result from excess stormwater runoff.
 - Ensure proper maintenance of stormwater management systems
 - Enforce and enhance regulations regarding private septic systems.
 - Educated landowners as to landscaping options that are sensitive to the environment.
 - Restore & stabilize shorelands, blufflands & stream banks.
 - Develop incentives for shoreland restoration and best management practices.
2. Ensure that wetland mitigation does not allow for loss of wetland function and seek to improve the overall ecological functions of the region's wetlands.
 - Develop targets for wetland protection and restoration.
 - Inventory area wetlands and assess ecological function

3. Determine groundwater systems and identify sources of potential contamination.
 - Develop targets for groundwater protection.
 - Assess capacity in light of growth demands and direct growth away from areas of fragile or limited groundwater supplies.

D. Fish and Wildlife

1. Educate citizens and decision-makers about needs of our natural world and techniques for mitigating the impacts of development.
2. Ensure that suitable and sustainable habitat for a variety species is primary focus of land and water conservation efforts.

E. Recreation

1. Acquire additional 17,000 acres called for in Met Council Park plan.
2. Promote opportunities for passive recreation in the area.
 - Provide interrelated parts & trails systems that:
 - √ Conserves natural systems
 - √ Provides access to urban population
 - √ Maintains & supports a constituency for natural resources in metro area & the state as a whole
 - Provide incentives for private development to set aside viable and accessible natural areas.
 - Encourage local government to adopt policies ensuring three acres of open space/person in their communities.
3. Restore and protect 144,000 acres of wetlands as called for in the Duck Plan.
4. Identify key trout habitat and protect and restore necessary land.
5. Maintain consistent strategy for harvest limits and adjust as needs of species demands.
6. Acquire additional 18,000 acres of WMA lands called for in WMA plan.
7. Teach children and adults about the importance of outdoor experiences to our physical and mental health.

IV. Opportunities and Strategies

A. Anoka

1. Major landowner divesting of its holding for potential other uses.
 2. Cedar Creek Natural History Area → add'l lands
 3. WMA Buffers & development right up to Northstar Rail development
 4. Hwy 10 expansion in Anoka co. (Anoka/Ramsey) Mississippi Bridge (Anoka/Hennepin co. – Ramsey/Dayton)
- B. Carver
1. Hwy 212 expansion
 2. Marsh Lake Hunt club for sale (300 acres?)
 3. County may get 2 new regional park facilities & trails
- C. Chisago & Franconia Bluffs
1. Little Lake (no. of Center City) – water quality, wetland possibly for sale
 2. Abandoned Rail Corridor (Wyoming → East → West) (Swedish Immigrant Trail)
 3. Rush Line (Rail) from Wyoming → Rush City??
 4. Duluth Line too
 5. No. Branch & sunrise Rivers → impaired (& Isanti county too)
- D. Dakota
1. Vermillion River
 2. Vermillion Highlands (5,00 acres)
 3. Hastings → Red Wing Trail
 4. Cob Lake – new regional trail prop.
 5. Pilot Knob
- E. Hennepin
1. Inholding within existing parks
 2. New Miss. Bridge crossing (Anoka too)
- F. Isanti
1. No. Branch & sunrise Rivers → impaired (& Chisago county too)
 2. Has no state parks
 3. Oxford Township coalition
- G. Ramsey
1. Trail system project (\$30 mill)
- H. Scott
1. New parks – county buying land \$3.5 m?) Cedar Lake, Blakely Bluffs
- I. Sherburne
1. Hwy. 169
 2. No. Star Corridor
 3. Great No. trail land acquis.
 4. Western region park acquisition by county
 5. Sand dunes state forest
 6. George Orning report
- J. Washington
1. St. Croix collab. → land along critical river area

2. Abandoned rail corridor – acquisition

K. Wright

1. Bridge connect (25) Wright →Sherburne
2. Pelican Lake

L. Everywhere

1. Residential development next to WMAs